



LUND UNIVERSITY
Faculty of Social Sciences
Department of Psychology

*Masters in Social Studies of Gender
(Two years)
Course: SIMT17
Supervisor: Roger Sages
August, 2011*

“Deconstructing the Identity Construction”

***An exploratory study of prostitute and motherhood identity in
Iranian sex-workers***

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Abstract

This paper reports on a phenomenological study of female sex-workers who are mainly engaged in street-based prostitution market in Tehran. Since the usage of contraceptive methods is often neglected, illegal fertilities and unwanted pregnancies have become an inseparable part of the lives of these women. Within the religious society of Iran, this issue has not only reinforced the image of “the sinner prostitute and the saint mother” but as well raised the concerns of intrapersonal identity conflicts. The empirical data in this study primarily contributes to shed light on what is the meaning of prostitution/motherhood for these women, how they define themselves as prostitutes and mothers, whether there exists any possible intrapersonal contradictions and how do they sustain a coherent sense of self in case of this existence. Personal accounts of these women on what prostitution and motherhood is were gathered through 8 interviews over two field visits to Tehran and further analyzed by the MCA-MINERVA tool for qualitative data analysis. By adopting a phenomenological perspective and within the psychological theory of dialogical self, results showed that the maintenance of a coherent sense of self has become possible by the participants’ subjective way of defining motherhood and prostitution that is done along with the accepted social norms and values. The ability to sustain a coherent self was as well shown to be possible through the interplays within the identities and their dialogical relations which allow one Self to have multiple, occasionally contradicting identities.

Keywords

Prostitute identity, Motherhood identity, Phenomenological psychology, Dialogical self

Acknowledgment

First and Foremost I would like to thank the participants that supported this work with their time, opinions, thoughts and experiences. I would like to thank everyone in MIKHAK center, without whose support, this work would have not been possible. Sincere thanks to my supervisor Roger Sages who never gave up on me.

“The universal is in the particular. Or, better stated, all that we can know anything that might be imagined as universal is known in the particular, in the everyday, mundane life. True, we are all part of one another, interconnected beyond the separations made by the mind...”

(Richard Quinney, 1998, p. xi)

INTRODUCTION

Prostitution is one of the oldest professions; this is probably the most well-known cliché in the history of debating about prostitution. Scholars (Oselin, 2009; Ditmore, 2006; Flowers, 1998) have vastly referred to this feature while bringing this concept under scrutiny. There have been facetious standpoints towards this thought as well. Fitzwater (1970) believes that despite the fact that prostitution has been mentioned as the oldest profession, there should have been cave dwellers who paid a few skins for the pleasure; leading to trapping as the first profession and not prostitution. Bonnie Bullough and Vern, L. Bullough (1996) also believe that instead of considering prostitution as the oldest profession it would be better to say that prostitution is the only mean of survival for the women who do not have a father, husband or brother to support them.

Traditional accounts of prostitution were mostly grounded on the clinical perspectives. They mainly had the tendency to humanize this deviant or advocate tolerance towards it, although they were not much sympathizing. Prostitutes were still perceived as the devil others who were forced to talk about what had pushed them into prostituting. (Kong, 2006)

It was with the emergence of the feminist ideas that another chapter in the discussions about prostitution started. Ever since two opposing stances concerning sex-working/prostitution has appeared amongst the feminists. On one hand, according to Chapkis (1997) are the feminists who consider prostitution as victimizations, as another instance for the patriarchal division of power, as the exploitation of women’s body and as a social structure that forces women into selling their bodies. And on the other hand are the pro sex-working feminists who believe in the agency and the free will of women who have

entered this job¹. This extended approach to prostitution brought new modules of defining and analyzing what prostitution actually is.

Another advantage that was brought by this latter mode of thought was the authority it gave to prostitutes to narrate their stories (Kong, 2006). These women were no more the *narrated* but they rather became the *narrators* of their lives themselves. Shelton and Johnson (2006) mention that the significance these self-narratives have on the development of someone's sense of identity has as well been acknowledged by the psychologists.

In studies about prostitution, this emphasis on self-narrations specifically gave rise to the domains such as talking about identities. Researchers paid a lot of attention on investigating how these identities are negotiated and constructed, how they are being managed or how they are occasionally transformed. Phoenix (2000) as one of them defined the underlying elements of the prostitute identity by conducting interviews. She argued that the involvement in prostitution requires a construction of prostitute identity that is loosely defined around the concepts of men, money and in some cases violence. In a similar vein, Sanders (2005) has talked about a manufactured prostitute identity among the sex-workers which becomes functional in their working atmosphere.

Talking about one form of identity and clustering a group of people under its rubric is based on the similarities that are found among a certain kind of people. This is the most fundamental component in defining identity. Having an identity of any sort includes a sense of personal continuity and uniqueness that make an individual distinct from or similar to others. It is based on this feature that people are assigned to various groups with people of similar identities.

Identity both as a concept and as a real life experience has as well an inseparable characteristic of fluidity. Individuals are not bound to only one identity. Their identities could either change based on various social contexts or even be replaced by other forms. Throughout all the interactions that people have together they hold different roles that are highly connected to creation of these identities and the categorization of them, whereas it is likely that these roles and consequently these constructed identities stand in total conflict with

¹ Concepts of prostitute and sex-worker are used interchangeably in this paper since making concrete divisions are beyond the aims of this paper.

each other. Respectively, since people are social phenomena, their identities can be judged and valued as negative or positive by the norms, values or cultural beliefs of a society.

An example of the case above can be the situation of prostitutes who have experienced to be mothers. More or less in all the cultures there is a great myth about motherhood, the principles of good motherhood or the equalization of mothers as saints, on the other hand there is a common perception of prostitution as a deviance, social problem or a stigmatized crime. The contradiction is especially enhanced where prostitution is illegal and there is a thin line between being a saint and a sinner. Being placed in any contradicting positions such as the ones above not only creates clashes between the social roles adopted by one self, but also elevates the intrapersonal identity conflicts as well as concerns about the maintenance of a coherent self. Finding a more profound explanation for these issues has become the reason for developing this study.

Therefore, what comes below is an artifact of a lived experience, a closer look at the lives of the Iranian women who are actively engaged in sex-working in exchange for money, goods or even drugs. Here too, the first and foremost objective is to elaborate how the prostitute identity is constructed and later reflected in these women's stories about themselves. This purpose also encompasses whether these women consider the community of sex workers inclusive of themselves. However, since the fluidity and interchangeability is an inseparable part of the identity, I would also aim to investigate the reflections of motherhood identity among them, its existence and its development since there is a great chance for these women to get pregnant and become mothers, intentionally or unintentionally. A remaining interesting issue would be to explore whether practicing both roles of sex worker and mother simultaneously has brought these women with identity conflicts and further possibly fragmented the coherency of their selves.

It is also worth mentioning that although prostitution is a globally known fact, it would not be accurate to define "Prostitution" in different contexts in the same way. In addition, the process of identity construction and representation would as well become highly context-dependant. This fact necessitates shedding light on the contextual background of this research to illustrate in what terrains the prostitute and motherhood identity of the Iranian sex-workers are shaped. Hence, before moving on to the theoretical part I would bring the historical background of sex working in Iran which facilitates the understanding of the discussions in this paper and further present the works and studies that have been done in this field.

Sex-working in Iran

The history of prostitution shows that even in the primitive societies there have been women who stayed outside the villages for offering transactional sex. As a reason for mere satisfaction in the ancient Greece or a mean for financing in the Egyptian pyramids prostitution has always been reported. Japanese Geishas or Greek Hetaerae were also part of the performing art such as opera, dancing, ballet and even literature. (Ditmore, 2006)

The history has witnessed shifts in the attitudes towards prostitution, from the acceptance of it during the middle ages to the condemnation of it with the emergence of renaissance and the reformation of protestant churches during the 16th century. Saint Augustine, the frontier in developing the western Christian morals, believed nothing is more disgraceful and humble than prostitution; nonetheless, in the absence of it a great rise in other capricious lusts would occur. Therefore however sinful, prostitution is a necessary evil. (Ditmore, 2006)

Selling sex in Iran as well has a long history. In his travel book to Persia, Jean Chardin has an exaggerated impression on the magnitude of prostitution in Iranian cities during the 17th century (Kamranifakoor, 2002²). Throughout all the history, prostitution has always been illegal in Iran and even though it existed, it was obscured due to high levels of public stigmatization. The only publicly evident form of it surfaced and expanded in 18th and 19th century during the Qajar dynasty as a mean of royal entertainment. It was only later during the Pahlavi dynasty (1925-1979) that selling sex was once for all legalized, red light districts known as *New City*³ became an official site for sex exchanges and women were officially sold for the lustful purposes.

In the following section the historical changes that selling sex has undergone during the Pahlavi dynasty and the Islamic revolution of 1979 and afterwards would be presented. The relevancy of this data relies on its capability in illustrating the twists and turns that sex working has experienced throughout the past 50 years.

² For facilitation in understanding, the dates of Persian references are changed. i.e., year 2002 is the same year as 1381 in Persian calendar.

³ It was originally called "Shahr-e-No", although also known as "New City". Here too the latter form is used.

Prostitution during the Pahlavi Dynasty

The fortress of New City –as an official site for selling sex- was first built during Qajar dynasty prior to Pahlavi's. However it was during the Pahlavi kingdom that prostitutes were gathered from the streets and moved to New City in order to control the diseases such as Syphilis. With the renovation of this area as a public place prostitution was once again flourished.

The whole area of New City was approximately 135 square meters that was divided into 2 districts of the *Fortress* and the *Chaste houses*. For preventing the women from returning into selling sex on Tehran's streets, different types of side jobs were also created so that they occupy themselves and have additional earnings. Meanwhile the sex-workers were also benefiting from the health care services which were provided for them by the state. Farmanfarmaian (1970) states that based on the health cards received by the prostitutes, their number were estimated to be around 130 in the Fortress part by 1951 and 1548 during 1968. The Fortress area was consisted of various houses in which a female boss and few sex-workers were providing the customers with sexual services (Farmanfarmaian, 1970). Until late January of 1969, the prostitutes in New City had all received their health cards (Monsefi, 1970; as cited in Madani, Shadi Talab, Feizzadeh, Kamkar, Raees Dana, 2006). These types of services facilitated the free engagement in prostitution for everyone. Therefore, any woman from a virtuous to a professional sex-worker could freely enter New City and start working there as a prostitute.

With the rise of Islamic revolution in 1978, the Fortress of New City was burnt down and 400 houses in which women were working were destroyed. Consequently, these women were urged to move to the other part -the Chaste houses- and continue earning money through selling their bodies. Later on in 1988, the whole area of New City was completely destroyed and 4000 women were arrested out of which only 800 were revealed to be sex-workers. (Sedigh Sarvestani, 1993)

Except this official type of sex-working in New City, other forms of prostitution in hotels, cabarets and streets were also ongoing. Farmanfarmaian (1970) also referred to the prostitutes who were living in a hollow in the southern part of Tehran. On one side of this hollow small rooms made out of tin metals and boxes were the working place for many prostitutes that in addition to the personal usage for giving sexual services were also sometimes rented out to the others. In these cases, without any pimps, the customers were in

direct contact with the women whom they were interested in. Moreover, most of these women had a customer (mainly as a personal companion) who supported them in times of trouble.

The call girls were one of the other unofficial forms of sex-workers in Iran who worked inside the private brothels. AghaAlikhani (1990; as cited in Madani et al., 2006) believed that the number of these houses in Iran were definitely not few, to the extent that even many of the bosses in New City knew about or owned some of these places. AghaAlikhani further estimated more than 200 brothels each consisted of 3 to 12 sex-workers. All of the prostitutes in the houses were young and some of them even had husbands.

Prostitution after the Islamic Revolution

After the revolution an area called *Ghorbat* (meaning a place far from homeland) or *Jazire* (meaning the island) was built which was one of the most important locations of prostitution in Tehran during that time. This place was called Ghorbat because of its mainly gypsy inhabitants, and Jazire due to the high levels of crime and perversion that was the main reason for its isolation. The prostitutes in this area were divided into 2 groups: the gypsy prostitutes and the outsider non-gypsies. (Madani et al., 2006)

Madani and his colleagues (2006) explained that among the gypsy prostitutes, selling sex was not indecent or stigmatized. The main reasons for becoming a prostitute for them were poverty, instabilities in family and unemployment. According to these authors the gypsy prostitutes were characterized by the following features: 1. Drug addiction was not common among them 2. Various crimes were not considered indecent among them and in times they were not able to commit other crimes they turned willingly into prostitution 3. Mainly during the times of prostitution, the breadwinner of the family was in the prison or on the run 4. In total, the prostitution among gypsies consisted only 10 percent of the whole area.

The group of non-gypsies engaged in prostitution chiefly because of drug addiction and their need for shelter. The high rate of selling sex among the gypsy women affected and accelerated the involvement of these new comers into prostitution. Moreover, the drug addiction among the non-gypsies entrapped them to have sex with the gypsy drug dealers in return for drugs and shelter. It was also times that the addicted women who were engaged in prostitution were also the wives of these dealers who forced them to sell their bodies. Finally,

in year 2000 this area was completely ruined and all its inhabitants were spread on the streets of Tehran. From that day on no official reports were given on such exclusive areas that the sex-workers were living and working in. (Madani et al., 2006)

Studies on Sex working in Iran

With the consolidation of the Islamic government in Iran, the ordinances of Islam were emphasized more than before, values and norms were redefined and concrete boundaries between “good” and “bad” were drawn. At this point, prostitution became not only a stigma but as well a crime that deserved punishment. Consequently the state attempted to fully abolish prostitution by deconstructing the official places of selling sex, imprisoning the women and other actors involved or sending them to the rehabilitation centres. Although this attempt was effective and broad in scope, this “necessary evil” -as Saint Augustine puts it- was never fully extinguished rather started to grow clandestinely after a while.

Within this atmosphere the representative characteristics of prostitution began to transform. Official sites such as New City or the brothels were replaced by normal streets of the cities and eventually a growing generation of street walkers entered the market and ever since remained to be dominant in the business. At this time not only the government but the public reactions as well became more sensitive and intolerant towards prostitution.

Public exhibition and negotiation with the customers, as the distinct manoeuvres of these women, brought significant concerns and insecurities to the Iranian society. From the sociological point of view this publicity highly contributes in normalizing and expanding sex working especially among the young generation (Sherafatipour, 2006). In addition to its influential impact, the scattered nature of street-based prostitution has limited the research on this phenomenon as well as the access to accurate statistics. It has only been in the recent years that studying prostitution has gained attention in the academic field, even though the number of these studies is still few and there is a lack of diversification among them.

The most comprehensive studies on prostitution in Iran were done by Farmanfarmaian in 1970 and Madani and his colleagues in 2006. Both of these studies that were respectively done before and after the revolution shared an informative approach to the situation of prostitution during these consequent periods. Farmanfarmaian’s study on prostitution elucidated the basic information on the dispersion and nature of selling sex by covering five main locations: New City, private houses, brothels, the southern hollows and public streets.

Madani's study on the other hand, became more elaborate and complementary by looking closer at the contemporary situation of prostitution and some surrounding issues such as the spread of drug and substance abuse.

More specified studies in this field in Iran range from a variety of domains such as sociological, psychological and medical to criminological and legal, but surprisingly these studies do not vary significantly within each domain. For instance, the sociological studies on prostitution have been mainly done on exploring the causes of this act (Hosseini & Aghayy, 2008; Sherafatipour, 2006; Oliae Zand, 2002) whereas the psychological studies have developed mainly within the clinical aspects (Zareidoost, Atefvahid, Bayanzadeh, Birashk, 2007; Kamranifakoor, Rasoolzadeh Tabatabaei & Allahyari, 2003; Behboodi, 1999).

The void in having more elaborated studies on prostitution accompanied by the need to study sex workers from a neutral stance, have been the underlying motives for me to conduct this research. Contrary to many of the works done in Iran, the aim here is not to look at the underlying reasons or consequent results of selling sex. Presupposing sex workers as criminals or victims is as well not my intention. Instead, within a phenomenological paradigm I am aiming to give the agency to these women to speak up for themselves and share their experiences as sex workers and as mothers. Consequently this research gains an explorative nature that necessitates raising questions rather than giving concrete hypothesis. These questions as well as a brief outline of the coming chapters would be presented in the section below.

Chapter Outline

The introduction and contextual background presented above would be followed by the theoretical approach of this research in chapter 1. Theories of phenomenology and dialogical self have been the framework for further analysis. Through phenomenology, the underlying meanings in sex workers' representations of motherhood and prostitute identity became graspable and through dialogical self the dynamic interplays of those identities. Chapter 2 would discuss the methodological approach in data collection and analysis. A description of the MCA-Minerva as the tool for analyzing the qualitative data and its application would as well be presented. Chapter 3 presents the outcomes of the study, including a brief description of each participant and the preliminary assessment of the data. In

chapter 4, the outcome would further be discussed within the theoretical framework of the study. The final part would be devoted to the concluding remarks of the study.

All in all the discussions in each chapter attempt to answer the following exploratory questions:

1. How the prostitute identity is constructed among the Iranian sex workers?
2. How the motherhood identity is constructed among these women?
3. Do any conflicts exist between their prostitute and motherhood identities?
4. How do these women maintain a coherent unified self in case of any identity conflicts?

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

After presenting the contextual background it is necessary to bring the relevant theories that account for the base of the arguments and discussions in this paper. This Chapter will begin by setting forth the Psychological Phenomenological approach, later look at the theory of dialogical self and finally shed light on the bonds and ties between the psychological phenomenology and the theory of dialogical self. It is worth mentioning that phenomenology has a dual function in this study: phenomenology as the theoretical approach and phenomenology as the method for data collection and analysis. What comes below is the application of phenomenology in its first domain.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology as a discrete philosophy in the modern sense established with the *Logical Investigations*⁴ of Edmund Husserl (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003). Going beyond the mere description of the facts is phenomenology's fundament. Robert Sokolowski (2006) describes phenomenology as the study of human experience and the way things present themselves to individuals in and through this experience.

⁴ Vol.1 (1900) - Vol.2 (1901)

For understanding phenomenology two sorts of attitudes and perspectives that individuals adopt should be clarified: natural and phenomenological attitude. According to Sokolowski (2006) the natural attitude is our default perspective, the one that we are originally in and the one we start off from. The phenomenological attitude on the other hand is the stance of a detached observer from a passing scene, similar to the role of a spectator in a game. We contemplate our involvements with the world and with the things in it. Sokolowski further argues that within the phenomenological attitude we are no more mere participants, we observe what and how it is to be a participant in the world and its manifestations. Therefore, the phenomenological attitude becomes the focus we have when we reflect on the natural attitude. In other words, a philosophical analysis of the natural attitude is carried out by the phenomenological attitude.

From the beginning phenomenology was envisaged as a science of the essential structure of pure consciousness that had its own methods of knowledge production (Moran, 2003). Phenomenology is the study of the essence of the phenomenon. The object, event, or in general the phenomenon as it appears is perceived as something there, a *being* just there which might possibly be in a causal interaction with other things just being there as well (Sages & Lundsten, 2004). According to Moustakas (1994) hence, any phenomenon is by definition qualified for being a subject of the research. The way an object is appeared to the perceiver is not an illusion, in opposite it can be a suitable starting point in valid scientific determinations.

Meaning, Life-World and Intersubjectivity

A significant fact about a phenomenon is its meaning. Each object has its own meaning by itself, apart from the meaning that we can assign to it (Sages & Lundsten, 2004). Meaning then is prior to a phenomenon. It is based on the meaning that a phenomenon is interpreted in one way or another; for instance a chair becomes a chair when it is constructed for the aim of sitting on it, apart from the color, shape or the materials used for its construction. Moreover, meanings are not something static, instead they are in a continuous perceptual/imaginary change that is nothing else than the change in the expressions of a person's experiences (Sages, Ostaszewska, Wypustek & Maia, 2010).

