



LUND
UNIVERSITY

Faculty of Social Sciences

***“IF WE HAVE THE SEX PURCHASE LAW,
WE MUST BE PREPARED TO HELP”***

**- How some of Sweden’s social services work with youths
having sex for compensation**

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Abstract

This thesis aims to look into how some social workers in Sweden view their work with youths having sex for compensation with regards to the feminist ideas that the law on buying sex expresses.

Swedish studies have shown that most of the youths having sex for compensation started when they were 13-14 years old. Previous literature and studies state that youths having sex for compensation often have been victims of abuse or have had other traumatic childhood experiences.

In this thesis, it is explored how social work are affected by policies. The theories critical social work and feminist social work are used in the thesis' discussion in order to see how social workers can work with youths having sex for compensation.

There are different perspectives on sex for compensation in the feminist debate. The two main sides are liberal feminism and radical feminism. Liberal feminists believe that having sex for compensation should not be illegal but rather regulated and viewed as any other type of work where sex work is regulated with unions and labor rights to protect sex workers. Radical feminists mean that sex for compensation is a form of men's violence against women which makes the women having sex for compensation oppressed victims.

This thesis explores if the radical feminist ideology that Sweden's sex purchase law is founded on can be recognized in the social work with youths having sex for compensation and if it is aligned with the main discourse.

I have interviewed four social workers working with youths and made a discourse analysis of news articles about youths having sex for compensation.

The interviews and news articles were found to mostly describe people having sex for compensation as victims, not always aware of the damage they cause to themselves. The explanations as to why the youths are having sex for compensation are however both in the interviews and news articles individual factors and not men's oppression over women in society.

The thesis' conclusion is that the news articles and interviews show signs of radical feminism because they describe the youths having sex for compensation as victims who do not know what is best for them. However, the news articles and interviews do not present the cause of sex for compensation as a consequence of the patriarchal society but rather individual factors. I see an importance in protecting youths having sex for compensation since our society means that it is harmful for them. Discussions are needed to ensure that the youths having sex for compensation do not feel shame in the meeting with a social worker.

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Introduction

In the Youth Board's survey for youths, 1.7 percent of the participants (about 20 000 girls and boys) stated that they have had sex for compensation. The Youths Board's report showed that the youths who had sex for compensation had a problematic life situation. They had poor mental health, a lack of contact with adults and difficulties setting boundaries. The girls who were described as especially exposed for having sex for compensation were girls who grew up in environments of addiction and girls who early on became drugged and sexually abused. Also girls with seemingly well functional families but with self-destructive behaviors such as starving themselves, binge eating, self-harming behavior and suicide attempts were at a higher risk (SOU 2010:49, p. 116). The Social Board's report shows that the youths the social workers meet had their first experiences of prostitution between the ages of 14-15 years. This is confirmed by the answers in the surveys for the youths. The prostitution unit in Stockholm also state that most of the roughly 400 people that have been in counseling say that they started selling sex between the ages of 13 and 14 (SOU 2010:49, p. 117). Swedish surveys reveal that youths that stated that they have provided sexual favors, have encountered buyers through friends or an acquainted adult. Per the Social Board's charts, the prostitution involving younger women generally takes place away from the street environment. The Social Board states in their reports that prostitution is not just a big city phenomenon, but that it also occurs in smaller cities and in different parts of the country (SOU 2010:49, p. 114).

Numerous studies have found a link between social care experiences and sex for compensation. One study has also shown that youths were introduced to sex work while in the care system (Mendes & Moslehuddin 2006, p. 116). Mendes, Snow and Baidawi state that young people transitioning from out-of-home-care are one of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in society due to their pre-care experiences of abuse and neglect, bad in-care experiences, accelerated transition to adulthood and lack of support (Mendes, Snow & Baidawi 2014, p. 22). One study compared youths who had been in foster care with other youths and found that a higher proportion of those who had been in foster care have had sex for money or drugs (Hudson & Nandy 2012, p. 182).

There are studies exploring why youths have sex for compensation. Several studies discuss whether to view youths having sex for compensation as agents or victims. The different views on

the issue can be seen in the different terms that are being used for the phenomenon. These included prostitution, survival sex, youth prostitution, transactional sex in youth, commercial sexual exploitation of children, domestic minor sex trafficking and adolescent prostitution (Wurzbacher, Evans & Moore 1991; Miller, Fielden, Tyndall, Zhang, Gibson & Shannon 2010; McMullen 1986; Ahrens, Katon, McCarty, Richardson & Courtney 2012; Peled & Lugasi 2014; Sapiro, Johnson, Postmus & Simmel 2016; Shaw & Butler 2003).

One study presented in the article *How Israeli social workers perceive adolescent girls in prostitution*, by Peled and Lugasi (2014) investigates the law in Israel regarding sex for compensation. In Israel, prostitution is legal but pimping and soliciting is illegal (Peled & Lugasi 2014, p. 21). The author discusses how other studies have shown differences in how the youths are viewed by social workers. It states that changes in the perception of adolescent girls having sex for compensation by professionals are slower than in the field's theories. The girls may still be viewed as deviant and pathological. Studies have shown that Israeli social workers are almost repulsed by prostitution because of the social-cultural stigma. This creates a dilemma in their perception of adolescent girls having sex for compensation. The practice is viewed as highly stigmatized, degrading and breaks the boundaries of what is acceptable sexual behavior for girls and young women. The professionals are also aware of research that indicates that adolescent girls having sex for compensation are victims of violence, exploitation and trauma (Peled & Lugasi 2014, p. 22).

The debate about prostitution/sex work is divided into two main views: the radical feminist and the liberal feminist. The radical feminists propose prohibition while the liberal feminists argue for normalization and depanelization (Vicente 2016, p. 475).

When studying the social work with youths having sex for compensation, we need to consider pertinent legislation, its intents, aims and ideological foundation. Skilbrei and Holmström (2013) mean that the laws on sex for compensation are particularly of symbolic importance regarding society's approach (p. 11). It is stressed that the regulation of prostitution is seen as something more than it just being legal or illegal (Skilbrei & Holmström 2013, p. 12). Skilbrei and Holmström state that it is important to see the relationship between a criminal justice approach and social welfare approach when trying to understand the link between ideology, political goals and policies (Skilbrei & Holmström 2013, p. 12). It is also important to look at the relationship

between the law and social work (i.e. what the law does), since the gap between what the law says and what the law does leads to anxiety about the role of the law (Scoular 2015, p. 14).

Further, there is previous literature on how legislation affect sex for compensation in a society. Scoular (2015) means that what the law says and what the law does are two different things, and we cannot therefore only look at what the law says. She describes law as a practice that constitute prostitution as a social fact (Scoular 2015, p. 19). The law extends governmental control and creates new ways of control (Scoular 2015, p. 45).

Studies on youths having sex for compensation discuss whether the youths should be taken care of by the police or the social services. For example, it is said that protecting youths having sex for compensation have been the responsibility of both the police and the social services. The measure being taken when the youth is discovered having sex for compensation is either being detained by the police or taken back to their families or foster homes (Miller, Fielden, Tyndall, Zhang, Gibson & Shannon 2010, p. 37). One study means that youths having sex for compensation (here termed domestic minor sex trafficking victims) are mostly treated as either adult prostitution offenders or juvenile delinquents. Therefore, the consequence is detention and any individual can be charged with prostitution or solicitation even though they have the legal status as a minor (Mir 2013, p. 166).