Meanings have their origins in the life-world. The life-world refers to the way things are actually lived and experienced in the context that they appear. According to Barbro Giorgi (2006) studying an experience of a phenomenon should be done in the real life context

in which the phenomenon is embedded rather than investigating some isolated aspects of the phenomenon that are removed from the actual context. In trying to grasp the life-world it is the whole network of meaning which counts, not only some isolated aspects. This fact leads to a comprehension of the phenomenon exactly as it is experienced by the person. Respectively, the life-world can become a real concerning subject matter for science.

Although it is hard to fully grasp the notion of Life-world, there are some features recognized for it. According to Karlsson (1993) the life-world is essentially pre-given and there is no doubt or question concerning it. This is the first feature of the life world. A person will never doubt the world even though there might be several things in the world that would not turn out to be the way one had first thought. Furthermore the objects in the life-world, as Karlsson further mentions, are given in a subjectively relative way. The way of perceiving a phenomenon creates a unique perspective of that phenomenon for the individual. Also, a same phenomenon might be experienced differently for different individuals. These two facts lead to the multiplicity of the possible ways of experiencing the phenomenon, nonetheless no one can deny that it is still the same world that we are experiencing.

The foremost feature of the life world is its intersubjectivity. The life-world and the meanings embedded in it can be shared among the individuals. This is referred to as intersubjectivity. To share a life-world means that people participate in common forms of activities (Sages & Lundsten, 2004). It is stated in Fraber's contention (1943; as cited in Moustakas, 1994, p.37), that in an experience others become present to me -as the observer- to the extent that they enter my consciousness, are co-present to me, and become essential to my intentional experience. For clarifying this statement Schutz (1967; as cited in Moustakas, 1994, p.38) has added that everything that I know about someone's conscious experience is based on my own lived experience. Therefore *my* lived experience of *you* is constituted simultaneously with *your* lived experience.

Consciousness, Intentionality and Epoché

Phenomenology aims to study the structure of conscious experience from the point of view of the first person. This makes consciousness a core element in this philosophy. The way a phenomenon is experienced by the consciousness and the manner of its appearing construct the major characteristic of the phenomenon's meaning. Moustakas (1994) illustrates this statement as follows:

The object that appears in consciousness mingles with the object in nature so that a meaning is created, and knowledge is extended. Thus a relationship exists between what exists in conscious awareness and what exists in the world.

What appears in consciousness is an absolute reality while what appears in the world is a product of learning. (p.27)

Every act of consciousness or every conscious experience is related with an object in an intentional way. This intentionality means that while we are consciously experiencing a phenomenon we direct all our awareness towards it. Ashworth (2006) acknowledges the definitive relatedness of consciousness and intentionality by considering that all consciousness is consciousness of something. However, the notion of *intention* used in phenomenology does not correspond to the concept of intention as a purpose or aim in our everyday lives (Sokolowski, 2006). While the intention in the latter meaning refers to the purpose we have in mind when we act, the phenomenological usage of intention means the conscious relationship we have to an object.

In conducting a phenomenological research the intentionalities of the observations should be suspended. This necessitates an act of bracketing all our previous knowledge, judgments or presumptions to produce fresh knowledge abstracted from a firsthand experience. *Epoché* is a term used in referring to this act of suspension. The word *epoché* is taken from the Greek skeptics who believed that any sort of judgment should be eliminated until the evidence is clear enough to make the judgment (Giorgi, 2006). Although phenomenology adopted this term, the skeptic idea of skepticism was not accepted. In phenomenology as mentioned by Giorgi, *epoché* simply refers to neutralization of natural intentions.

According to Moustakas (1994), *epoché* means to suspend everything that interferes with fresh vision. For doing so we must invalidate, inhibit and disqualify all the commitments to the previous knowledge and experience. In Husserl's phenomenology (1931; as cited in Moustakas, 1994, p.85), *epoché* does not deny the reality of things or eliminate or doubt everything, it is only the natural attitude and the biases of everyday knowledge that are adjourned.

Therefore, it seems valid to say that phenomenology is free of any sort of presuppositions by essence. This leads to its avoidance of entangling or basing its results or

claims on any other study. Phenomenology, however, is not necessarily the only approach of undertaking the human experience rather it is a science of pure possibilities that is conducted in a systematic concrete way that assists the expansion of the empirical studies (Moustakas, 1994). In other words, Husserl believed that (1900-1901; as cited in Moran, 2003, p.60) phenomenology is the “science of essence” that can provide the essential grounding for all the scientific knowledge.

Phenomenological Psychology

The application of phenomenology is not only finite to philosophy rather it can be applied in various scientific fields. The influence of phenomenology in Psychology initiated with the slogan of “*from the point of view of the behaving organism itself*” (Snygg, 1941; as cited in Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003, p.243). The suitability of phenomenology in psychological studies was also emphasized by the developers of this idea time and again. Amedeo Giorgi and Barbro Giorgi (2003) has mentioned that Husserl thought adopting phenomenological perspective could assist the clarification of the fundamental concepts in psychology and Merleau-Ponty believed that phenomenology and psychology share a sympathetic characteristic with each other.

Husserl’s phenomenological psychology departed from the thoughts of Wilhelm Dilthey (1893/1903; as cited in Karlsson, 1993, p.61) who believed that psychology was inappropriately following the footsteps of natural science in *explaining* the psych rather than *understanding* it. As further mentioned by Dilthey psychology concerns itself with the lived experiences. The perceived facts by the individuals are not disconnected from each other in their experience rather from the very beginning they are connected and meaningful in a contextual whole. According to Cheung Chung and Ashworth (2006) the experience of being conscious about something seems to be some kind of psychology itself since psychology has the task to delineate the various ways in which consciousness could relate to its object. They further argue that a psychological approach that has adopted phenomenology focuses on the meanings of the experiences as well as the people’s perceptions, utilizes a form of epoché and is aware of the life-worlds of the individuals.

Phenomenological understanding can be helpful in psychology since much of the subject matters in this area are those that do not objectively exist (Giorgi, 2006). Phenomenological psychology creates descriptions of lived events as they are lived by the participant and seeks for the meanings beneath the experiences of the individuals.

Psychologists in this field search for the meanings that individuals subjectively give to their worlds; however the perception of these worlds is not a common experience. The gestalt of the experience or the reality that is perceived might seem to be same but it is undoubtedly experienced in different ways among different individuals.

The phenomenological psychologist in specific is involved in studying the human beings; their behaviors, feelings, motivations, perceptions or even their value-system, anything related to human behavior that can be significant of studying. Life-worlds, as the subjective world that human beings are experiencing, are not happening in vacuum. According to Adams (2009) the life-worlds, interpenetrate and stimulate each other, therefore we have to work with an interlacing of different life-worlds. This necessitates the study of this subjective experience in a contextual and situational whole, a network of meaning that arises from patterns of behavior and is not isolated from the whole; however it is considered to be a part.

Despite studying identity is possible within a wide variety of psychological frameworks, the phenomenological psychological approach seemed to be the most promising in studying Iranian sex workers. Within this theoretical background I started off from suspending the prejudgments and prejudices towards sex workers and understand their subjective ways of giving meaning to their lives as prostitutes and as mothers. Although living in the same society has gathered them under the same conditions and categorized them under the same label, all these women were experiencing different life-worlds. In other words, the meanings they assigned to their lived experiences were substantially different even if the experience itself was common among them. This difference made it valuable to take a closer look at the subjective world of these women.

Through phenomenological psychological approach, I primarily intended to thrive at a scientific understanding of the construction of prostitution/motherhood identity among these women and make sense out of the manner of this construction. Furthermore it is interesting to examine how the motherhood and prostitute identity is interacting on their intrapersonal level. Therefore, for having a more intricate analysis of the interplays between these two identities I have adopted the theory of dialogical self that is capable of examining a set of identities within a bigger gestalt, namely the Self. In the following section of this chapter the theory of dialogical self would be more elaborately explained.

Conceptualizing Self and Identity

As an introduction to the theory of dialogical self it is necessary to present a clear but brief clarification on what is meant by concepts of self, identity and role in this paper in order to compensate the impreciseness of these concepts.

In our daily lives we are living with and through our selves and identities, without doubting or questioning them. We might hesitate about their structure, their functionality or their continuousness but rarely deny their existence. It seems that these concepts as lived experiences by individuals are omnipresent and somehow self-evident. We also seldom draw a concrete line between our selves and our identities, or mark their territories since they are highly interwoven and complimentary.

Self and identity have a lot in common but this fact does not deny their distinctiveness. Self, according to Owens (2006) is *“an organized and interactive system of thoughts, feelings, identities and motives that (1) is born of self-reflexivity and language (2) people attribute to themselves (3) characterize specific human beings”*(p.206). The confusions about self and identity arise especially when identity becomes an extended part of the self. The self in this sense as Owens further puts it is a cognitive structure that is incorporating particularities such as smart, honest, catholic, Australian or parent.

Identity on the other hand, is referred to the categories used by individuals to define themselves and locate themselves relative to the others (Owens, 2006). In this way identity implies both a sense of sameness with others in case of similarities or distinctiveness from others in case of differences. By another definition, Stryker (1980; as cited in Oselin, 2009, p.382) has mentioned that participation in the structured role relationships constructs the internalized positional designations in one self that in whole could be referred to as identity.

The latter definition on identity by Sheldon Stryker has been highly successful since it has brought back the social structure and the roles into defining identity. In his account of identity Stryker has adopted the assumption that self reflects the society. In other words, self is a multifaceted domain that reflects the variety of network contacts in which people are participating. As a result individuals have as many identities as they have network contacts in which they hold a position and play its associated role (Smith-Lovin, 2002).

Although Stryker's theory on self, role and identity is not limited to what is mentioned here, it perfectly grasps and represents the accounts of this paper on above concepts and their interplays. Here too, I would study identity as an extended part of the self

developed in a social context, therefore as much as discussing about identity I will about self. It is through this application of the concepts that the theory of dialogical self has become an appropriate terrain for basing my final claims.

The Dialogical Self

“We are all storytellers and we are all the stories we tell”

(McAdams, Josselson, Lieblich, 2007, p.3)

In its most concise way of defining, Hubert Hermans' theory of dialogical self reflects the dynamic multiplicity of the I- positions. This psychological theory on self was expanded on William James distinction of *I* and *Me* as the main components of the self and inspired by Mikhail Bakhtin's polyphonic Novel that referred to the multiplicity of voices. As the fundamental thoughts in the dialogical self, these two theories would both be illustrated below as well as some empirical questions of what dialogical self really is, what are its defining characteristics and most importantly how it functions in the daily life.

Self as the knower and self as the known

William James has made a distinction between the two main components of the Self; *I* as the subject or the knower and *Me* as the object or the known. The *I* continuously interprets its experiences in a subjective manner that is characterized by 3 features: continuity, distinctness and volition. The continuity of the self as the knower is reflected in the individual's personal identity that is a sense of sameness across time. The distinctness refers to the person's sense of individuality, having an own identity and an existence separate from the others. The sense of personal volition is expressed by continuous appropriation and rejection of thoughts by which the self as knower, the *I*, manifests itself as an active processor of the experience. (Hermans & Kempen, 1993)

According to Hermans (2002), *Me* as the known-self is identified as the empirical self that is composed of all the things that can belong to a person from the body and psych, the house and wife to the work and reputation. Hermans & Kempen (1993) have referred to 3 main characteristics of these belongings: material (body, possessions), spiritual (thoughts, consciousness) or social characteristics (relations, roles, fame).

Me indicates a basic feature of the self which is its extension. Hermans & Kempen (1993) mention that this self is not a closed entity, disconnected from the world while having a mere existence for itself, rather it is extended towards some aspects of the environment. In this sense, the interplay between the *I* and the *Me* is not a separate existence from the thought process of the other people whereas the perspectives of the others can become an integral part of someone's self.

Bakhtin's Polyphonic Novel

Bakhtin's viewpoint on Polyphonic Novel encompasses a multi-vocal feature of the Novels that is resulted from his thesis on Dostoevsky's literature. What Bakhtin unveiled in the works of Dostoevsky was not the "multiplicity of the characters" but a "plurality of the consciousness". According to him, this consciousness is in an intense dialogical relationship with another consciousness. (Hermans & Kempen, 1993)

According to Hermans & Kempen (1993) the chief characteristic of the Novel is that it is composed by a number of independent and mutually opposing viewpoints that are embodied by characters involved in the dialogical self. Bakhtin believes that this embodiment refers to a voice that someone is uttering and it becomes meaningful only when it is in relation to someone else's voice that has as well been expressed (Hermans, 2002). It is only through this gestalt that personal meanings such as thoughts, ideas or memories can become dialogical.

Hermans' Dialogical Self

The theory of dialogical self, on one hand, is founded on the *Me* as an empirical self and the *I* as the continuous mental process which observes and coheres the different manifestations of *Me*. On the other hand, it is inspired by the idea that individuals can take multiple voices embodied in one person⁵. In this sense, Hermans' theory does not imply a hierarchical structure of personality as it was traditionally considered, but rather a dynamic flow of voices that are interacting with each other (Mc Ilveen & Patton, 2007).

⁵ Herman's implication of multi-vocality is slightly different from Bakhtin's polyphonic Novel since the voices by Hermans are embodied only by a single person and not many.

Hermans, Kempen and Van Loon (1992) elaborately mention that there is not an overarching *I* organizing the constituents of the *Me*. This *I* is as well not static and fixed; it has the possibility to move from one position to another. These movements which can even be opposing are in accordance with the shifts in time and space. The *I* has the capability of imaginatively assigning a particular voice to each of these positions so that dialogical relations between these positions can be established. The authors further state that:

The voices function like interacting characters in a story. Once a character is set in motion in a story, the character takes on a life of its own and thus assumes a certain narrative necessity. Each character has a story to tell about experiences from its own stance. As different voices these characters exchange information about their respective "Mes" and their worlds, resulting in a complex, narratively structured self. (p.28)

Based on this, a person does not have one central independent self. The *I* of he/she adopts multiple perspectives in various spatial and temporal positions. Through this shift of I-positions, a decentered dialogical self is created. (Mc Ilveen & Patton, 2007)

Hermans has identified specific characteristics for the dialogical self. According to him (2002b; as cited in Mc Ilveen & Patton, 2007, p.72) first, the I-positions might take on features of permanence or transient such as a relationship with a life-long friend or a chitchat with a stranger in the bus, respectively. Second, they might attract social support or in opposite attract social derision. Third, these I-positions may also vary based on their affectivity on each other since there is no assumption about the equivalent reciprocity amongst them. Fourth, I-positions can be imaginary such as an imaginary friend that a child can play with. Fifth, the frequency of activity amongst the positions is not predetermined. Finally, these I-positions can sometimes be similar to one another sometimes stand in total contradiction with each other.

Another central feature in the theory of dialogical self is the narratives and stories that are created based on the various positions of *I*. Individuals own a narrative mode of thought as well as the rational one. Bruner (1986; as cited in Hermans & Kempen, 1993) mentions that the narrative thinking aims to put the general human condition into the particulars of experience whereas locating this experience in time and space. It is through the narratives that

events are connected and constructed in such a way to develop meaningful structures. Although there are various ways in linking these events, based on the dialogical self, it is only the theme of the events that provide a pattern for the events' connection and in tandem ensuring the coherence of the narrative. Furthermore, according to Bruner the perspective of the narrator as well as the knowledge and the interest of the person to whom the story is told also play an important role in how to put the story forth.

The I-positions that have created the narrative and the way the narrative is constructed is undeniably affected by the social and cultural environment. Hermans & Kempen (1993) believe that when the thoughts and talks of *I* about *Me* increase, the influence of the society also begins to increase. More elaborately, since the *Me* is as well a social *Me*, individuals are not able to think, act and feel in isolation from their societies. In this sense, self become a social phenomenon and related to the society in variety of ways.

The significance of the narratives is due to the meaning that is conveyed through them. The dialogical movement between different positions of the *I* creates the different meanings. According to Hermans (2001), by paying attention to the stories that people tell about their lives as well as understanding the ways that they are organizing the events as part of their personal and collective background, the patterns of Meaning construction and reconstruction becomes vivid.

By going through the discussions above, one can simply uncover the main overlap of the theory of dialogical self with phenomenology. Most fundamentally, both of these theories have occupied themselves to reveal the patterns of meaning constructions in the daily lives of the individuals. Hence, meaning itself becomes a crucial aspect of the arguments in these theories. In tandem, meanings are extracted from an experience that an individual has had from a phenomenon (in case of phenomenology) or an event (in case of dialogical self). This experience is further put into the stories that are narrated by the participant. Moreover, although meaning is the major similarity between the focus of these theories, it is not the only one. The importance of the consciousness in experience and the significance of the intersubjective world as the basis for the meaning construction is another overlapping area between Husserl's phenomenology and Hermans' dialogical self.

Dialogical Self and Identity Construction

Although in the preceding sections I tried to dispose the distinctions made between self and identity, questions might still exist concerning the centrality of identity in the theory

of dialogical self. Contrary to the belief that the concept of self is central in the theory of dialogical self- as a theory about self-, this theory directly addresses the concept of identity. Based on the dialogical feature of it, 3 dimensions are considered for identity; Unity versus Multiplicity, Continuity versus Discontinuity and Individual versus Society.

The multiplicity of the identity in dialogical self is rooted from the ideas of Bakhtin who considered individuals as multi-vocal actors. All of the positions that the *I* can hold account for one voice or a story that it can utter. Akkerman and Meijer (2011) mention that each I- position is driven by its own intentions, For instance mother in me who wants to care or a pragmatist in me who wants to find solutions. As a result, in their opinion, the movements of the *I* from one position to the other contribute to the construction, reconstruction and negotiations between them. Not surprisingly these I-positions as well as the constructed identities related to them can even stand in contradiction with each other. Hermans and Hermans-Jansen (2003) have also referred to this point by mentioning that the *I* in one position can agree, disagree, understand, misunderstand, oppose, question, challenge and even make fun of the *I* in the other position.

The feature of multiplicity amplifies the concerns about the unity of self. How does one not fall apart from this multiplicity? Or how he/she can pursue a sense of sameness in all time or throughout all the various situations? These are the questions that would as well be further discussed in this paper.

The second aspect concerning identity in the theory of dialogical self is the issues of continuity versus discontinuity. As mentioned before identity has a fluid characteristic. It is dynamic not only due to the changes in mood, thoughts and behaviors from moment to moment but also because of the various positions that a person can be in (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011). This feature points out the multiple I-positions that individuals experience on a daily life basis. In this sense, it is likely that a special situation gives rise to a particular part of the self, the part which is more appealed to in that situation. As an example, Akkerman & Meijer (2011) refer to a caring I-position in a mother that is less likely to evoke towards her colleagues than her children.

Furthermore, for answering the question of “who am I at this moment” the mere reliance on the isolated internal justifications seems to be insufficient; rather, the things and people that are involved in that particular situation at that moment should be taken into consideration. It is due to this reason that we cannot attribute someone’s actions entirely to that person, since how a person acts also represents the person’s attitude towards the

preceding and the succeeding actions of the others (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011). Although this discontinuous nature of identity helps to better grasp the complexity of it, it also provokes the concerns of the continuity of identity throughout time. How can the person, be the person who was in the past, and how can he/she maintain to be the same person in future?

The last dimension of identity is the Self versus Society. Identity has majorly been considered as a social phenomenon. There is an interaction between the social environments and how a person acts or develops in certain direction. However from the point of view of dialogical self, the influence of society is not limited to the social nature of identity. According to Bakhtin (n.d.; as cited in Akkerman & Meijer, 2011, p.313-314) utterances are not only produced by a voice, but who is being addressed is also important. It is by this being addressed that a person both responds to and also predicts the actions or reactions of others. Further the voices of others become interwoven into what a person is saying; eventually these others become part of the way one speaks and acts and finally become part of the answer to “Who I am”. Hermans and Hermans-Jansen (2003) therefore say that:

The dialogical self is social, not in the sense that a self-contained individual enters into social interactions with other outside people, but in the sense that other people occupy positions in a multi-voiced self. (p.541)

As final words it should be mentioned that it is through the theory of dialogical self and its elaborations on identity, that a sophisticated analysis of the concerns of this paper became possible. Therefore, each dimension presented above in relation to the data gathered from the sex workers would be more elaborately analyzed in the discussion chapter.

METHODOLOGY

In the following part I would take a look at the methodologies of this study; the nature of the work, the way I participated in the field, approached the informants, collected data and further analyzed them.

Qualitative Research

The usage of the preconceived experimental designs and the application of statistical methods for analyzing impose a restricted theoretical construct on the richness of human behavior and the meanings assigned to it (Van Kaam, 1966; as cited in Moustakas, 1994, p.12).

During the last decades there has been an increasing rate of the number of devotees to the qualitative methods in the academic fields. Making the decision whether to choose qualitative or quantitative method is dependent on the objective of the study and the methods of gathering data. Tavallaei and Abu Talib (2010) mention that the main purpose of the qualitative studies is to develop a comprehension of how the world is constructed. They further point out that the researcher uses the qualitative methods when he/she wants to unravel the issue under investigation elaborately. In this regard, the participants become empowered to tell their story and make their voices heard.

Although giving a concrete definition of qualitative study can be various, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) offer a definition as follows:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings,

attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them. (p.3)

Reviewing the objectives of this work shows that the qualitative method to collect and analyze data would be the most appropriate one. Following the process of the qualitative method, I also had to locate myself in the world of the participants and profoundly engage in their lives to be able to observe their world as Iranian women who are involved in sex-working.

Another reason for the suitability of the qualitative method for this study was also because there is not much work done in Iran that has studied the sex-workers within a wide academic scope. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005; as cited in Tavallaei and Abu Talib, 2010, p.571) the qualitative method is used when one of the following conditions exists: 1. there is less or no information available on the issue 2. the variables of the research are not clear 3. a relevant theory base is missing in any sense.

Therefore, the contemporary study in a similar vein as the other qualitative studies, tend to explore, describe, analyze and interpret more than giving hypotheses and testing them. In addition, since the qualitative approach for tackling the subject matter and unraveling the meaning underlying the world of people varies, in this research I aimed to adopt a phenomenological method as a specific approach in qualitative research to collect and analyze my data.

Phenomenological Method

Edmund Husserl creation of phenomenology brought a critical way of observation and knowledge production by capturing the essence of a phenomenon. It stretched the venue in concretely describing the lived situations by individuals. According to Finlay (2009) a method is phenomenological when it gives a rich description of the life-world or the experience and adopts an open phenomenological attitude by discarding the judgments about the realness of the phenomenon.

A phenomenological approach has been adopted for this study to collect and analyze data since the main objective is to elaborately probe the life-worlds of the Iranian sex-workers in hope to explore the aspects of their identities. The fact that a phenomenological analysis accounts for the first person expressions was influential in choosing this method

since the firsthand narratives of the Iranian sex-workers were the ground of the study. This approach as well, goes beyond the participants' expressions, languages, feelings and behaviors and uncovers the meanings that lie beneath all these.

Moustakas (1994) indicates that in deriving scientific evidence in phenomenological investigations, the researcher has to establish a series of methods and procedures that meet the requirements of an organized, disciplined and systematic research. Two principles that are significant for a phenomenological method would be discussed here.

A prominent principle in conducting a phenomenological method is the liberty from any prejudgments, prejudices, presuppositions or biases or as mentioned before epoché. According to Moustakas (1994) the challenge of the epoché for us as researchers is to be transparent to ourselves. We should allow whatever is before us to appear in our consciousness as it is so that we can see with new eyes in an open manner. However it is undeniably a complex task to achieve the epoché since we are all as conscious beings who are involved in the life-world we are exploring.

The second principle is the phenomenological reduction that is rooted in the notion of epoché. The phenomenological reduction is needed for unfolding the primary and ultimate foundational value of the life-world (Sages, Lundsten, Lahlou, Kurc & Moscarola, 2002). By implementing the phenomenological reduction I aimed to find out the meaning structure of the participants' life-world. The phenomenological reduction undertakes the quality of the experience. According to Moustakas (1994) its task is to describe in a textural language what one sees, both in terms of an external object and an internal act of consciousness. This task requires that:

I (the explorer) look and describe; look again and describe; look again and describe; always with reference to textural qualities- rough and smooth; small and large; quiet and noisy; colorful and bland, ...- descriptions varying intensities; ranges of shapes, and special qualities; time references; and colors all within an experiential context (p.90)

By opting this phenomenological reduction I also aimed to explore the phenomenon, let it appear to me in the manner that it appears essentially, gaze at it from different angles and consider the particularities of time and space of what I am observing or according to

what Husserl (1931; as cited in Moustakas, 1994, p.92-93) says, reduce until I reach the steam of pure consciousness.

Data Collection and Analysis

Approaching Participants

There were no in advance criteria to locate the participants; however there were some basic criteria for their selection. Severe legal penalties for prostitution and high levels of public stigmatization have pushed this fact into the concealment. Therefore it was hard to locate these women and get into profound conversations with them. Streetwalkers as the only vivid type of sex sellers in Tehran became the first participants that I aimed to approach, nonetheless my attempt was unfruitful. Through some guidance, I came across the MIKHAK institute (Center for Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights) that was giving primary services such as food, shelter, education and health care to the vulnerable women.

Although the official purpose of the institute was to control the drug/substance addiction as well as the prevention of HIV, not all the women covered by the services of the center were drug addicts or HIV positives. Based on the statements of the working personnel at the center, the majority of these women were involved in sex-working⁶ or in some random cases pimping. This categorization was shaped on the staff's daily-based observations, psychological assessments and medical reports. Hence, these women were categorized as sex-workers preceding my interviews. Beside the active involvement in sex-working, the other touchstone for choosing the participants in this study was their experiences of motherhood in terms of having an infant or a dependent child.

Data Collection

The method for collecting data in a phenomenological research is typically long interviews (Moustakas, 1994). In MIKHAK center I got the opportunity to conduct 8 in depth interviews that lasted between 17 minutes at least to 2 hours at most. Although performing

⁶ The criteria for this labeling were their excessive sexual relation, being multi-partnered and their financial reliance on prostituting.

open interviews was the ideal, due to the personal and social restrictions not all the women were willing to share their experiences with me. Therefore as alternative, semi-structured interviews and follow-up questions with open ends were chosen since they were a flexible way of data collection. According to Smith and Osborn (2003) the semi-structured interviews allows the researcher and the participants to engage in a vibrant dialogue in which the researcher can modify the interesting issues by further questions in respect to the participants responses.

The empirical data for the study was gathered over the course of 2 field visits to Tehran (January-April 2010 and June-July 2010). There were no limits for the participants' age; hence, it ranged from 20 to 50 years old. Since the interviews were semi-structured, prior to them some questions were constructed in a way to evoke a corresponding answer to the study's issues of concern. More questions were raised with the flow of the interviews to probe interesting areas that were rising or following the respondents' interest or concern. All in all, the questions were short, specific and not value-laden. The opening question was phrased in a way to leave the informant free to answer or begin the conversation as she desired: "*Tell me about you*".

To avoid getting lost in the translation, the interviews were used in the participants own language; Persian. As an inseparable part of the fieldwork, I also had the privilege to be dominant on the language as well as being familiar with the cultural and social characteristics of the context. However this familiarity demanded more bracketing of my previous knowledge.

Another means for collecting data that supported my interviews was the participant observation. Clifford (1988) notes that: "*Participant observation serves as the shorthand for continuous tacking between the inside and outside of events*". During my first few days in the institute I took a mere observer stance and tried to gain trust by having casual conversations with these women as well as the staff. The phenomenological interview as well often starts with a social talk or a meditative activity in order to create a trusting and relaxed atmosphere (Moustakas, 1994). Moreover, after each interview a detailed description of the observations during the interview was provided. As the participant observer I was also obliged to get involved directly but at the same time not crossing the limits of this involvement. This was the moment when the paradox of "getting close" but "keeping the distance" became more vivid for me.

The concern of getting close but keeping the distance shares similarities with the concepts of intersubjectivity and epoché in phenomenology. According to Giorgi (2006) both in the interview and the data analysis, the researcher should have a certain degree of intersubjective understanding about the cultural, historical and social context in which the participant is situated. Without this intersubjective understanding the researcher cannot arrive at an understanding of the participant's experience or extract meanings from the experience. In order not to get lost in our own understanding of the context, the act of epoché is needed so that the researcher suspends all the presuppositions concerning the experience.

Data Analysis

A phenomenological reduction in psychological studies aims to uncover a fact in the psychological world of the respondents. Smith & Osborn (2003) mention that whether or not the researcher is reading self reports, diaries or conducting interview, a piece of the respondent's identity is being revealed. Regardless of the method for collecting data, the meaning always plays a central role and the purpose is the attempt to understand the content and the complexity of the meaning (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

The first step in analyzing the data was to transcribe the interviews into the text by using the participants own articulation. The further principle step for the analysis was carried out by the usage of MCA-Minerva (Meaning constitution analysis) program⁷ that is suitable for analyzing qualitative data. This program helps the researcher to strive at gaining a pure vision to analyze the data and obtain the meaning underneath. MCA-MINERVA helps to explore the pluralities of the significations that are lying in the texts or implied by them (Sages et al., 2002). The application of this program not only enables the researcher to analyze what has been gathered but also aids to interpret the objects experienced by the participants.

MCA-MINERVA consists of 3 main stages (see appendix 1). The first step is the partitioning of the whole text into smaller meaning units. Sages and Lundsten (2004) believe that it is essential to cut down the syntax whenever the smallest shifts in the meanings are recognized by the researcher. This breaking leaves the researcher with short statements that

⁷ Developed by Professor Roger Sages, Lund University.

are rich in meaning. The authors believe that the shorter the meaning unit the more exact the analysis would be. Determining the meaning units is a preparatory phase for the main analysis of modalities, entities and predicates through which values are assigned to the meaning units.

The second step engages a more focused analysis of the meaning units. It includes the extraction of personal particularities from the meaning units in form of modalities. Modalities in specific illuminate the way of appearing something to the individual, for instance whether an experience is perceived as negative or positive. Sages and Lundsten (2004) mention that the objective of the second step is to separate the pure meaning from the modalities of the expression. The modalities can vary from time, property, informants' belief and etc. These modalities display the participants' experience of life-world by giving an understanding of the form of experiencing. Modalities in this study are divided into seven categories:

1. Belief: which reveals the degrees of hesitations (doxa-negation), affirmations (doxa-affirmation), possibilities, probabilities and questions
2. Function: whether the meaning unit is perceptive, imaginative, signitive, etc⁸
3. Time: including the past, present, future, always-recurrent, empty, etc
4. Affect: including the negative, neutral, positive and ... aspects
5. Will: refers to the wishes (negative and positive), the un/engagements and the aspirations
6. Subject: I, we, he, she, the one, everybody and etc.
7. Property

The third step of this phenomenological analysis is to determine the partial intention from the pure meaning units that were gained from the first step. The partial intention is the only part of the pure meaning unit that the individual is expressing. Partial intention is consisted of *Entity* and *Predicate*. The meaning contained in the partial intention is called the entity, and the way of expressing it is its predicate. Each entity can be expressed by one or more predicates. The structure obtained by the modalities, entities and predicates constitute the full meaning structure. (Sages & Lundsten, 2004)

⁸ Some modalities such as Function, Affect and Time have more sub-categories due to the combination of their divisions.

Statistics and tables of frequencies also provided by the MCA-Minerva assisted this study for the further analysis. All these steps as well as the tables and figures presented by this tool were incorporated to analyze the study's set of data. Since the software also devoted to the suspension of my own concerns, prejudices and presumptions hence it served as an efficient tool.

Ethical Issues

The studies on human beings are never vacant of the ethical principles. All the participants were agreed to stay anonymous under the study and their information confidential. Consequently, referring to the whole interviews or attaching them in the appendix section was also abandoned. The participants were also able to withdraw from the research whenever they intended. They could as well disagree to reveal some parts of their lives whenever they felt uncomfortable although none of these women tried to alter the procedure of the interview in any sense. To a certain extent, the process and the purposes of the study were shared with the participants and the importance of the interviews was mentioned so that the participants know the significance of their contribution.

OUTCOMES

The results of this paper are presented in three clusters. The first section in each participants profile is a brief description of her background for the purpose of making the information in the further sections more understandable. The actual analysis involves the second and third sections. These sections are the gestalt of the information gathered from participants' emotions, thoughts, opinions, intents and experiences concerning prostitution and motherhood, in other words the reflections of their lived experiences of being mothers and prostitutes. The analysis presented below is the outcome of the Meaning Constitution Analysis-Minerva (MCA-Minerva) program. For further illustrations on the data, some figures and tables are as well presented in each section.

Defining Prostitution and Motherhood

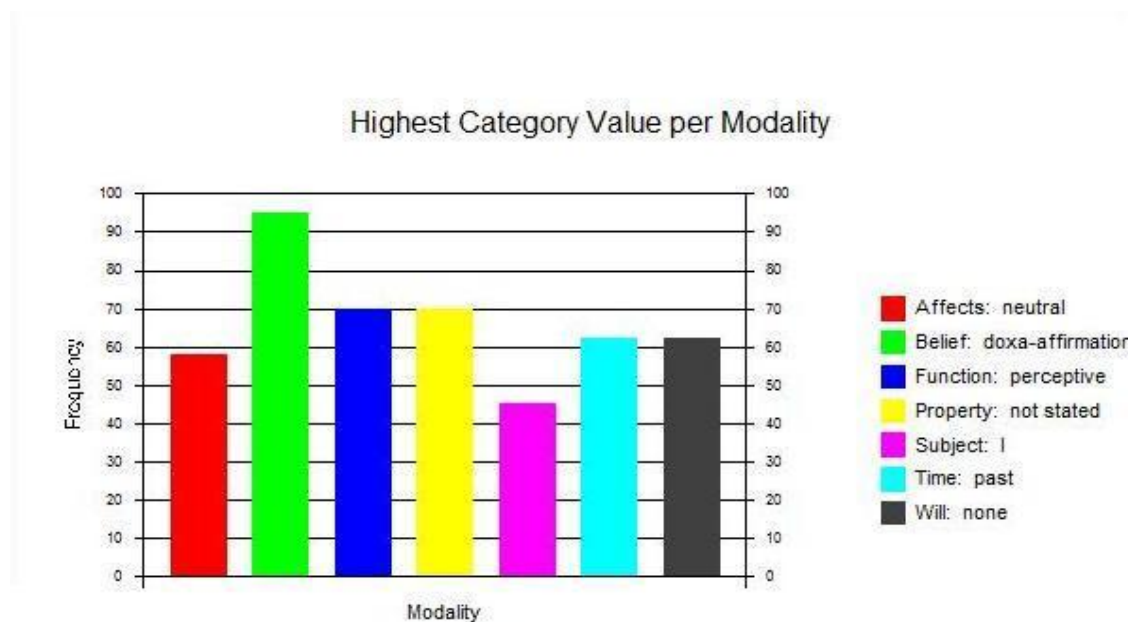
Participant 1

The first participant was a middle aged woman around her 50's. Following her parents will, she experienced an early marriage leading to a divorce when she was a teenager. As she narrated her story, after her divorce she came to Tehran in order to find a proper job, however, instead she met a man in the first few days and got pregnant in no time. She was one of the most reserved and convincing participants when it came to talk about herself and her life. This even became vivid to me through her short and concise statements and expressions with the aim to terminate further questions. Although not admitting to prostitution personally, based on the files, staff observations and the other interviewees confessions, she was one of the rare women in charge of pimping and finding customers for others.

Data on Prostitution

In the data on prostitution, figure (3-1) presents the hierarchy of the highest modalities that were attributed to the meaning units by the participant. As a manner of articulating and narrating their stories, when it came to express opinions and emotions concerning the subject of sex-working, the modality of belief was first analyzed. 95.83% of the statements were used in doxa-affirmation form which revealed her strong belief, showing no doubt, hesitation or

question concerning sex-working. These affirmations were exemplified in sentences such as “*I have 2 (partners) right now*” or “*all in all I have had 4 (husbands)*”⁹.



Figure¹⁰ (3-1), Prostitution: Highest Category Value per Modality

The participant’s reservation for sharing her experience as a sex-worker was evident in her non value-laden statements. Respectively, the modality of affect and function were analyzed. In the modality of affect more than half of the sentences (58.33%) were neutral, vacant from any positive or negative values. Concerning the modality of function, 70.83% were perceptive sentences that reflected her concreteness while leaving me no room for any doubts. The combination of these modalities can best be shown in the following sentences: “*I was a virgin when I came to Tehran with my cousin and met the father of my child in a motel...I became his temporary wife*”. Talking about her migration to Tehran, her virginity and her precise relationship with the father of her child was not only mentioned in a neutral

⁹ The importance of distinguishing their sex-partners as customers, companions, boyfriends and husbands would be more elaborated in the discussion chapter.

¹⁰ Except for the figures of “Highest Category Value per Modality” the remaining figures are used randomly and only when a need for more illustration was felt.

way but as well all information was concretely narrated, even the nature of their relationship was vividly mentioned.

As a further step in analyzing the interview, the entities were screened out from the meanings she had assigned to prostitution. The entity of *I* was mainly used. *I* as used by this respondent was the reflection of the agency she was giving to her actions. For instance in her sentence of “*I was a virgin when I divorced him*”, this authority is implied by the second *I*. Another entity frequently used by her whenever referring to a male partner or an action involving that partner was *sighah*¹¹. Interestingly, in all cases this term was formulated in the sentences empty from any negative reflections or values, instead all sentences were perceptive neutral affirmations (perceptive: function modality, neutral: affect modality and affirmation: belief modality). Although it is worth mentioning that in general, in the whole context of her conversation, her way of defining *sighah* was not precise especially when she used this word as an umbrella term for most of the partners she has had.

Data on Motherhood

The modality of affect was the start of the analysis when it came to her reflections on motherhood. With the frequency of 39 sentences the neutral affect was mainly used by the participant. Taking a closer look at the entities and the predicates that were used in the neutral form showed that the entities of *I* and subsequently *child* were used respectively 24 and 12 times by her. In most of the times, these entities were used in the description she was giving about her child: “*I have a 17 year old son...He is physically handicapped, but mentally he is perfect, He is studying now and has passed all of his courses...I don't know which grade he is in, but he is 17*”.