This thesis is set with the background of the feminist debate and what the different ideologies views on sex work is. Since the aim is to look into this issue in Sweden, the creation of the law against buying sex is described in the background chapter as well as a look into other countries' legislations on sex work. The theoretical concepts that are used to analyze the gathered material are social representations, critical social work and feminist social work and subjugated knowledge. The methods used in the thesis are qualitative and abductive. I have done interviews with four social workers in Sweden working with youths to explore their views on this issue and how they perceive their social services' work and approach to youths having sex for compensation. I have also found news articles in Swedish newspaper over time and used this material to do a discourse analysis. The data from the interviews and the articles have been categorized in themes. In the analysis I have looked at the differences and similarities between the discourse and view on sex work between the social workers and newspaper articles. The data

is also analyzed and compared to the feminist ideology that the Swedish law against buying sex is based on.

Aim

The aim with the thesis is to explore how some social workers in Sweden view their work with youths having sex for compensation with regards to the feminist values that the law on buying sex expresses.

Research questions

Do the interviewed social workers express a way of social work that align with feminist ideologies on which the law against buying sex are based on?

What discourse can be seen among the interviewed social workers? Does this align with the one in the media?

Background

Youths having sex for compensation

Several studies have been conducted to see what the causes are for youths having sex for compensation. One thing that is mentioned is vulnerability that has been created for the youth by several factors. The youths often have personal or family history of substance abuse and physical or sexual violence. Coming from an unstable or abusive home can lead to the youth running away from home. If they are under state care, they might run away from group homes, foster homes or juvenile institutions leaving them homeless (Mir 2013, p. 165). Studies have tried to determine causes and effects of this. Two basic explanations have been given to understand abuse as a cause for prostitution. The first is a direct model where the experience of abuse produces less self-worth which changes the self-image to be indifferent to how one is treated by adults. One argument is given that incest is a rehearsal for prostitution (Matthews & O'Neill 2003, p. 253). Earlier sexual abuse may lead to, in addition to loss of self-worth, a distorted perception of sexuality and sexual behavior. Because of this, having sex for compensation may be viewed as fulfilling a self-harming compulsion resulting from past abuse (Thorburn & de Haan 2014, p. 18). The second explanation, the indirect model, explains that the experience of abuse creates a series of other events, e.g. running away from home. The runaway behavior becomes an intervening variable. Therefore, prostitution is not caused by experiences of abuse but rather running away (Matthews & O'Neill 2003, p. 253-254). Personality, psychological issues, emotional problems and school problems may further add to the vulnerability for exploitation (Mir 2013, p. 165). Studies have also shown a link between sex work and out-of-home care. One of the factors are as mentioned above: experiences of neglect and abuse at home. The loss of self-worth, a distorted sense of the relationship between sex and emotions and indifference to adults' treatment of them make the youths particularly vulnerable to perpetrators in the care system. Other explanations are abuse of alcohol or drugs and experiences of residential care (Mendes, Snow & Baidawi 2014, p. 242). The link between substance use and sex work have also been discussed. It has been unclear whether the youths had sex for money in order to pay for their drugs, or if they used drugs to be able to cope with the sex work (Mendes, Snow & Baidawi 2014, p. 250).

Traffickers and pimps know to target vulnerable young women (Mir 2013, p. 165). Professionals in residential care were asked about youths under their care having sex for compensation in a study. The professionals described organized operations where older pimps would deliberately target residential care units and contact the youths via social media. The residential care workers could not do much to prevent the youths from having sex for compensation. According to the care workers, they tried to encourage the youths to at least use condoms, but some young women refused since they were paid more when not using protection (Mendes, Snow & Baidawi 2014, p. 249). It has been described that the pimps' tactics have been initial seduction of socially marginalized girls through false indications of love, affection and security. By exploiting the girls' vulnerabilities, the pimps gain their trust to get personal information about the girls that is later used against them in future psychological manipulation and threats (Menaker & Miller 2013, p. 170). Tyler and Johnson write about homeless youths having sex for compensation. They write that some youths have sex for compensation voluntarily while others experience coercion from the client or a third party. The youths were often exploited by adults who provided care but later demanded compensation in the form of sex. The third party are described to be for example a friend, boy- or girlfriend or a pimp (Tyler & Johnson 2006, p. 209).