¹¹ The temporary marriage in Shi'a Islam – mentioned by “Sighah” among the participants in this study – refers to the marriages that are done for a fixed period of time in return for a dower of a known property, whether in cash or else. (Murata, S. (n.d.). Temporary marriage in Islamic law. *Al- Serat, XIII*. Retrieved November, 16, 2011, from <http://www.al-islam.org/al-serat/muta/>)

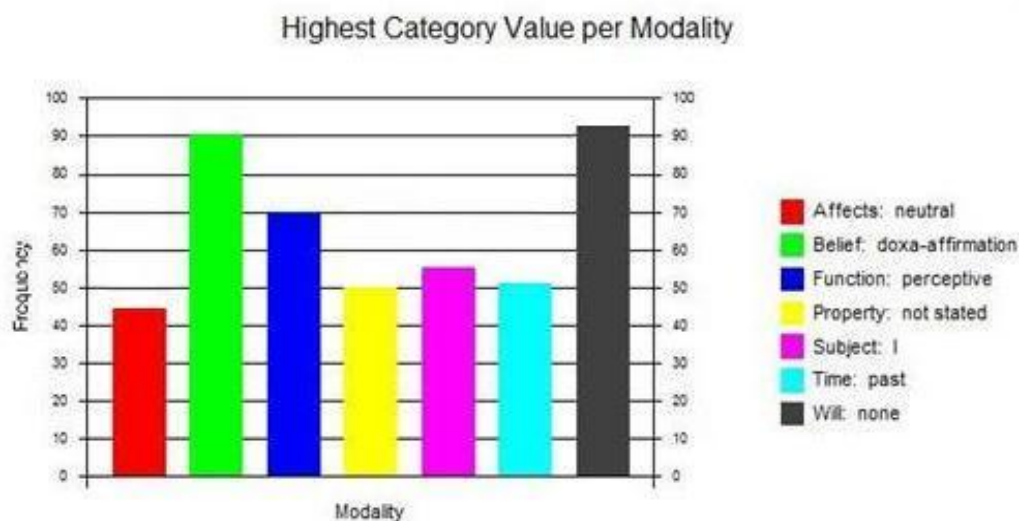


Figure (3-2), Motherhood: Highest Category Value per Modality

In addition to the neutral form, the positive affect directed to the past (positive-retrospective) was used by the participant the most. With the frequency of 24 times, the positive-retrospective sentences were more a reflection of her experiences in child birth and child raise that portrayed a vivid image of the strong bond between her and her child. The frequent use of the entities such as *hugging, kissing, cleaning and bathing* or *feeding* was a portrayal of her affection:

*When we wanted to sleep at night, his hand should have been under my head
and mine under his head. I couldn't sleep if he was not next to me, I swear!*

The modality of will was also interesting for analyzing the data on motherhood. More than 90% of her sentences were used vacant from any engagement, disengagement or wishes. The lack of engagement in the story she was mentioning should not be mistaken with the lack of affection or interest towards her child, rather this engagement was counted more as the lack of agency that she attributed to herself while narrating the story. Below is an example of this absence of agency when she quoted her sisters opinion about her child:

*My sister said that she has come back with a baby, but so what! The baby is
handicapped, she has to leave it either in front of the mosques or on the cross
roads.*

Participant 2

The second participant was a 25 year old girl with experience of several sexual rapes beginning in the age of 13. After the divorce between her parents, the calm atmosphere of her home was as well transformed to a dreadful place of more harassment by her own father and acquaintances leading to her escape from the house, tendency to drug addiction, alcohol consumption and engagement in sex-working. Her sexual activity was in the forms of street prostitution and selling sex in illegal private brothels. Her first experience of motherhood was unexpected and unwanted therefore the child was given for adoption to the Iranian welfare state after 6 months.

Data on Prostitution

According to frequency of the modalities that is illustrated in the figure (3-3), the dominant modalities used by this participant were the belief, property and time; therefore it is worth taking a closer look at them.

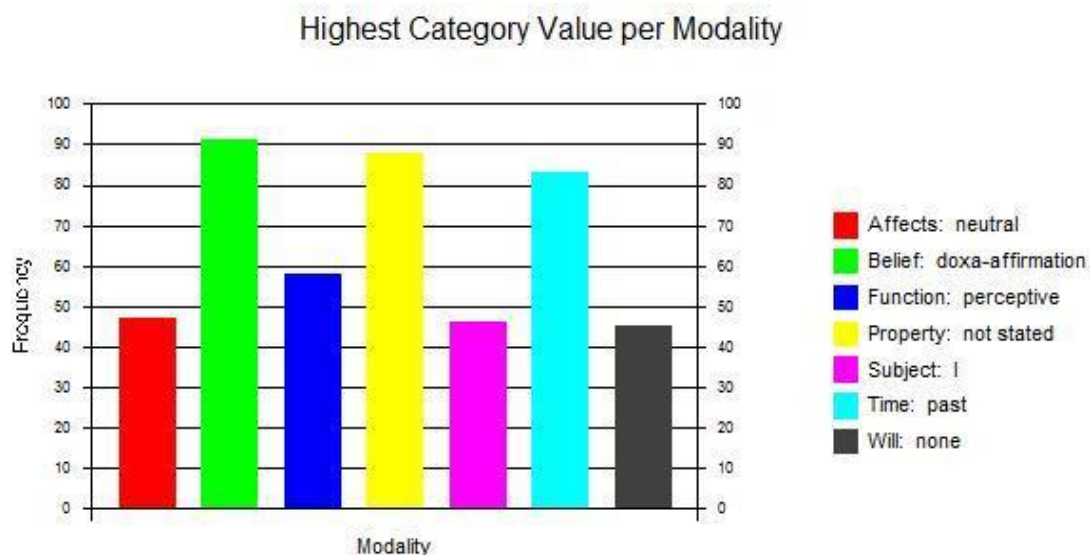


Figure (3-3), Prostitution: Highest Category Value per Modality

In the modality of belief, 91.25 percent of the statements were used in doxa-affirmation form. Analysis shows that the affirmative statements used by her are most of the time about specific subjects including *I*, *he* and *they*. Elaborations on these subjects reveal that in 33 times, the participant affirmed something about her life such as “*I had sex*

with whomever I met” or *“I’m not attached to him”*. This frequency of the subject *I* is as well related to the modality of subject shown in the purple column in figure (3-3). Respectively with 23 times and 5 times, the other subjects mentioned in her affirmations were *he* and *them* which in all cases referred to a significant man that she had sexual relations with: *“He took my virginity on that same day”* or *“He was a thief...he was a murderer,...he was a drug dealer...”* and *“They all raped me”* or *“So what! They don’t want to marry me”*.

In the analysis of her expressions about prostitution, there is another set of affirmative sentences that can be grouped together under the same rubric, since they share the same frequency and have similar characteristics. Interestingly this group consists of the concepts that all refer to her own involvements in sex-working, e.g., boyfriend, selling in terms of sex selling, customer, sex, virginity and offer for sexual activity. For instance, *“Oh, I have had as many boyfriends as you can imagine”* or *“I went with him, whenever he offered me”*.

Furthermore, the modality of property was not stated in 88.75% of the statements, while the rest of the statements were either reflecting the property owned by *herself* (10%) or *others* (1.25%). As another significant modality, time, was in most of the sentences related to an event or feeling that she had experienced in the *past*; for example *“I didn’t love him...I didn’t know at that time what is it to love someone...I was not attached to him...for me it was only to the extent of sitting and talking...”*. Surprisingly, throughout talking about sex-working there was an absence of any sentences that were directed towards the future in terms of any plans, aims, hopes or dreams.

Based on the modality of function, as indicated in the figure (3-4), the participant has either used perceptive sentences that implied her objectivity (47 sentences) or used signitive sentences that showed her subjectivity (33 sentences). The combined analysis of function modality, entities and predicates shows that the entity of *I* was the most commonly used in the perceptive and signitive sentences, however with a significantly various employment. 15 signitive sentences were precisely a reflection of her sexual experiences with various men, from the boyfriends that she has had to the customers that she has served. In other words, she used terms that left a room for more questions and hesitations for the listener. However, on the other hand, 22 of her perceptive sentences expressed in concrete terms were a combination of issues concerning the family, siblings and herself that were related or in some cases not related to her sexual activity, i.e. *“I live with my sister, you know her!...We used to go to parks with my sisters and brother...It was there where I found my first boyfriend”*. For instance the following signitive sentences might have a specific meaning in the mind of the

speaker, but not the listener; “*I have had sex as much as you can imagine... I even met the guy who raped me again, for a while...I was going with him...Well, I went with him around 2, 3, 4 times*”. The meanings of the expressions such as “*for a while*”, “*as much as you can imagine*” or “*going*” were indeed differently interpreted in her mind as the narrator and mine as the listener.

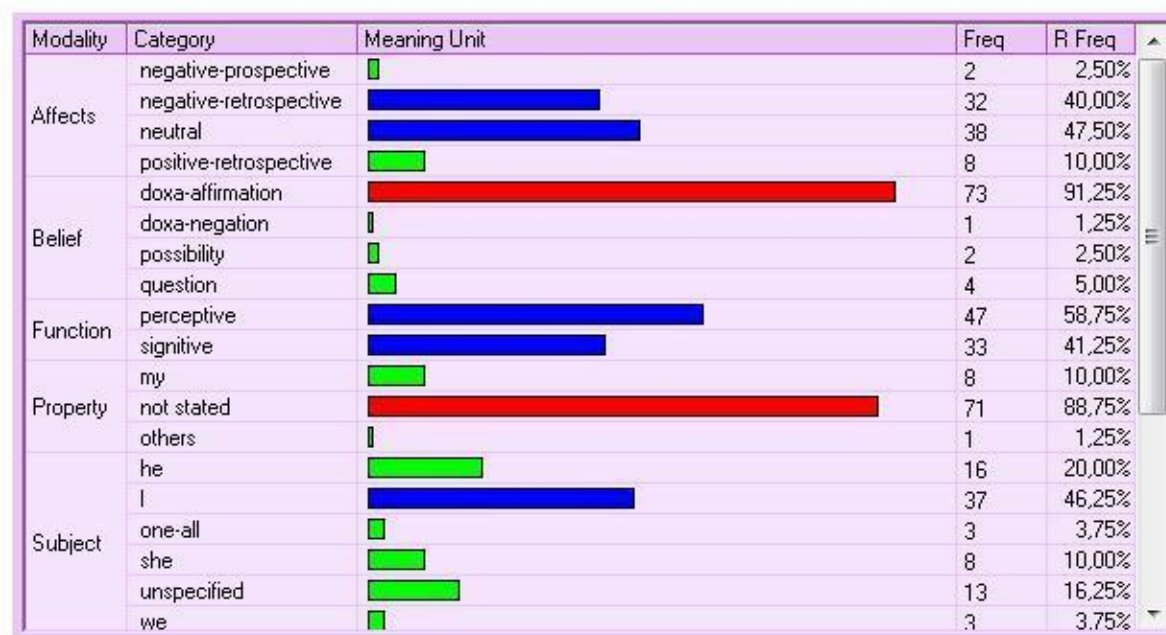


Figure (3-4), Prostitution: Frequency of modalities

Another set of data related to the thoughts, feelings and experiences of sex-working was found by the lexical analysis of the terms used by the participant whenever referring to her male partner. The data showed that the most frequent entities used to address these men were the words of *him*, *them*, *the guy*, *the first*, *the second* or *the third*. The seemingly interesting part of the analysis is the lexical reference of these pronouns and not so concrete attributions. These attributions randomly included the participant’s boyfriends, guy friends, customers and even one night stands.

Data on Motherhood

The data in this section consists of two sort of information, the participants experience as a daughter in relation to her mother and as a mother towards her child. As represented in the figure (3-5), in 86.84% of the statements this participant is affirming something rather than hesitating or questioning about it that is indicated by the belief modality and the

doxa-affirmation sub-modality. Since the pregnancy was for her a total shock and as she called it a disaster in her life I aimed to have a closer look at the modalities of affect and will.

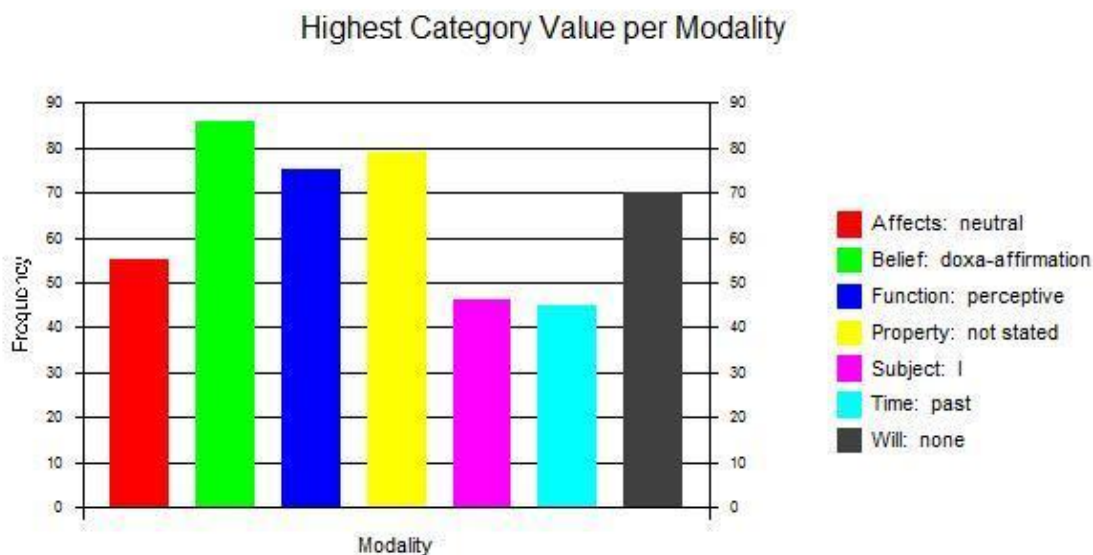


Figure (3-5), Motherhood: Highest Category Value per Modality

The affect modality indicates a positive or negative reflection towards the future or past in the participant's life-world, however there is also a neutral stance between this positivity and negativity which was mainly used by her. As I looked at the entities involved in the statements with the neutral affect, I noticed that *I* and with a slightly different relevance, *she/he* were the main subjects of her sentences. These neutral questions or statements were mostly related to her own emotions and experiences towards her maternity, *"Half of my heart wanted to give it to the welfare state and the other half didn't...So what if I keep it!?!...Sometimes I was thinking so what if I give it away!?!...After 6 months I requested for his adoption"*.

On the other hand, the neutral affect of the statements with the subject of *she/he* was majorly the sentences related to her mother, and seldom about her child. Majorly, these sentences were description of the past events, *"She left to Live in Mashhad with my step father and step sister...She found a job there"*.

The division between the negative and positive affect surprisingly showed that chiefly the participant projected negative affect towards her prospective and retrospective life (35.52%). Her statements showed that this negativity was primarily connected to her own unpleasant experiences in life such as the negative feelings concerning motherhood towards

her child and afterwards her negative experience in her childhood and in relation to her mother. On the other hand, however, the usage of the positive affect were only limited to 13 sentences (8.55%) which means that the participant did not reflect her past as something positive or her future as a time to be filled with positive dreams and plans. These few statements can indicate her positivity: *“Heaven is underneath the mother’s feet”*, *“No matter what! I still say that I love my parents”* and *“I was crazy about my child”*.

Modality	Category	Meaning Unit	Freq	R Freq
Property	your		1	0,66%
	he		5	3,29%
Subject	I		70	46,05%
	one-all		3	1,97%
	she		22	14,47%
	unspecified		45	29,61%
	we		7	4,61%
	always-recurrent		13	8,55%
Time	empty		35	23,03%
	future		10	6,58%
	past		69	45,39%
	pres -> pas		1	0,66%
	present		24	15,79%
	engagement		31	20,39%
Will	none		107	70,39%
	unengagement		12	7,89%
	wish-negative		1	0,66%

Figure (3-6), Motherhood: Frequency of Modalities

The modality of affect made it more interesting to check for the will modality, since it takes a closer look at the degrees to which the participant engages in what she is saying or wishes for the future (see figure (3-6)). In more than 70 percent of her expressions, the will of the sentence was undefined, meaning that she neither showed agency and engagement in what she was saying nor unengaged herself. Instead she took a more passive stance.

In 31 sentences such as *“Everyone was advising me, but I was not caring at all... finally I made my own decision to give him away... I thought that it would be better if I give him away...”* the participant showed her engagement in what she thought would be better for her child’s future. In opposite, 7.89% of the statements showed her disengagements such as

“my family told me to give my child away... the prison (the prisoners) told me to give him away...”. The significant result concerning the will modality was the absolute absence of any wish-positive sentences and only one example of a negative wish: “Oh God, I wish this misfortune would have never happened to me!”

Participant 3

She was a 36 year old woman from a religious family that urged her for a traditional marriage in the age of 23, although against her will. As she characterized herself, her obstinacy and vanity were the reasons for disagreements and arguments with her parents as well as her divorced husband and two abandoned daughters. She was one of the few participants who freely admitted having sex in exchange for money. During the time of the interview she was also pregnant with an unwanted child.

Data on Prostitution

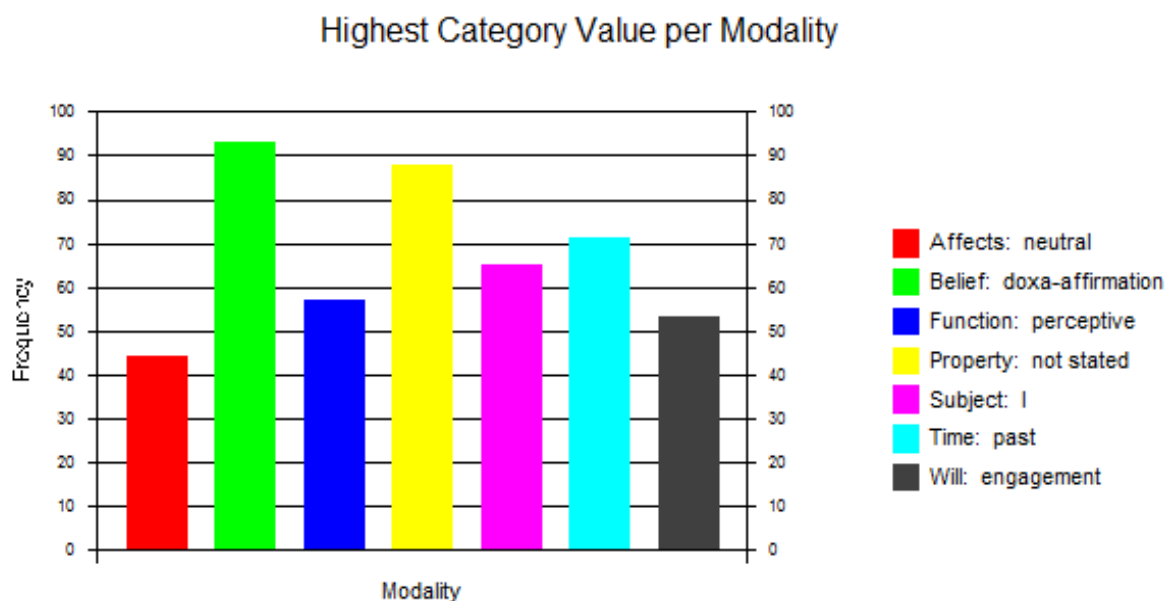


Figure (3-7), Prostitution: Highest Category Value per Modality

The most vivid data presented by the figure (3-7), similar to the results in the previous sections is the belief modality with the 93.33% of the sentences articulated in doxa-affirmation, property modality that is *not stated* in 93 sentences and time modality that is related to the past.

Here too, the modality that attracted my attention was the modality of will with the highest rate of the engagement subcategory among the others. It is worth mentioning that the denial or silence these women usually obtain in revealing their participation in selling sex leads to a higher rate of none or disengagement subcategories in the will modality, since any form of selling sex is equal to fornication. However, in contradiction, this participant showed engagement in more than half of the sentences (53.33%) that were related to the activities, intentions or emotions concerning her sex-working. In tandem, the entity of *I* was as well used 52 times by her that not only showed her engagements but also the authority she showed when it came to choosing a customer and having a sexual relation. *“I cannot say like the guy should have a pretty face or be special, but I have to like him, otherwise I don’t go with him...”* or *“I have a frank personality, if a guy asks me where have you been from the morning, and I have been with other guys, I will tell him that I was with others, as simple as that”*. The other frequent entities used in her engaging sentences revealed her openness in the conversation. Concepts such as [sexual] *relations*, *sex*, *boyfriends* and *unrestrained relations* were the main entities that she referred to. For instance, *“...sex with 5 guys per day...I had a lot of boyfriends... these unstrained relations were during my drug abuse”*.
















Modality	Category	Meaning Unit	Freq	R Freq
Affects	negative-retrospective		38	36,19%
	neutral		47	44,76%
	positive-prospective		6	5,71%
	positive-retrospective		12	11,43%
Belief	doxa-affirmation		98	93,33%
	possibility		2	1,90%
	question		5	4,76%
Function	perc/imag		1	0,95%
	perceptive		60	57,14%
	sign/perc		1	0,95%
	signitive		43	40,95%
Property	his		2	1,90%
	my		8	7,62%
	not stated		93	88,57%
	our		1	0,95%
	their		1	0,95%
Subject	he		7	6,67%
	I		69	65,71%
	one-all		2	1,90%

Figure (3-8), Prostitution: Frequency of Modalities

A glance at the modality of function (see figure (3-8)) as well shows that in 57.14% of the conversation, the participant was utilizing the perceptive descriptions, obvious for herself and me as the mere listener, whereas, in 40.95% of the signitive sentences she did refer to a subjective matter that needed more explanation. For example it was no wonder when she mentioned “*I had my first sexual relation 2 years after my husband*”, however; I still had doubts about her actual feeling when she considered “*I had that mood throughout all my times of addiction*”.

Data on Motherhood

Interestingly, her reflections on motherhood were quite different from those on prostitution. This variety can easily be noticed from the figure (3-9) especially in the modalities of affect and will.

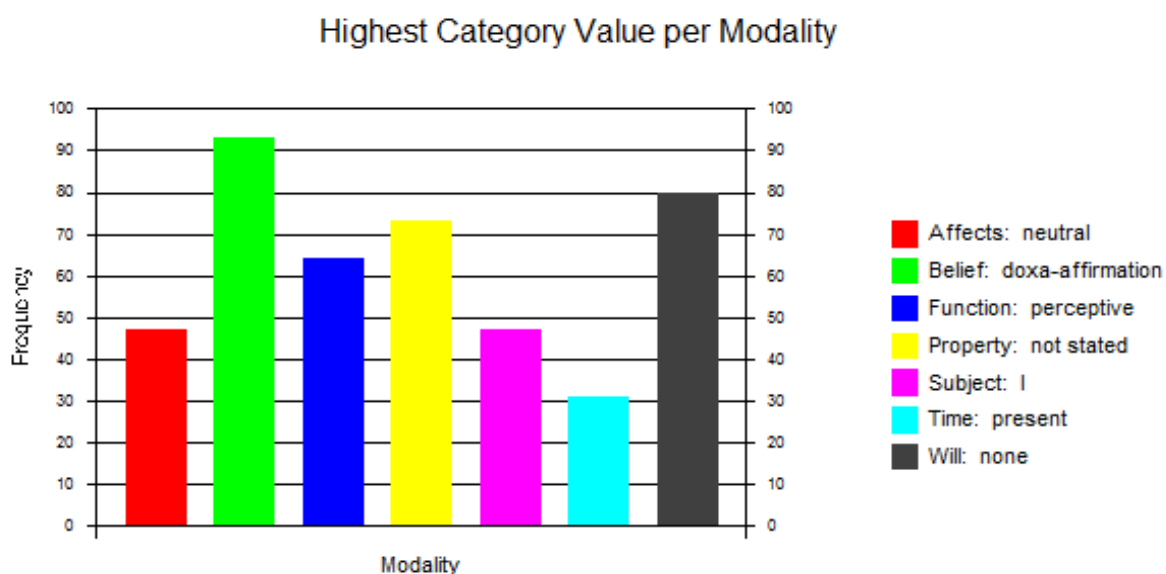


Figure (3-9), Motherhood: highest Category Value per Modality

Although in the data on prostitution the highest frequency in will modality is related to engagement, the results of motherhood reveals that none subcategory has the highest rate, consisting 80.55% of the statements. For instance “*The older [daughter] calls me mom...but the younger thinks that I am her aunt*”. Another shift in the results from the data on prostitution and motherhood was the frequency of the present time in the modality of time that was repeated in 92 sentences. The sentences happening in the present time majorly

consisted of the entity of *I*. This *I* mainly referred to her feelings, emotions and practices of motherhood concerning her current unwanted pregnancy “*I don’t want it [the baby]...I am a sinner...I am a criminal...I feel moral pain...but now, I have overcome my moral suffer*”.

Little less than half of the statements concerning motherhood accompanied a neutral affect. The analysis of the meaning units and the most entities involved indicated that the entities with this neutrality were mainly concerning the life of her two daughters, previous events and her feelings towards them. This narration will shed light on the usage of neutral effect in their relationship “*I was not hoping for the custody, it was enough for me to see her once a week...well, once a week, a Thursday, Friday, holiday..., there existed a time that I could see her*”.

Participant 4

This participant was a middle aged woman around her 40’s. The strength of religious ideas could easily be traced from her statements and reflections about life in general, strongly believing that spirituality is like nutrition for one’s soul. She first got married in the age of 18 that led to a divorce after twelve years. As mentioned by herself, she has experienced many temporary marriages (*sighah*) and less other forms of relationships lasting from some days to some years.

Data on Prostitution

The modalities of belief and function were the departing point in analyzing her narrative. Throughout the interview, I perceived an intentional self-control that halted her in speaking openly. Hence, here I aimed to look at the modality of belief to examine the degrees of her affirmation or hesitations in her speaking. As well as looking at the function modality to check the extent of her objectivity or subjectivity in the sentences.

According to the modality of belief, exactly 50% of the statements were in doxa-affirmation and 41.52% were in doxa-negation which mirrored the moments she asserted something or doubted and hesitated while talking. A more elaborate scrutiny was on the entities and predicated that were involved in these sentences. For the sentences in doxa-affirmation, the entities of *I* and *sighah* were the mostly used. The predicates that accompanied the entity of *I* were majorly divided into two thematic categories: predicates about the circle of her male friends and predicates about the temporary husbands (*sighah*) that

she was once married to. The two below affirmative sentences reflect these themes respectively.

For a while I was among the university students and decent people, I became their friend ... I was hanging out with respectable people, businessmen and students, and they were all devoted to praying and fasting.. But among them I always had a specific companion, I didn't go with everyone.

I always read the [Quran's] verse for sighah, I knew it. A while ago I got married [temporary] to someone who was younger than me. I was his sighah, but I wanted it to be really short so I didn't extend our sighah afterwards and now I am someone else's sighah.

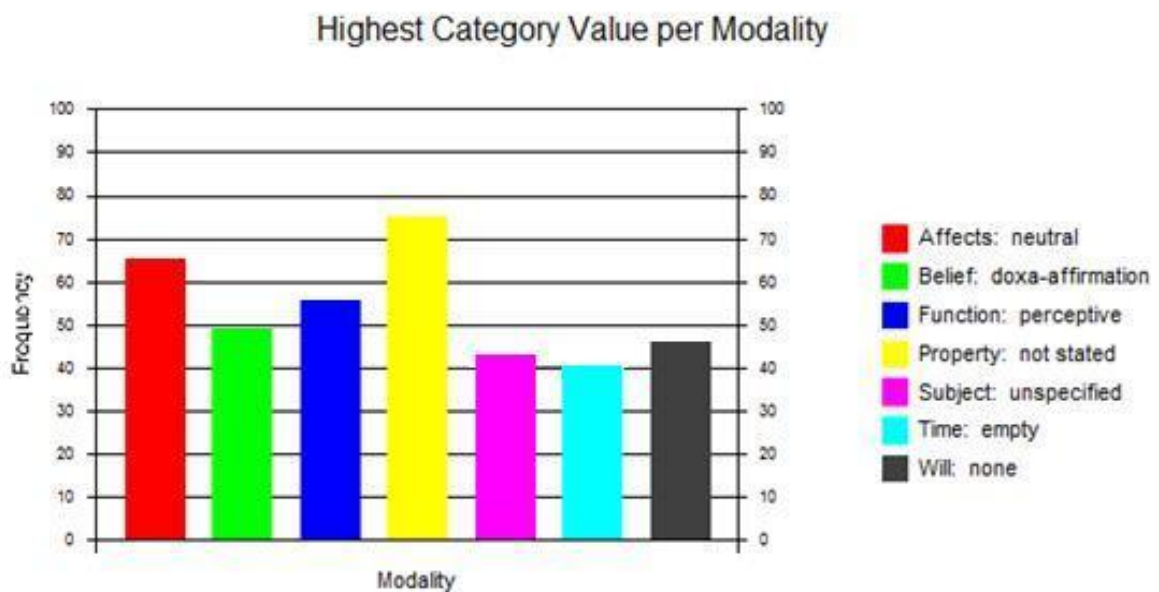


Figure (3-10), Prostitution: Highest Category Value per Modality

According to the modality of function on the other hand, the perceptive form was dominant in 55.46% whereas the signitive form was used in 30.25% of the sentences. In analyzing the signitive sentences I noticed the interesting fact that almost all of the sentences that she was using in this form were related to the personal boundaries that she placed for

herself, resourcing from religious and spiritual thoughts to accepted norms and public regulations. These sentences were as such: *“I don’t do it like that, god is witnessing me”* referring to an illicit sex, *“I loved to have a sound life, but I saw it was not possible”* referring to a morally healthy life and *“Maybe my money was like that as well”* that referred to the illegal earning from prostitution.

Data on Motherhood

In sharing her experiences of motherhood, the participant used 93.94% of her statements in doxa-affirmation, as seen in figure (3-11). The remaining sentences included cases of possibility, probability and question. As an instance for the probability category, when talking about abortion and getting pregnant outside the marital frame she mentioned *“If I’m not menopause, then I have to use protection...and well, even if I get pregnant, it would be from my [temporary] husband”*.

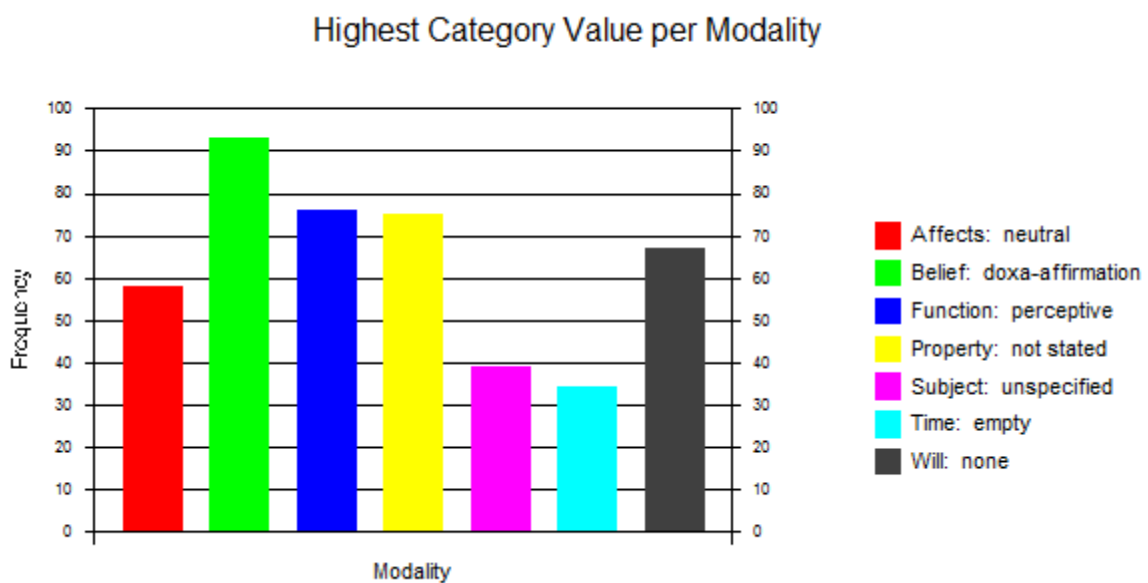


Figure (3-11), Motherhood: Highest Category Value per Modality

According to the modality of function, 126 sentences were used in the perceptive form. From the beginning of the interview this participant had a strong tendency to narrate her story with detailed information including the stories about her marital life, the experiences of her abortions and child rearing as well as her close intimacy with her mother. Therefore, the perceptive form as a mean of factual description became a good way for her narration. These sentences were as well mostly directed to the past time, present time or they

were empty from any specific time. For instance in this perceptive sentence, *“The person who is doing it¹² or has a boyfriend should use a protection”*, she is not referring to any specific time. While interestingly deviating and othering the person *“Who is doing it”* or *“has a boyfriend”* from herself.

More interpretations on the perceptive form in combination with the modality of time revealed that these form of sentence could be grouped in 2 time directions based on their theme; on one hand, the past time that mainly included the descriptions of her own experiences of motherhood and on the other hand, the sentences with the empty and present time that were linked to her ideals of motherhood or the guidelines that she was using and advising to others. One example of this guidelines and advices was evident in her following sentence: *“There are many times that the [prostitute] woman has to take the child with herself... I am seeing it now...my friends are like that...because there are no places that the mother gets proper education...well, I don’t do it myself because I am really strict”*.

Modality	Category	Meaning Unit	Freq	R Freq
Function	perceptive		126	76,36%
	signitive		35	21,21%
Property	her		8	4,85%
	my		26	15,76%
	not stated		124	75,15%
	our		1	0,61%
	their		4	2,42%
	your		2	1,21%
	he		4	2,42%
Subject	I		58	35,15%
	one-all		7	4,24%
	she		28	16,97%
	unspecified		65	39,39%
	we		3	1,82%
	always-recurrent		10	6,06%
Time	empty		57	34,55%
	future		4	2,42%
	past		50	30,30%
	pres -> fut		4	2,42%

Figure (3-12), Motherhood: Frequency of Modalities

¹² This verb can be used exclusively for sexual intercourse in the Persian Language, therefore it should not be mistaken as a signitive term.

The modality that I would like to take the final glimpse at is the subject that shows the prevalence of unspecified with 39.39% as the main subject of the sentences (see figure (3-12)). This data is in opposite to most of the other participants since in their sentences the entity of *I* was the primary subject. Hence, with the frequency of 39 times the entities of *child*, *children* and *my children* were the subjects of the sentences. And in tandem, the entities of *sin*, *abortion* and *life* were the other entities that were used with 8, 6 and 5 times of repetition respectively.

Participant 5

She was one of the few participants who experienced an early marriage that was based on love. After 4 years, a betrayal to her husband led to their divorce, the separation from her first son and her addiction. She also had another 6 year old son from her temporary husband. Although only 39 years old, during the time of the interview she looked old, wrinkled and evidently drowned in drug addiction.

Data on Prostitution

As seen in figure (3-13), all the information concerning how she experienced or defined prostitution was formulated in doxa-affirmation form with 100% that showed no exceptions of questions or concerns about possibilities or probabilities. The high prevalence of these affirmations was either divided into the perceptive or signitive form.

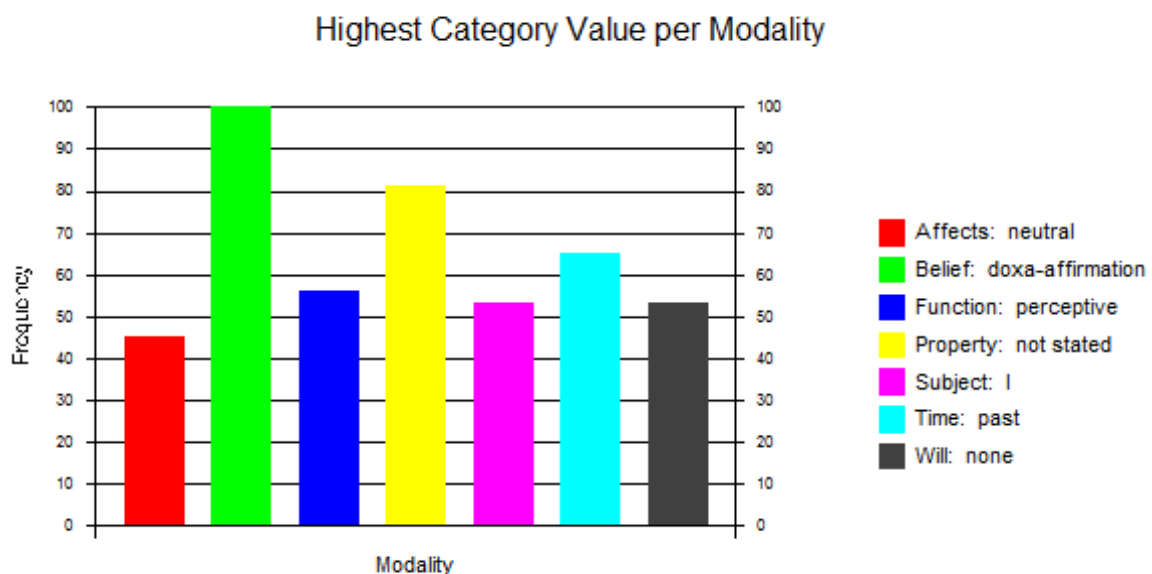


Figure (3-13), Prostitution: highest Category value per Modality

Unsurprisingly the subject of *I* was mainly used by the participant since narrating her lived experiences was the primary method throughout the interview. The domination of the *I* entity was vivid in 32 sentences ranging from the *I*, who was in the prison, the *I* who has a 21 year old son and the *I* who hates to go under a man's body. The conversation around the theme of sex-working left the room for the entity of *he* to be the second dominant entity. However interestingly, the other dominant concept was the entity of *sighah* that was slightly lower than the *he* entity and was mainly the link between the entities of *I* and *he* whenever these two were overlapping. For instance the paragraph below is an example of this link:

When I didn't have my life and my house anymore, I became someone's sighah... lately....He went to prison, and my sighah expired...Before I met Hamid, I had a pretty face, it was not like I would become everyone's sighah...

For interpreting the network of these three used entities, they were analyzed in relation to the modality of affect to check for the positive or negative perspectives that the participant had about herself and *sighah* towards other men.




















Modality	Category	Meaning Unit	Freq	R Freq
Affects	negative-prospective		4	6,25%
	negative-retrospective		17	26,56%
	neutral		29	45,31%
	positive-prospective		1	1,56%
	positive-retrospective		13	20,31%
Belief	doxa-affirmation		64	100,00%
	perceptive		36	56,25%
Function	sign/perc		1	1,56%
	signitive		27	42,19%
	her		1	1,56%
Property	my		8	12,50%
	not stated		52	81,25%
	others		3	4,69%
	he		7	10,94%
Subject	I		34	53,13%
	she		7	10,94%
	unspecified		12	18,75%
	we		4	6,25%
	Time	always-recurrent		8

Figure (3-14), Prostitution: Frequency of Modalities

According to the modalities frequency in figure (3-14) and its relation to the discussed entities however the neutral affect was mainly used, other subcategories of affect with the

positive and negative direction showed more interesting results for the analysis. For instance the mere sentence that was directed to a positive future (positive-prospective) included the entity of *I* whilst she demonstrated her dislike towards sex-working “*I wouldn't like body selling*”. This sentence is better analyzed in the full context of her statements especially when showing her hatred from her partners before and her interest in showing herself excluded from the prostitution world. In addition, the other few sentences directed towards a negative future (negative-prospective) in general showed her lack of interest or belief towards either a positive or negative future. Opposite to the positive-prospective statements that only referred to the entity of *I*, the statements of negative-prospective were solely in relation to the entity of *he*.