Those who enter prostitution at an earlier age are more likely to stay in it for a longer duration of time (Cobbina & Oselin 2011, p. 324). Sex workers suffer physical injuries from clients and third parties. The sex workers are exposed to sexual transmitted diseases. There may also be psychological consequences from sex work such as depression, dissociation, anxiety disorders and post-traumatic stress disorder (Mir 2013, p. 165). It is known that many sex workers use drugs as a coping mechanism. Sex workers have testified that their addictions intensified the longer they remained in the trade due to the difficulties of the work (Cobbina & Oselin 2011, p. 326).

It is important to tell a child exposed to an adult's abuse that the adult have abused their power. Otherwise the child will be stuck in a victim state. It is important to free children and young people from all responsibility and blame. Since children do not choose freely to become prostitutes, they cannot be expected to choose to stop being prostitutes (McMullen 1986, p. 40). One should also be careful to project an identity connected to the sex work onto a damaged

young person since they may adapt that identification. If the young person is called a prostitute, they might start to further fulfill this role (McMullen 1986, p. 37).

Men having sex for compensation

Men are usually described as sex buyers in the literature. It should also be taken into regard that men can also act as persons having sex for compensation. Studies have shown a link between selling sex and homelessness, psychological distress, unemployment, lacking high school education and age. In a study from Spain they have seen that most of the male sex workers were immigrants (Berg, Schmidt & Weatherburn 2015, p. 287). Child sex abuse and men selling sex are also linked together (Vanwesenbeeck 2013, p. 13). Cácares et al mean that although causes for men selling sex have been found to be poverty, ethnic exclusion, lack of family support and working opportunities, a difficult occurrence in the man's life is what pushes him into prostitution (Cácares, Bayer, Gomero, Grenfell & Salazar 2015, p. 99). However, it is stated that some high-income men start selling sex out of curiosity, as a hobby, for sexual pleasure or experimenting sexually with men. It can be that these men see this as a business and want to earn fast money. Some men just become prostitutes by chance (Cácares et al 2015, p. 100). Other research has also connected social and economic disadvantage and constrained choices with entering sex work. One researcher has presented two categories of men risking becoming prostitutes: men trying to survive on the streets, escaping situations making them vulnerable to abuse and men being led to the life of selling sex due to their early sexual abuse experiences (Lillywhite & Skidmore 2006, p. 352). Although one research showed that sexual victimization as a background factor for becoming a prostitute is not as common with male sex workers as it is with female sex workers (Scott & Callander 2013, p. 269).

In the literature about boys and men selling sex, it is claimed that the extent is hidden. Lillywhite and Skidmore (2006) explain that men do not seek help by stating that there is a culture where young men experience an expectation to be strong and in control, be knowledgeable about sex and protect themselves (p. 355).

Regardless of if it is men or women selling sex, the customer is presented as male in most of the literature. This is sometimes presumed to be so obvious that it is not even written out in the text. We can observe this when authors start to discuss whether the male seller is homosexual or not. Cenk Özbay (2015) has researched this subject for ten years and never seen cases where men sell

sex to women, either it being for money or other type of rewards (p. 54). Some researchers, however, have examples of this. Scott, Minichiello and Meenagh (2015) mean that the occurrence of women buying sex from men are not presented because it is not coherent with ideological ideas. The numbers of cases where men buy sex from men are small. However, the market is growing due to increased gender equality, giving women more access to more income, status and sexual pleasure. It is easy to find examples of this if you want to (Scott et al 2015, p. 178). In China, men who sell sex to women are called ducks. The market may be small in China, but is increasing (Ge, Li and Aggleton 2006, p. 234).