On the other hand, there were sentences that were related to the past either positively or negatively. The concept of *I* was in both cases mostly used although the higher frequency was especially related to negative past that she had (negative-retrospective). Her experience of divorce and the start of her involvement as a prostitute was the theme of these negative statements mainly: “*When I was separated from my husband I became a guy's sighah...I was only 20 when I divorced him...I was with a lot when I was young, but not now ...*”

As well as many of the other participants, however the denial of selling her body was her dominant reaction especially at her age, using specific entities in relation to specific predicates made her involvement evident for me, below is our brief conversation and a highlight on how prostitution is defined for her:

The participant: I hate them [men]... It has been 14 months that I haven't had fun [sex], even with my Sighah who has been in prison now for 2.5 years

The interviewer: Well, this means that you have had it with other men whilst your husband is in prison?

The participant: I have been with one or two, but it was not like that! They were not my boyfriend but they have spent money for me for a while, they were all cool guys. Sometimes we both wanted, sometimes we didn't want. But it was not like I wanted to continue, for example, he had spent [money] for me

Against most of the definitions given by the scholars and the common belief that prostitution happens in exchange for money, it seems that her subjective way of defining prostitution mostly embraces some sort of a continuous sexual involvement with a man rather than the reality of exchanging sex per se. More elaboration on how prostitution is defined for these women will be included in the discussion section.

Data on Motherhood

Following the figure (3-15), not a significant difference can be traced comparing her given information on motherhood and prostitution. The highest value per subcategories in the modalities are similarly repeated as the ones in the data on prostitution, therefore since affect and will modalities were more central in defining motherhood, I would focus on these two in this section.

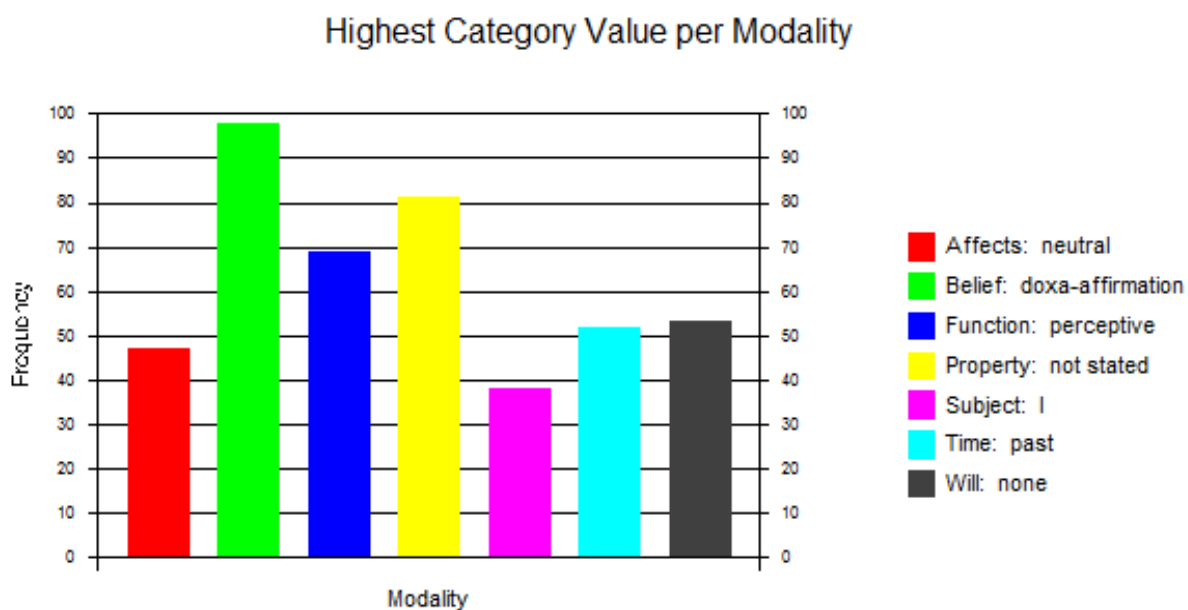


Figure (3-15), Motherhood: highest Category value per Modality

The highest percentage in the modality of affect was devoted to the neutral category with 47.86%. Checking for the highest entities used in the neutral affect, I noticed that the word *child* was used by her as the main entity in 24 sentences. Surprisingly the usage of this entity in a neutral manner was absolutely never used in direct relation to her life. Her way of articulating the concept of *child* was either in general terms or related to the women who are engaged in sex-working while having a child. Below is an example of a mother who has sex in the presence of her child;

*A woman can do it for the child... The child can sit in the corner of the room,
...[the child] can see it...well, in this way, the child is no more interfering what
the mother is doing...The child knows, but won't say anything... says nothing...*

According to the modality of will, the prevalence of none subcategory was as well the highest with 53.58%. In this way, in more than half of her statements about motherhood, she did not show engagement, ambition or wishes for a future or a cherished desire to be obtained. The review on the most entities involved in the none category revealed that, the entities of *he* and *child* exceeded from the other ones. Out of the 32 sentences in which *he* was the chief entity, 25 sentences referred to the participants own sons in a descriptive manner, whereas, in the sentences where *child* was the main entity, no sentences referred to the participants own child showing her general explanation about a mother and child relationship. The brief exemplar paragraph that came above is as well a good example of none sub-category where *child* was the main entity.

In opposite to the neutral sub-modality with the highest percentage, the wish sub-modality of will had the lowest prevalence and was only used one time. The participant's affection as a mother towards her child mirrored in only one sentence that showed the extent she was longing to see her child: "*I wish to see him when I'm clean [from addiction] and that means a world to me*".

Participant 6

Tranquil and reserved was the first impression I had while talking to her. She was a middle age woman around her 40s who had come from a religious traditional family. From her youth she had been opposed to various harassments, starting with her marriage with a drug addict in the age of 14, being beaten up by her husband, losing one of her four children and molestation. She had experienced a wide variety of relationships with men, from being their wife or girlfriend to their one night stand. As she mentioned herself, she had never experience an unwanted child.

Data on Prostitution

The interesting result presented by the figure (3-16) is related to the modality of will and its highest category of engagement. The participant has used 48.72% of her statements in the manner of engaging herself in the story that she was sharing.

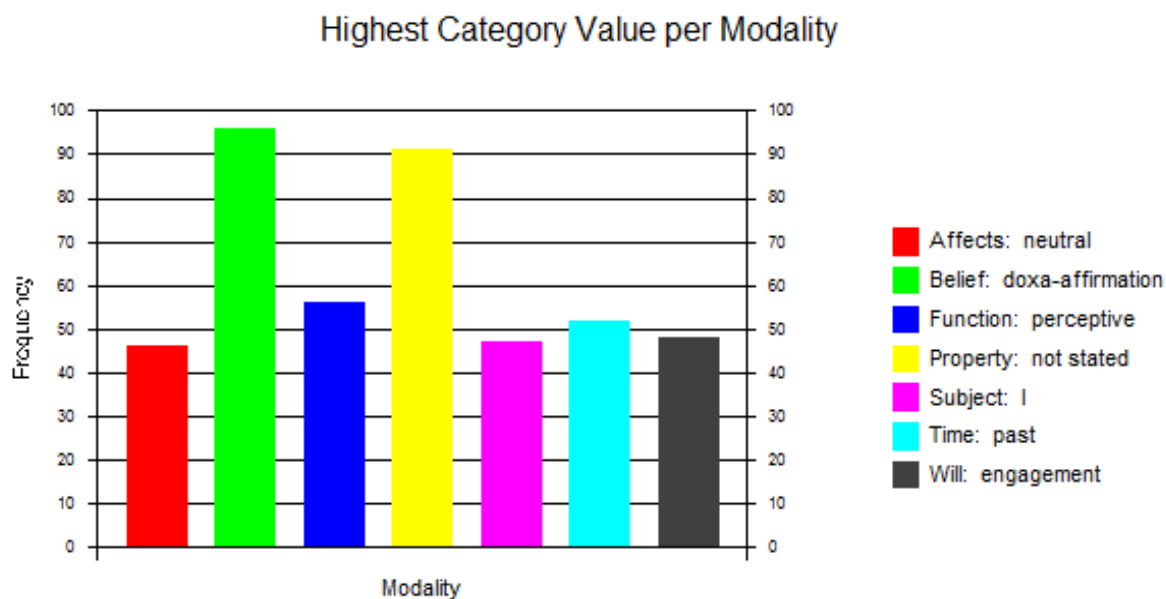


Figure (3-16), Prostitution: Highest Category value per Modality

Showing high levels of engagement accordingly gave rise to the usage of the entity of *I* in her sentences. A closer look at the entities and the predicates that were explaining them showed that for her, this engagement more had a closer relationship to the agency that she was giving to her relationship with men; *“After my husband I married another man [permanent marriage], then I brought 2 children for him...then here I married [temporary marriage] another man, but exactly in 1 year, even though the sighah was not expired, I went and canceled the sighah...”*. Another example is when she was talking about prostituting her body: *“I cannot say that I have never sold my body, or that I didn’t have, well, yeah, I had! Yes, I had one or two, but I never let it get to the extent that I had to live like hobos”*. In opposite to the sentences referring to her *engagement*, there were only 5.13% of the sentences showing her unengagement in the various relationships. For instance when referring to a sexual relationship in which she was called a prostitute she took away her agency and will in deciding, by saying: *“...and then at night he took me to his mom’s place and had sex with*

me". Considering how she was taken by the man and further implying her passive stance in the sexual activity is representative of this lack of agency.

Data on Motherhood

According to the belief modality showed by the figure (3-17), the doxa-affirmation form was used in 94.17% of her discourse that illustrated her certainty in statements. On the other hand, only 3 sentences were used in doxa-negation that were all related to the entity of *pregnancy* and her doubts about being pregnant or not. In three different period of her conversation she referred to her pregnancy in an unsure way: "No one knows about it", "I have no idea what had happened" and "But I don't know if I were [pregnant] or not"

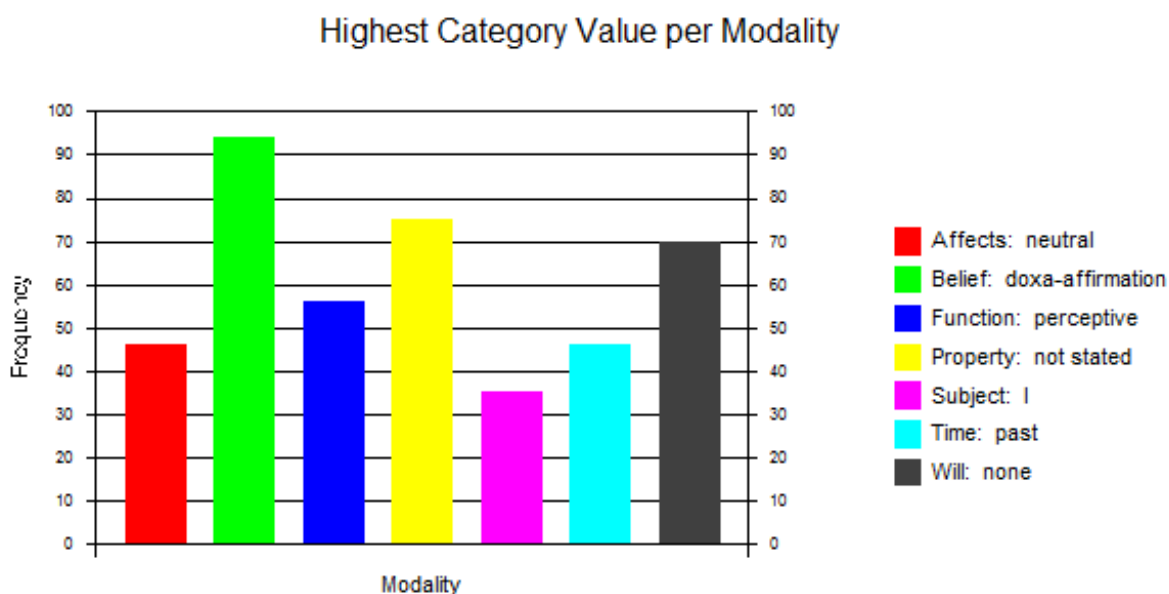


Figure (3-17), Motherhood: Highest Category per Modality

Looking at the modality of affect revealed that she used most of her sentences in the neutral form that mainly consisted of the *I* entity. Although slightly different from the neutral effect, were the positive and negative effects that were directed towards her past, including the positive-retrospective and negative-retrospective. What attracted my attention were the main entities utilized in these positive and negative sentences. In situations where she was talking about an experience with a positive effect the entity of *pregnancy* was used mostly and in the cases where some negativity was involved, the entity of *child* was her main focus. With a more detailed scrutiny and going through her interview, I noticed that the high

frequency of the entity of *child* mainly was empty from her own engagement and more related to her bad experience of losing an infant. On the other hand, the common feelings among the mothers while having a child reflected itself in the high frequency of *pregnancy* in the sentences with positive-retrospective affect.

Participant 7

She was the only person who always walked around the institute holding a little boy. At the age of 25, she had gone through physical torture and rape by her own father. The little boy that she was carrying all the time was a consequence of her father's rapes of her older sister. Eventually she had left the house and got engaged in selling sex in return for anything. The limited amount of data about her is because of the brief conversation we had.

Data on Prostitution

Similar to all of the other participants, her discourse was as well formulated in the doxa-affirmation form, leaving only 4 sentences in doxa-negation that were mentioned with doubt and hesitation (see figure (3-18)). In this hesitation, first the entities of *I* and then the entity of *sighah* were mostly used: "*I don't know what to do, I don't know if I should go and marry [sighah] him or not... I don't know if I have fooled him...*" These sentences were muttered as an answer to her hidden thoughts of whether to become an old man's temporary wife.

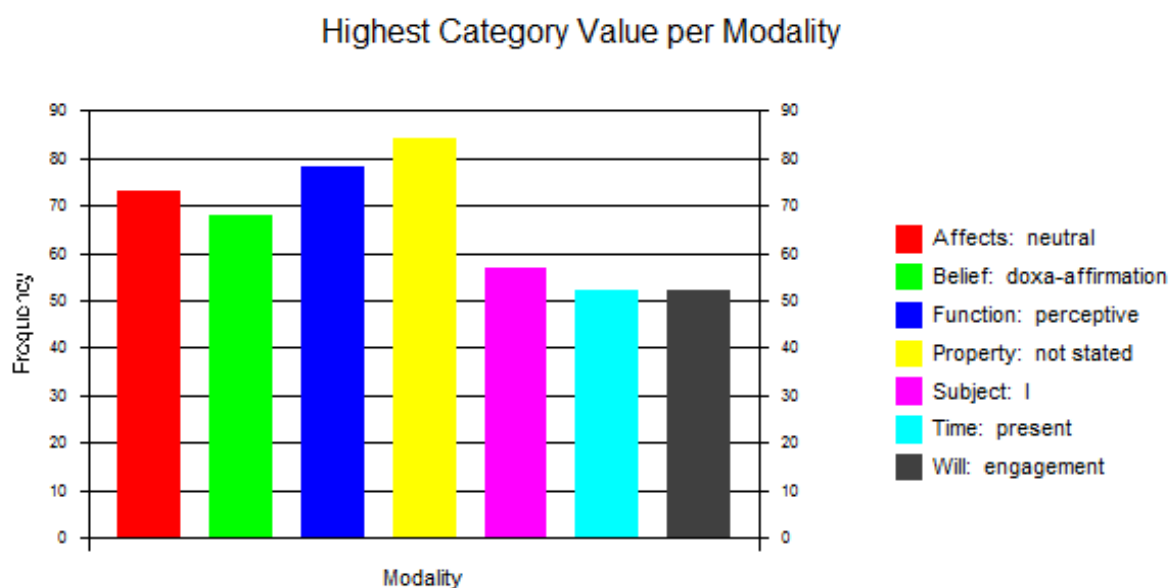


Figure (3-18), Prostitution: Highest category Value per Modality

The modality of time was further analyzed which is as well presented in more detail by figure (3-19). On one hand, the main part of her conversation was directed to the present time (52.63%) and on the other hand, the rest of the sentences were either empty from time or directed both towards the past and future (in total, 47.37%). Her narratives occurring in the present time were mainly occupied with the entities of *I* and *he* and had the theme of her doubts in getting married.

I don't know him, I don't know maybe I have fooled him. But I pity my current boyfriend as well; I don't know what to do... He is old... he is around his 60's or 50's...

The final modality I would like to briefly explain is the modality of will. The participant showed her engagement while talking about her sexual activity in more than half of the sentences. Similar to other participants, these sentences showed her free will and agency in deciding whether to be with a man or not, i.e. "*I don't know maybe I have fooled him*", "*I have planned to see him for 3 months*" or "*I'm thinking whether I should go and live with that man or not*"

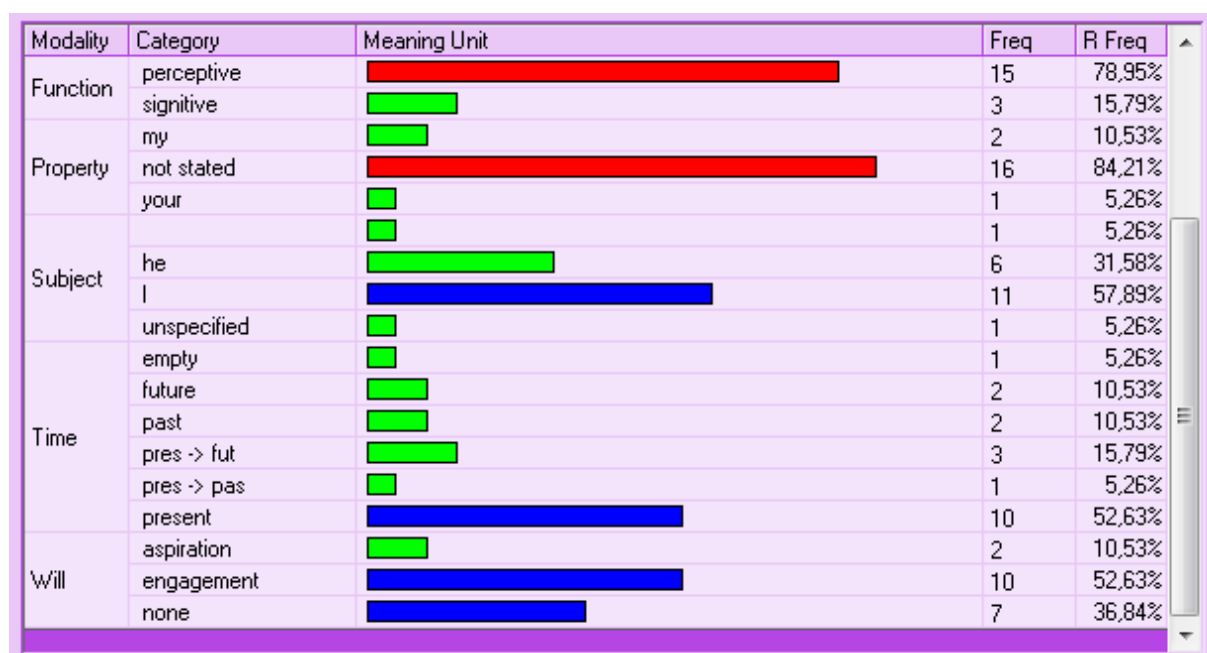


Figure (3-19), Prostitution: Frequency of Modalities

Interestingly in all of her discourse, she devoted much time to explain me the situation between herself and the new man in her life, instead pushing her experiences of rape and unwanted sex with the father unsaid. For starting to inform me about her father she asked me the following question “*Do you know my father was a person who raped his 3 daughters?*” She asked this question as if she wanted to give me brief but critical information about her experience whereas leaving me with limited flexibility for asking further question, since the only predicted answer by me was a yes or no.

Data on Motherhood

Opposite to the superiority of the present time in her conversations about prostitution, in 53.33% of her statements about motherhood the past subcategory was dominant. This past tense was without exception associated with her feelings and devotions as a mother to a child who was actually not her biological child, rather her sister’s unwanted infant from their father. The paragraph below illustrates her affection towards this child.

At first my sister wanted to abort her child, but then we said that it is the first grandchild in the house, so we kept it. I took care of him right from the hospital and fed him with milk powder. My sister had no idea about how to raise a child...

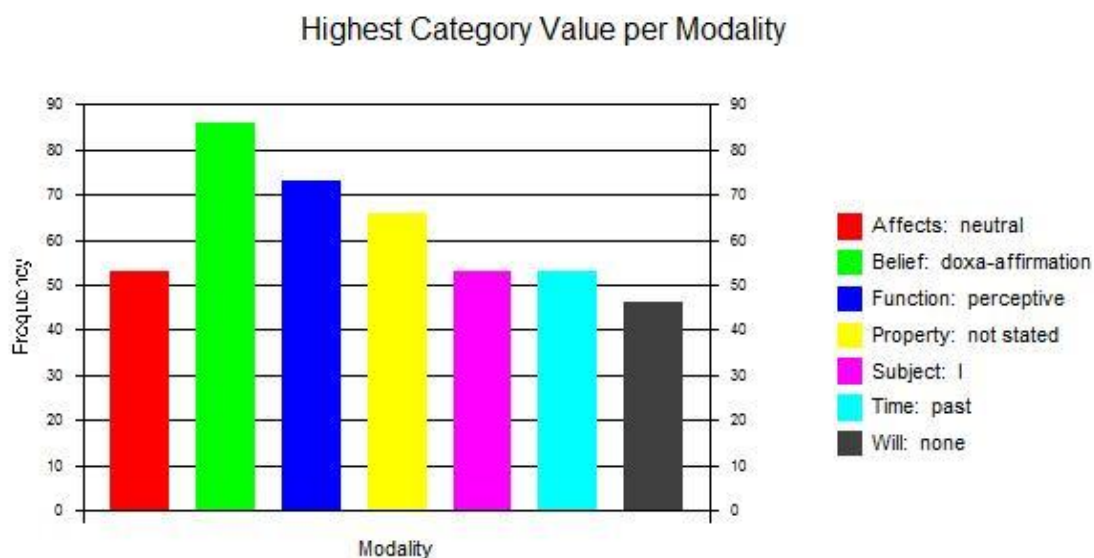


Figure (3-20), Motherhood: Highest category Value per Modality

Following this cited paragraph, the superiority of her sub-category in the modality of property could easily be explained. As seen in figures (3-20), the category of her has been mentioned 3 times more than the category of my in the modality of property. When testing the preponderance of the entities involved, the only property that referred to my category was the *birth certificate* that she was waiting to receive. On the other hand, the entity of *child* related to the property of her in all of the sentences. Evidently this child was her sister's infant that she had accepted to bring up; "*Do you know that this is my sister's child?*", "*At first my sister wanted to abort her child*" and "*Whenever I put her child in her arms, she started crying*"

Participant 8

Finding a way to start the conversation with this participant was challenging since her initial reactions were limited to a yes or no or a bitter sarcastic smile. She was a pregnant woman with 39 years old whose first sexual relationship was as well a rape by a random man on the street when she was only 25. Probably the extent of her relationships with men was far less than the other participants since until recently she had always been long lasting friendships for 8 year, 6 years and 2 years and it has only been lately that she started unbounded sexual experiences in exchange for money.

Data on Prostitution

Similar to most of the other mentioned participants, her narratives about sex-working and prostitution was consisted of the doxa-affirmation sentences by 64.58% (see figure (3-21)). The interested fact about her affirmation was the dichotomous division of boyfriends and husband that she distinguished while talking about her relationship. As a result the entities of *I*, *boyfriend*, *sexual relationship* and *husband* were each subsequently used 18, 13, 7 and 4 times that contrary to some of the other participants revealed her concrete distinguish between her boyfriends and husband and the nature of relationship status that she had. For instance when she mentioned "*2 or 3 years after my divorce I became friends with a guy that lasted for 8 years*". Although she had always been in relatively long relationships with men, she categorized herself as a prostitute without any hesitation or denial; her involvement became more evident when she used the following doxa-negation sentence "*I don't know whose child is it because I was with 2 men at the same time*"

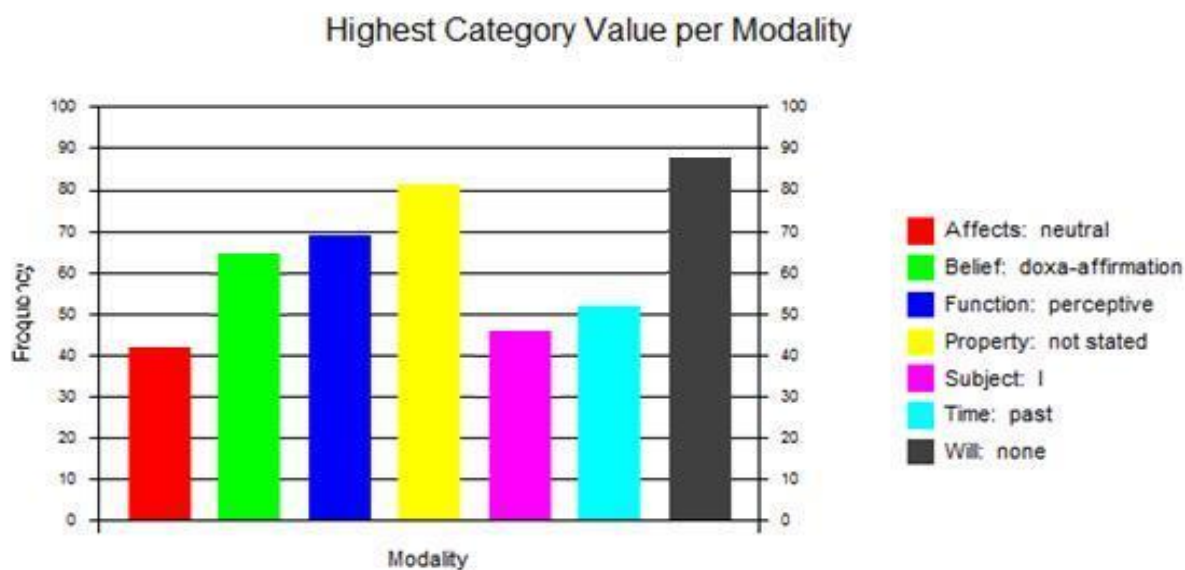


Figure (3-21), Prostitution: Highest category Value per Modality

Due to the vivid explanations of her relationships, further I analyzed the modality of will, to see the extent of her engagement or disengagements in what she was mentioning about sex-working. Despite her concreteness about her sexual life, in 87.5% of the sentences she did not use any involvement and agency, neither showed disengagement. Therefore, the high levels of none sub-modality occurred as it can be seen from figure (3-21). The only sentence that showed her engagement was when I asked her about her way of defining a prostitute; *“I don’t know how to define it, a prostitute is someone like me”*.

Data on Motherhood

I would start this section with the modality of affect that was highest in the form of neutral. Her conversation about motherhood was limited to her relationship to her mother on one hand and to her unwanted infant on the other hand. In general the neutral affect was used in her statements by 49.33% as showed by figure (3-22). Looking more elaborately on the entities that were used in her statements, I noticed that the entity of *I* was mostly used in a neutral form, and respectively came the entity of *this/it* that was referring to her infant. Although the words my child, my infant or other words showing affection could be used by the participant, the usage of the pronoun of *this/it* was a symbol of a loosened mother-child relationship between her and the infant. These examples even made this lack of affection clearer: *“This is my first”*, *“whatever now! This has happened”*, *“...I didn’t want it to exist, or incase it existed, it was mine, not someone else’s”*, *“I wanted it to be actually mine”*.

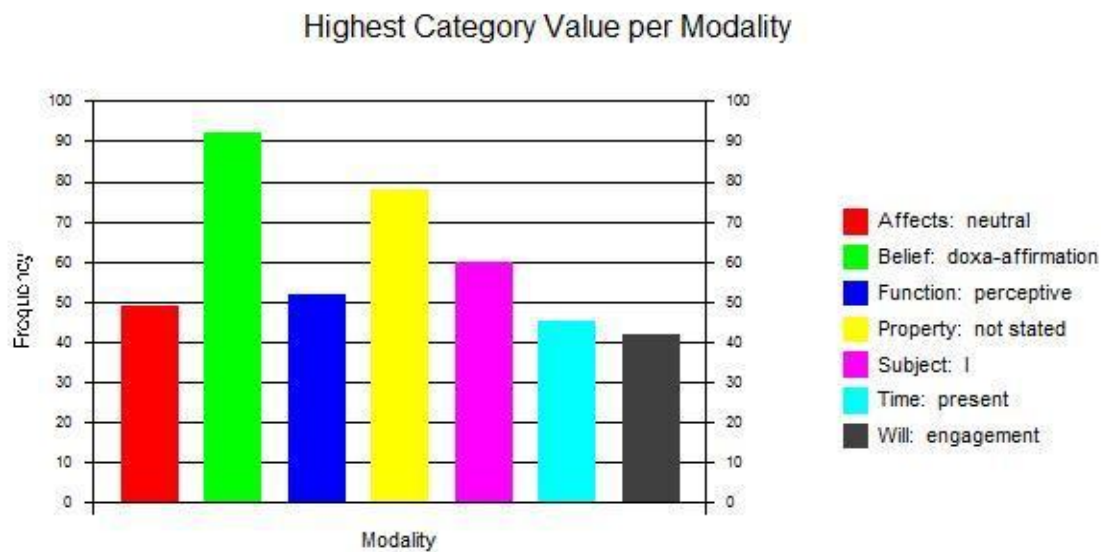


Figure (3-22), Motherhood: Highest Category Value per Modality

Moreover, I took a closer look at the other sub-modalities of affect, namely the negative forms (both retrospective and prospective). I conducted this analysis to search for the negative feelings that were resurfacing from her side during our interview. In 42.66 percent of the conversation about motherhood she was unveiling a negative effect (see figure (3-23)). In the sentences directed to her negative future (negative-prospective) the main theme of her conversation was the relationship between herself and her child, in which the entities of *I* and *child* were majorly used:

I am truly not happy to have this child, I don't like it. I don't like it because of my family [referring to the way she has been treated in the house because of the child], that is why I want to give it away. I hate it! I don't want people to say that she has a haram¹³ child in her life

Contrary, the sentences that were related to the negative past (negative-retrospective) reflected her concerns about the relationship with her mother. Consequently, the involved entities were majorly *mother* and *I*:

¹³ Referring to something that is unacceptable in the Sharia law, opposite of Halal.

I don't know what to say about my mother...After two weeks she didn't even ask where I was or what I was doing, what can I say about her? She has always hurt me...She has always taunted me instead of guiding me...My heart is filled with sorrow...




















Modality	Category	Meaning Unit	Freq	R Freq
Affects	negative-prospective		16	21,33%
	negative-retrospective		16	21,33%
	neutral		37	49,33%
	positive-prospective		4	5,33%
	positive-retrospective		2	2,67%
Belief	doxa-affirmation		69	92,00%
	doxa-negation		2	2,67%
	probability		1	1,33%
	question		3	4,00%
Function	imag/perc		1	1,33%
	imaginative		4	5,33%
	perceptive		39	52,00%
	sign/perc		1	1,33%
	signitive		30	40,00%
Property	her		2	2,67%
	its		1	1,33%
	my		11	14,67%
	not stated		59	78,67%
	others		1	1,33%

Figure (3-23), Motherhood: Frequency of Modalities

All of the data presented in the outcome section were information on how these women live in the world of sex-working while experiencing the immense difficulty of motherhood. Although it was more desirable to analyze a gestalt of data including all the participants' information, the technological limitations dragged me into separating all the participants and mirroring their life-worlds independently. In the discussion section all of these data become interwoven and more illustrative of the primary questions of this paper.

DISCUSSION

Studies on self and identity have always been occupied by answering two crucial questions. First, how can individuals be so different in different social settings while keeping their sense of self-coherence and self-unity? Second, despite all the variegated personal traits, how can people play multiple social roles in such a predictable manner so as to allow smooth coordination of the social system? In a similar vein with these questions posed by Smith-lovin (2002), the core concern of the contemporary study was as well to uncover the interplay of the I-positions (I as the prostitute and I as the mother) that however occasionally contradicting, still allows the individuals to maintain a sense of self-unity. Yet, deriving to a concrete answer for this concern needs elaborations on how this *I* itself is defined by the person. Since, no one can better reflect who he/she is rather than the person him/herself.

The prostitute identity in this study was the central I-position that could diversely be defined by the prostitutes themselves. According to Farely & Barken (1998) a prostitute is a woman (seldom a man) who earns her living by selling sex that does not involve affection and is temporary. Although this is a more or less widely accepted definition by the scholars and otherwise, through my interviews I noticed that defining prostitution was still highly context-dependant and personal. Prostitution, as characterized by these women, took a turn from the objective way of being defined to a more subjective way. This subjectivity was underlined by the very personal aspects of life that they mentioned while defining prostitution.

These highly context dependent and personal definitions on prostitution, resurfaced the following underlying features in phenomenology. First, the experience of a phenomenon and the network of meanings assigned to it are embedded in a real-life context and cannot be separated from it. Second, following Karlsson (1993) each object in the life-world is perceived in a subjective way by the individual that is different from the other. This subjectivity shapes the uniqueness and individuality of everyone. In this sense, the meanings these women assigned to prostitution originated from their own life-worlds or the world of sex-working as they were experiencing and living through. The conversations below make their subjective life-world of prostitution more clarified.

The interviewer: So, who is a prostitute? How do you define prostitution?

Participant 2: There are some who go with men only for a moment, so to have a quick sex for the money. But there are also some who neither need the money, nor the pleasure, they do it to find someone so that they can live with, live together and become husband and wife. (Runaway girl who never received proper emotional support at home and escaped in hope to find elsewhere)

Participant 5: A woman who has a husband but does bad things...A woman who has a husband but goes, she has a good position, a life, a house but she goes...And her husband knows that she goes, even she gets beaten up. (A woman who cheated on her husband)

In spite of their subjective way of defining prostitution, there was an immense attempt of othering the prostitutes and presenting the world of prostitution exclusive of themselves. Unsurprisingly, high levels of negative perception towards sex-working and the criminalization of this act in the Iranian society accompanied with their possibly misguided feelings of any evaluation or judgment throughout our interviews could be a reasonable source of their exclusion. This distinctiveness was conveyed whenever they referred to prostitutes as “she/they” or more importantly by the manner they explicated the nature of their relationship with men.

In their experiences of sex-working, not a clear border existed between who a customer, companion, boyfriend or a husband is. The widely used concept of “sighah” as an extended form of the term husband and the only socially accepted way of having a sexual relation outside the framework of marriage was the most primary form of these referrals. Among some of these women (i.e., participant 1, 4, 5, 6 and 7) the usage of the term customer was completely abandoned whereas the patterns of temporary sex exchanges for money were vivid in their practices. The thin line between these concepts can become more illustrated through the examples in the next page.

Participant 4: “Well he should support me for example an hour or a day, we can become “sighah” to see if we want to stay more or not” or “How did I find

my husbands? Husband is something you can find a lot [Sniggering]. Even with my age, right now, if I walk on the streets there are 100 men who want to become my sighah.”

Participant 6: “He took me to his mother’s place, and we stayed there over the night. We became sighah that night; sighah for one night...”

Although the religious usage of the temporary marriages (sighah) shares only some similarities with the way these women utilized this concept, it seems by this usage, prostitution as a socially deviant act has been transformed to an extended form of marriage that is more morally and socially accepted and functional in the social context that they are living in, both by themselves and the others.

In tandem, however personal, the prostitute identity is as well a social product that is represented in an interwoven network of socially accepted norms, values, thoughts, predispositions and even emotions that are accompanying it. The perspective on how the prostitute identity is defined and looked upon by these women, has given them the authority and freedom to talk about the same thing under a different name. Through this differentiation, the same act of prostitution is sometimes fallen in a socially deviant category and sometimes not. In other words, their sexual activity with male partners takes a shape of a continuum that has “sighah” on one end and “customer” on the other, with one being regulated and normal and the other highly stigmatized. Foucault’s idea can be worth mentioning that the power that constructs a discourse (here, how the personal definition of this identity is constructed within the socially accepted norms and values) is not a repressive force located in particular institutions or resourced from a dominating class or race, rather it is a social constitution that produces a concept, regulates it and normalizes this regulation (1984a, 1988a; as cited in Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002). In another words, prostituting, however a known concept and practice for all, can mean differently among different individuals based on their various forms of experiencing. Moreover, however it is shaped, defined and practiced by the individuals themselves, the influence of the social context in regulating this definition is undeniable.

The other concerning I-position was the motherhood identity. Motherhood and the meanings assigned to it are more or less shared among various cultures, however more

concretely motherhood in the Iranian society refers to an all-encompassing female activity that accompanies a sense of maternal devotion and self-sacrifice. Since mothers have the great responsibility of raising the children, there are not only guidelines for the most appropriate practices of motherhood but as well an idealized image of it.

Defining motherhood in this study was in contrast with their way of defining prostitution. Contrary to prostitution, for most of these women motherhood both in terms of feelings and practices was an inclusive category that was either something they had experienced in the past or an experience to be grasped in future. Motherhood in the latter sense was tied with the wishes and hopes for starting a stable nuclear family which consists of both parents and children.

Referring to the narratives of the past experiences and prospective hopes did not leave their present time experiences of motherhood behind. Their definition of and representations on being a good mother was mainly shaped in that current time; while being prostitute mothers. These “good mothering” got meaning through their personal way of showing self-sacrifices in order to provides their children with better and brighter future. Along with supporting their child mainly in financial terms, the abandonment of them was a common experience among them (except participant 7) that as well was subjectively a reflection of their affection and care. Therefore, the multiple subjective way of perceiving motherhood created a unique perspective of it for each of the participants. The below examples make this statement more explicit.

Participant 2: Finally I decided to give him away because I was not sure what was going to happen to me, so it would have been better leaving him... But when they were taking it away from me, it was like ripping off my skin from my bones.

Participant 3: There is another way for me; to leave this child for the Behzisti¹⁴, and once in a week buy something and take it for her, snacks, gifts, don't know something.

Participant 5: I never took my child with me... Never in my life has my child seen me in this way. I never had sex in front of him; he was either playing outside or was asleep.

As obvious in the examples above, the essence of motherhood and the motherhood identity among these women was not substantially different from the dominant perceptions of it, although it might be differently put in practice that as well revealed their individual way of giving meaning to a mother. This given meaning was as well shaped by the circumstances they were in. Although, motherhood for them is still perceived as a sacred experience and feeling that involves affectionate devotion.