In most of the literature about prostitution when men are mentioned, it is as buyers or pimps while women are the sex workers (Lillywhite & Skidmore 2006, p. 352). Earlier research on male sex workers mostly focused on HIV/Aids and substance abuse (Lasco 2018, p. 34 & Smith, Grov, Seal, Bernhardt and McCall 2015, p. 1048).

It is described that men may view prostitution as entrepreneurship and work which decrease the stigma (Smith et al 2015, p. 1048). However, the stigma for men selling sex increases because there is a stigma both in selling sex and having sex with men (Scott & Callander 2013, p. 269 & Koken, Bimbi & Parsons 2010, p. 222).

One of the differences between men and women which has been seen in the research is that men do not seem worried about the possibility of violence from their clients (Smith et al 2015, p. 1055). Scott and Callander (2013) explain that men selling sex are less exploited than women selling sex due to a mutual equality between men that is not present between men and women (p. 264).

Marlowe (1997) means that even though the men selling sex are adolescents and above the age of consent, they are often described as children in the literature in order for them to be perceived as innocent. Women selling sex are however treated as childlike victims even though they started selling sex as adults (Marlowe 1997, p. 143). The issue of exploitation is only discussed when there is a woman selling sex and a male buyer or with a minor selling sex to an adult (Marlowe 1997, p. 142). Since the market for buying sex is a predominately heterosexual sex business, there are far more money to be made on female prostitutes than male ones. This leads to women selling sex more often and making them more violently targeted by organized crime (Vanwesenbeeck 2013, p. 14).

In much of the literature I have been reading, the men selling sex are to a greater extent described as subjects than the women. Their sexuality is often looked into. In one research it is stated that men selling sex are not necessarily homosexual but describe themselves as heterosexual or bisexual (Deisher, Eisner & Sulzbacher 1969, p. 936).

Legislation for social services

There are two different laws in Sweden for social services working with protection of children and youths. One is used when help can be given with consent from the parents and the youth if it is over 15 years old. The other law, the Young Person's Act, is used when consent is not given. This is stated in the first paragraph of the law. The other two paragraphs define if the help is needed due to the child's or youth's surroundings or by their own behavior. The third paragraph state that it is applicable if the youth exposes its health or development to a palpable risk of being damaged due to addiction to addictive substances, criminal operations or other socially destructive behavior. If the law is applied due to the youth's surroundings, it can be used until the youth is 18 years old. If the law is applied in the third paragraph, the youth's own behavior, the law can be applied until the youth is 20 years old. If the youth is already under care under the Young Person's Act, it can be held until the youth is 21 years old (Lag (1990:52) med särskilda bestämmelser om vård av unga).

The feminist debate

In radical feminism, prostitution is seen as violence against women and a way for men to keep their power in society (Vicente 2016, p. 476). This point of view is shared by societies that have criminalized prostitution, such as Sweden. Here, prostitution is seen as sexual exploitation, equal to domestic violence and rape (Beegan & Moran 2017, p. 60). The ideal for the abolitionists would be for prostitution to be eradicated from society altogether. Prostitution becomes a symbol for how women are objects for men to purchase and decide over (Vicente 2016, p. 476). From this perspective, prostitution must be combated like other ways of oppression (Beegan & Moran 2017, p. 62). Radical feminists believe that although there may be an appearance of choice and consent, this is not the case since women exist in the oppressive system (Vicente 2016, p. 476).

Liberal feminists advocate for sex workers to be viewed as agents, capable of making their own choices. Sex work can be seen as a way for women to support themselves and take themselves out of poverty (Beegan & Moran 2017, pp. 62-63). The liberal view on sex work is that it is not

harmful in itself but becomes so due to external factors such as stigmatization of sex work and sex workers. The harmful factors of sex work are products of how society reacts to and regulates sex work. Society's reaction is also the reason to why sex work is practiced in depressing and demeaning conditions (Vicente 2016, p. 476). While radical feminists mean that sex work is degrading and harmful, liberal feminists argue that sex does not have the same meaning to everyone. For some it may feel wrong to have sex in exchange for money and not for one's own pleasure. For others, it may not be a big deal. They may feel that it is a way for them to enjoy sex and get paid. For the first category, sex work would then be devastating and lead to self-hatred and psychological issues. For the second category, sex work could be a job preferable to another job (Vicente 2016, p. 478). The aim for liberal feminists is to neutralize sex work and treat it like any other job (Vicente 2016, p. 476).

In summary, both radical and liberal feminists acknowledge the statistics that show that depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, self-hatred and suicide are common with prostitutes/sex workers. They differ in their view on the underlying factors: radical feminists mean that this is a consequence of the violence the women are victims of when prostituting while liberal feminists mean that it is a consequence of society's stigmatization and treatment of sex workers which radical feminists play a part in creating (Vicente 2016, p. 478).

Legislation on sex for compensation

Garafolo Geymonat (2014, p. 141) considers four different types of legislations regarding sex for compensation: criminalization or prohibitionism, abolitionism, regimentation or legalization and decriminalization. Criminalization entails total ban on every form of prostitution and forbids both selling and buying. When it is only illegal to buy, it is called neoprohibitionism. Abolitionism means that it is illegal to exploit regarding prostitution (for example rent out to or advertise for a sex worker), but it is not illegal to buy or sell sex if it is between consenting adults.

Regimentation means that prostitution is accepted if it is between consenting adults, and if specific economic rules are followed. It is called neoregimentation when focus is on the sex worker's rights. Decriminalization entails that there are no particular laws regarding prostitution if it is between consenting adults and it is almost equal with other economic activities.

Those who are for a prohibinistic legislation mean that prostitution is made possible because of gender violence and violation of human rights (Valor-Segura, Expósito & Moya 2011, p. 161).

Prostitution is here seen as something that is caused by structural, cultural and personal inequality and abuse. It can therefore not be voluntarily chosen (Skilbrei & Holmström 2013, p. 138).

The argumentation against criminalizing sex work is that it does not necessarily have to be oppressive to women. The sex workers are also said to have different amount of agency regarding starting to sell sex and their working conditions. They mean that sex work can be seen as legitimate work and that people should have the right to sell sexual services if they want to (Levy 2015, p. 38). Further, they believe that labeling sex workers as victims leads to even more alienation and gender violence. It also prohibits sex workers from demanding their rights (Valor-Segura, Expósito & Moya 2011, p. 161).

Up until the middle of the 1980s in Sweden, prostitution was seen as an expression for capitalism (Dodillet 2009, p. 57). This view was shared by a group of scientists doing a social work project in Sweden. They believed that prostitution was commercializing people's emotions which proved the hold commercial exploitation has over humans in the capitalistic society (Dodillet 2009, p. 104). One scientist wrote that the most important thing for them was to be able to understand what they could do to get the prostitute to stop selling sex (Dodillet 2009, p.96). They meant that the sex worker often did not understand herself that she did something harmful. One of the reasons they claimed to have found was the sex sellers' addiction to consumption. This entailed both financial strains and debt as well as expensive habits and purchases. The scientists said that the most challenging thing was to make the prostitute change her mind about the material and expensive lifestyle (Dodillet 2009, p. 110). They tried to make the sex workers understand that the material things were just covering up a meager and vacuous existence (Dodillet 2009, p. 111).

In 1991, there was a new charting of prostitution in Sweden. This led to the issue being discussed in the government once again and they suggested a total overview over society's actions against prostitution. In 1993, an investigation was assigned. They handed over their report, *the Sex Trade* in 1995 (prop. 1997/87:55, p. 100). At that time, it was not illegal to offer sexual services against compensation. It was however illegal to buy sex under certain circumstances, for example to buy sex from someone under 18 years old (prop. 1997/87:55, p. 103). Further in proposition 1997/98:55, the government states that although prostitution is not a desirable societal phenomenon, it is not reasonable to criminalize the one who in most cases is the weaker part and who is being used for other people's sexual needs (prop. 1997/87:55, p. 104). Another reason for

criminalizing only the buyer is to affect the demand. The Minister of Gender Equality Margaretha Winberg said in 2000 that all trade is dependent on customers and demand. If there were no customers using women's bodies as objects, there would be no market. If there were no market, there would be no victims (Svanström 2006, p. 67).