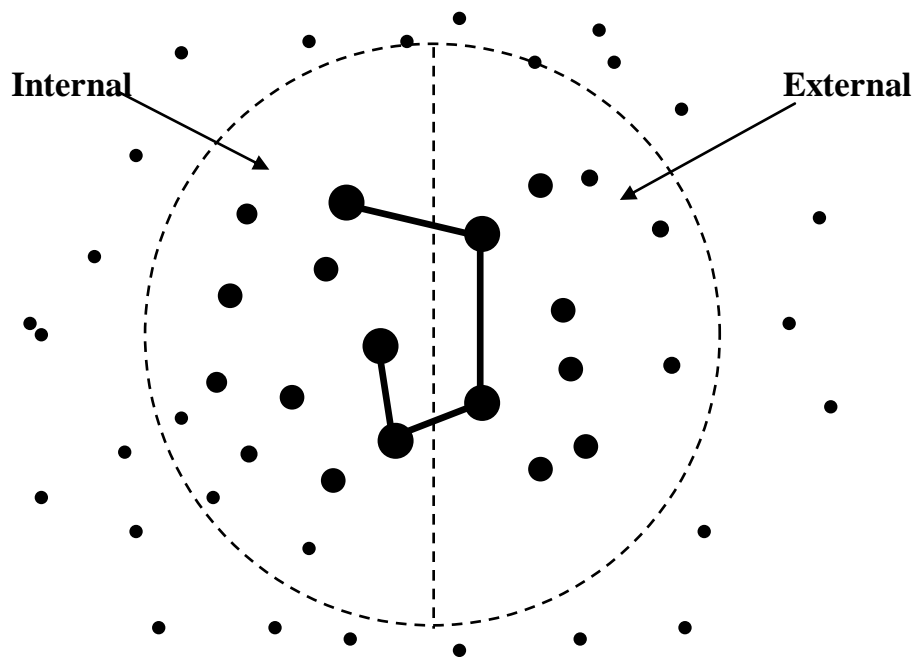
Deconstructing both of these identities has fundamentally benefited this research in clarifying two main aspects. First, how particular versions of motherhood and prostitution came to be constructed in particular ways of experiencing them and second how these particularities are still part of a bigger whole, called the social context. Yet, the concerning question would be the contradictions within these particularities as well as with their social context that might raise not only interpersonal conflicts but as well intrapersonal. More exclusively, how would the two contradicting identities of motherhood (conceived as sacred) and the prostitute (conceived as stigmatized) sum up in an individual while allowing her to maintain a sense of coherence and unity? This answer that would be elaborated here lies in the theory of dialogical self.

The process of positioning and repositioning

The answer to how the participants maintained a united self in spite of their contradicting life-worlds as mothers and prostitute would be discussed in this part. According

¹⁴ State Welfare Organization of Iran

to Hermans (2002) the *I* moves in an imaginal space from one position to the other. This movement creates dynamic fields in which self-negotiations, self-contradictions and self-integrations happen and result in a great variety of meaning. Hermans (2002) has developed a model that allows the understanding of the I-positioning and repositioning that would as well clarify perfectly my concern of the study. The figure below is Hermans' "model of positions in the self".



BASIC MOTIVES

Figure (4-1), Model of Positions in the self

This figure is a composition of the multiple I-positions that resembles one's self. The space within the circle represents those multiple I-positions that are divided into the internal and the external positions. The internal positions are felt as part of myself, for instance "I, as an unfaithful wife" or "I, as a devoted mother" whereas the external positions are felt as part of the environment, such as "my husband" or "my cellmates". Internal and external positions are in mutual relationship over the time. On one hand, the external positions that refer to the objects and people in the environment are variously relevant to the internal *I*; on the other hand the internal positions receive their relevancy from their relation with one or more

external position. The internals and externals as showed by the figure in half circles are both considered as I-positions since they are all part of the self.

The connecting lines between the spots in the circle indicate the dialogical relations that may develop between the internal and external I-positions, for instance “As a mother I have to raise my children correctly”. There also exist lines among the internal positions themselves or the external positions, i.e. “I convinced myself to let go of the baby”.

Significantly the bigger the dots are and the closer they are to the scattered line in the middle of the circle, the more dominant they are in that specific moment and place. In details, the lines between the big dots as I-positions represent the dialogical relations that are in process in that specific time and space. The other dots that are in the background and show no dialogical relation represent the potential I-positions that might get dominant in another situation. Let us take a glance at part of the second Participant’s conversation.

Some years ago, when I was 18, we used to go out for fun [sexual affair], but then that woman [the pimp] received all the money and didn’t give me anything. It was from her side. And one day she called me and said it seems you are pregnant. I said no way! And she said I swear! You are pregnant. But I couldn’t believe. I had no stomach.

The beginning of the narrative starts with her involvement in prostitution, where the dialogical relation can for example be seen between internal *I* and the external components of *fun* or *money*. But from the third sentence, other internal and external I-positions came along from the background and become dominant in the dialogical relation. Within this paradigm the *I* as who was prostituting get subordinated to the *I* who is becoming a mother.

Moreover, according to the figure (4-1) although many positions are situated in the circle, there are as well many positions that are peripheral to the circle. These outside spots are simply outside the subjective horizon of the self and simply fall beyond the person’s awareness. With a change in the situation, these outside dots can easily enter the space of the circle. For instance when one of these women start her desired nuclear family in the future

many new internal I-positions (I as a wife, I as a mother) and new external positions (my infant, my husband) will be introduced as part of the self.

Crucially and undoubtedly a movement among the circle's spots should be considered, from the internal to the external, the inside to the outside, the front to the back and many more. Basic motives that determine which positions move to the front and become active or to the background and non-active should as well be considered in this model. These basic motives are the general story themes being narrated.

By adopting Hermans model, the interplay of the prostitute and motherhood identity can be illustrated more clearly. It is true that within the Iranian society, prostitution and motherhood cannot morally and psychologically happen simultaneously because of their contradicting nature. This contradiction is as well not limited to the social or personal values, but also the practices and roles that are assigned to motherhood and prostitute identities and in general the contradictions that might exist between these identities.

In this study, within the framework of dialogical self and the real-life experiences of these women, it has become understandable that motherhood and prostitute identity can exist and practiced simultaneously. Based on the above model, the various internal and external I-positions, are in domination in a specific situation and time, whereas they can simply shift among other I-positions. These women can be professional prostitutes in relation to their companion or customer in a private brothel but they can as well be "good" mothers while at home raising their children. This reveals that multiplicity even in its most contradicting form does not essentially weaken the unity of the self.

Although these shift between I-positions, from sex-workers to mothers does attest a sense of discontinuity, following what Akkerman and Meijer (2011) have mentioned at the same time a sense of continuity is maintained through the past, present and future alignment in narrations of the self. These narrations warrant the sense of continuity both happening in the self (as the narratives belonging to our inner world) and in the verbal narratives we utter to others (Herman & Herman-Jansen, 1995).

It is through these narrations that the meaningful experiences are squeezed into one narrative that relates to us and is about us. These narratives helps a person to make sense of the experiences, integrate the old and new experiences, identify the ordinary from the exceptional experiences, give these experiences personal accounts such as personal intentions, interpretations, justifications and evaluations and further construct an identity (Herman & Herman-Jansen, 1995). Therefore, a prostitute or mother I-position is

discontinuous in the form of being an active participant with a specific identity at a particular moment in a specific context, as well as historically continuous in the form of the prostitute/mother being a transcendent self, recognizable through time.

Although Herman's model is relevant for answering to the concerns of this study, it must be intertwined with the way these women constructed their identities, since it plays a crucial role. Based on their stories, however prostitution is still stigmatized among the prostitutes as significant others, these women have defined and constructed their prostitute identity in such a manner that has allowed them not to fall in the category of stigmatized prostitutes. Further, their experiences of motherhood, their practices and obviously their construction of its relevant identity, has as well showed a flexible characteristic that has allowed it to get along with their prostitute identity.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is worthwhile to mention in the final words that it is because of the great variety of dialogical relations between the I-positions that individuals become unique beings with their subjective perception of the world and what exists in it. But once again however subjective, the existence of the others in ourselves cannot be denied. The social environment is an inseparable part of our selves, not only the people but as well the social institutions, the convention, norms and etc. According to Hermans (1992) the dialogical self can only be fully understood when its relevant cultural constraints are understood. It is within this social and cultural setting that the identity formation process of individuals can become meaningful. Therefore, it is true to say that we are all social participants but at the same time autonomous individuals with our own reflections of the world we are living in.

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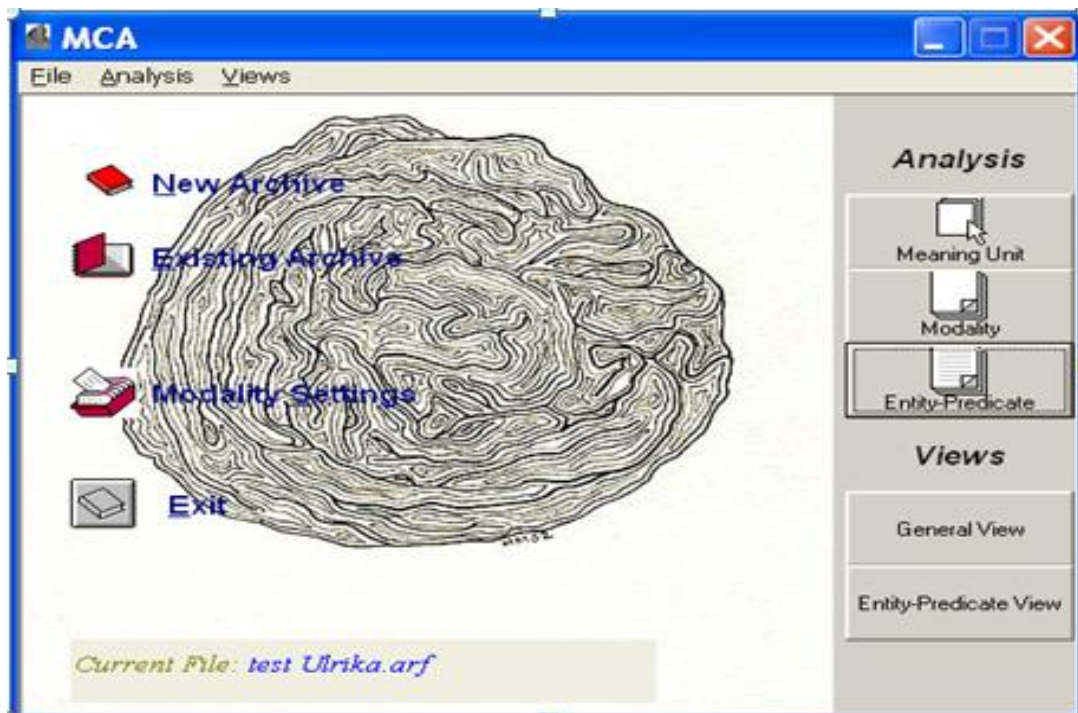
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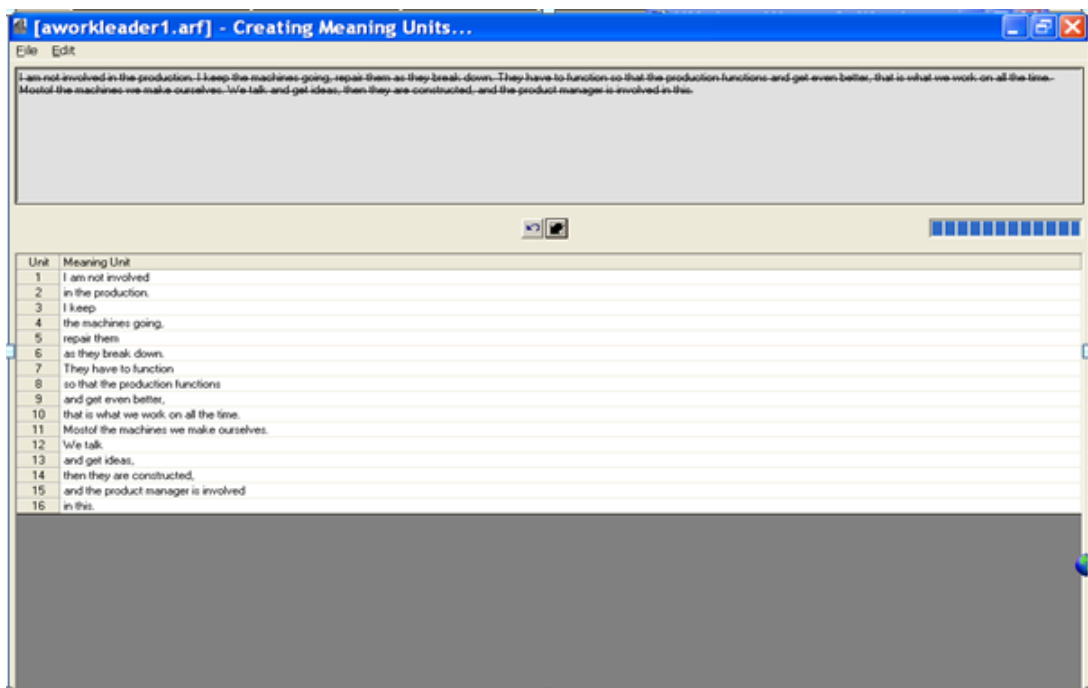
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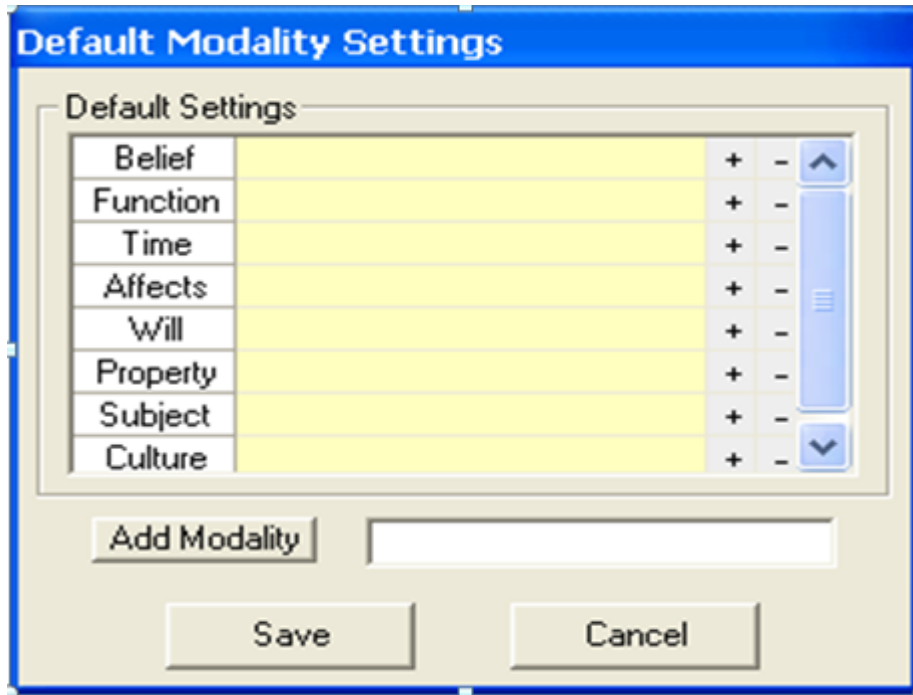
(Appendix 1): Overview of the MCA-Minerva Software



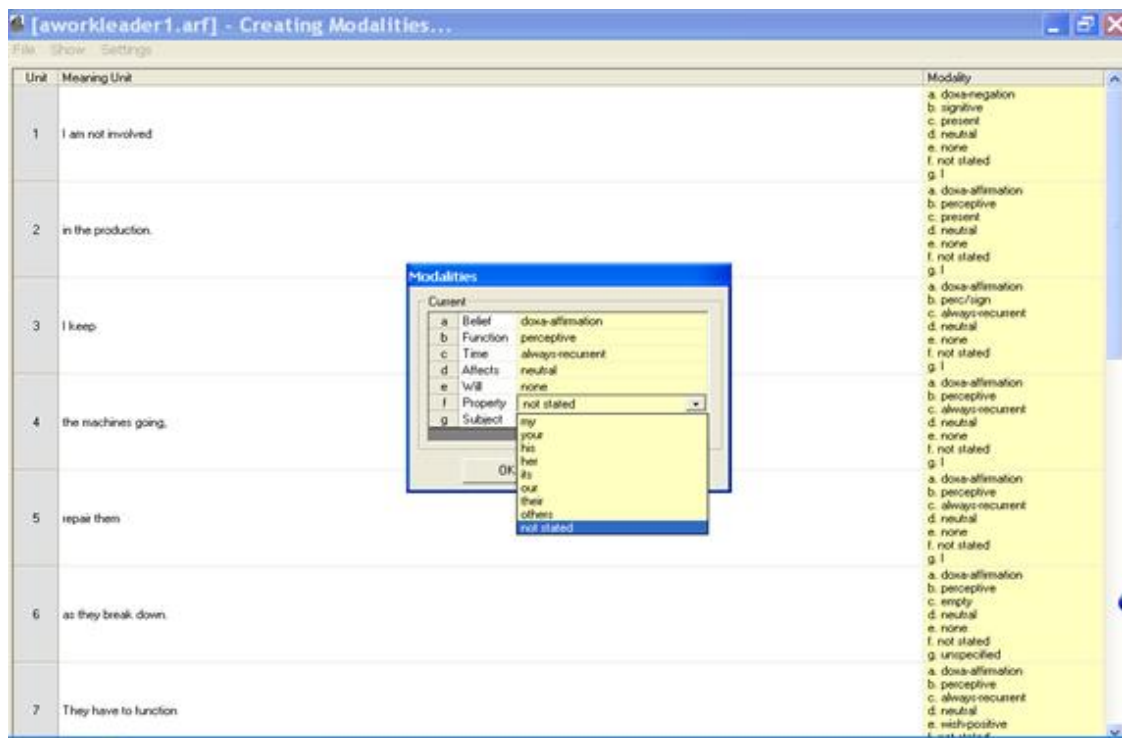
MCA-MINERVA Starting page



Preparatory Phase: Dividing the text into meaning-units



Default Modality Setting



Analysis Phase of Assigning Modalities

The screenshot shows a software interface with a table containing 10 rows of data. Each row represents a different phrase and its corresponding logical components.

Unit	Pure Meaning	Partial Intention	Entity	Predicate
1	I am not involved	i exists one can be involved i can be involved I am not involved the production exists	involved i involved involved production	that exist that can be that i can be that i can not that exist
2	in the production.	in exists the production can be in one is in the production i exist	in production production i	that exist that can be in that one can be that exist
3	I keep	one can keep i can keep i keep machines exist	keep keep i machines	that one can that i can that one can keep that exist
4	the machines going.	one can be going machines can be going the machines are going them exists	be machines machines them	that one can be going that can be going that are going that exist
5	repair them	one can repair one can repair them one repair them they exists	repair repair repair they	that one can do that one can repair that one can them that exist
6	as they break down	one can break one can break down they can break down they break down they exists	break break break break they	that one can that one can break down that they can that exist
7	They have to function	one can have one can function one have to function they have to function the production exists	have function function function production	that one can that one can that one have to that they can that exist
8	so that the production functions	one can function the production can function that exists the production functions	function production function production that	that one can that can function that exist that functions
9	and get even better.	one can get even better exists one can get even better that exists	get even better even better that	that one can that can be that one can get that exist
10	that is what we work on all the time	what exists	what	that exist

Interpretation Phase of Creating Partial intentions, Entities and Predicates

The screenshot shows a 'General View' window with a table mapping modalities to categories, entities, and predicates.

Modality	Category	Entity	Predicate
Belief	doxa-negation		
Function	signitive		
Time	present		
Affects	neutral	i	that exist
Will	none		
Property	not stated		
Subject	I		
Belief	doxa-negation		
Function	signitive		
Time	present		
Affects	neutral		that can be
Will	none		
Property	not stated		
Subject	I		
Belief	doxa-negation		
Function	signitive		
Time	present		
Affects	neutral	involved	that i can be
Will	none		
Property	not stated		
Subject	I		
Belief	doxa-negation		
Function	signitive		
Time	present		
Affects	neutral		that i can not
Will	none		
Property	not stated		
Subject	I		
Belief	doxa-affirmation	production	that exist

General view of the Entities, Predicates in relation to the Modalities