In the proposition for the law, the prostitutes are described to have severe difficult social situations (prop. 1997/98:55, p. 104). The investigation means that the general perception amongst those with practical or theoretical knowledge about sex for compensation is that it brings harm to women; psychological, physical and social. They add that this does not mean that there are not women coming out of prostitution with few or no consisting injuries. They should however be viewed as exceptions. The sellers of sex are in large extent suffering from illness and are often also exposed to injuries through abuse. They almost always develop psychological issues. Many of them abuse drugs and alcohol. The addiction is sometimes the reason why they prostitute but it can also be something that they do to cope with the prostitution. The literature review in SOU 1995:15 shows that the harm the women have suffered through earlier abuse enhances and deepens in prostitution (SOU 1995:15, p. 4).

An importance of motivating the prostitutes to seek help and get out of prostitution was described in the investigation. It said that they need to feel that they do not risk any form of consequences because they sell sex (prop. 1997/87:55, p. 104). Further, the investigation states that prostitution harms society. The fact that men can buy women in order to fulfill their own sexual needs goes against the perception of humans' equal rights and ambition towards total equality between men and women (SOU 1995:15, p. 4). Any society that defends principles of legal, political, economic and social equality for women and girls must reject the idea that girls can be bought and sexually exploited by men (Skilbrei & Holmström 2013, p. 31). In such a society prostitution is perceived as a type of sexual violence (Skilbrei & Holmström 2013, p. 81). This is an example of how radical feminist perspective view prostitution as a form of male, patriarchal violence against women on an individual and structural level driven by men's power and sexuality (Levy 2015, p. 30).

Lastly, the investigation recommended that prostitution is criminalized (SOU 1995:15, p. 7). They believed that the positive effect would be that it would change norms as well as make a statement that prostitution is not socially acceptable (prop. 1997/87:55, p. 183). The statement

was also meant for other countries, which could decrease people coming to Sweden for sex trade purposes (SOU 2010:49, p.47). The ban was expected to also decrease the domestic purchases of sex. They meant that for many buyers, the risk of discovery, police investigation and a trial would be a strong repellent factor. They also thought that the ban would have a repellent effect for women selling sex (SOU 1995:15, p. 7). Even though there are arguments against criminalizing purchase of sexual services, the government still meant that the arguments for criminalization are so substantial that it is worth to have a ban against buying temporary sexual encounters (prop. 1997/87:55, p. 104).

Since 1999, it has been illegal to buy sexual services in Sweden (Lag (1998:408) om förbud mot köp av sexuella tjänster). All sex exchanged for money is regarded as sexual exploitation (Levy 2015, p. 66). According to the law, a person who pays for casual sexual relations should be punished by a fine or prison for maximum of a year (Lag (1998:408) om förbud mot köp av sexuella tjänster).

Buying sexual favors can be considered a crime against one person as well as a crime against public order. Therefore, the one who has sold sex can be regarded as plaintiff if the person has been offended or suffered injury by the crime. If the one selling sex should be regarded as plaintiff must be decided in each individual case (prop. 2010/11:77, p. 14). In proposition 2010/11:77, it is also stated that it must become clearer that the person who have performed sexual favors against payment can be regarded as plaintiff and therefore get indemnity. This should be adjusted depending on eventual aggravating circumstances (prop. 2010/11:77, p. 30).

This is a subject of discussion in a court case from 2008 where a 31-year-old man bought sex from a 15-year-old-girl. The compensation in this case was a bottle of whiskey. This case has later been identified as a particularly significant case because of the discussion on whether the girl should be viewed as a plaintiff or not. The judges in the District Court did not consider the actions against the girl as especially offensively, although it is described to be "clumsily and not very nice". The judges state that if indemnity will emanate, it is required that the crime has offended one person so much that they get the role of plaintiff. The purpose of the law regarding the crime should also be to protect the plaintiff. The District Court means that actions such as buying sexual favors and buying sexual acts from children are crimes which protective interests lay in protecting women and children as a group and try to erase a societal issue, i. e. prostitution.

This led to the District Court deciding that the youth is not offended by the crime, that she is therefore not a plaintiff and should not receive indemnity. The case went on to the Court of Appeal. They stated that if someone has voluntarily participated in an action, they cannot be perceived as being exposed to severe violation. The meaning of the limit for sexual autonomy and its criminal adjustment have though been perceived to be that one who is under 15 years old cannot be regarded as mature enough to make decisions about sexual acts of a more qualified type themselves. For example, when an adult has sex with someone, knowing that they are under 15 years old, it is generally to be regarded as a serious violation even if the plaintiff has participated voluntarily. In this case the youth is however 15 years old. Like the District Court, the Court of Appeal means that the crime in question has the general purpose of fighting prostitution as a societal phenomenon. The youth is however particularly protected by the law since it she not yet 18 years old. This crime is therefore different from that of the law against buying sexual favors. The Court of Appeal means that the crime of buying sexual acts from children in some cases should make the child eligible for violation indemnity. In this case, an adult man has gotten a girl who is only 15 years old to both undertake and tolerate numerous sexual acts including intercourse. This has been done with compensation of alcohol which the girl had asked the man to get for her before they started discussing sexual favors. The investigation shows that the girl has not been active in the sexual acts herself, but mainly passive. The man has also through repeated urges brought the girl to say things during the sexual acts which she has experienced as demeaning. Therefore, the judges decide that the circumstances of the crime can be regarded as an attack on the plaintiff's person and that she has been severely offended by the crime (RH 2008:79, case number B 8918-06).

In proposition 2004/05:45, it is stated that in order to protect youths from being introduced to prostitution, the application of the law buying sexual services from youths should extend to punish someone who uses the youth for sexual favors although someone else has paid for it. The proposition also states that youths' way into prostitution usually do not start with having sex for money, but rather material things such as clothes and jewelry. Further, there can be situations where some for example take advantage of a young person's weakness or lack of maturity and against compensation lure, entice and use them for sexual reasons. The committee further proposed that the current expression "sexual relations" is replaced by "sexual act". The law should be applied to youths who are not yet 18 years old (prop. 2004/05:45, p. 92).

In 2005, there was a sexual crime reform. The earlier law introduced in 1999 was replaced by a new penalty regulation, called buying sexual services. The change was done to clarify that the purchase can be a one-time occurrence (SOU 2010:49, p. 47). To be held accountable it is enough that compensation has been promised for the sexual encounter, that the payment is a presumption for the sexual act (SOU 2010:49, p. 79).

In 2010, the government presented an investigation with the purpose to evaluate the ban against buying sexual services between the years 1999 and 2008. It says that it was presumed by some that the new law would lead to that those who are being used in prostitution would not dare to take contact with authorities or seek help to the same extension. The investigation states that the new law has not led to a difference in the amount of contact between street prostitutes and authorities. They have regular contact with social services, health care and non-profit organizations. The prostitution unit in Stockholm has during the 2000s had a big increase of client contacts (SOU 2010:49, pp. 128-129). Further, the investigation states that there was roughly the same amount of street prostitutes in Sweden, Norway and Denmark before the new Swedish law. After this time, there has been a substantial increase in street prostitution in Norway and Denmark while there has been a decrease in Sweden by half. Since there are large similarities between these three countries, economical and socially, the investigation's conclusion is that the decrease of street prostitution is a direct consequence of the law (SOU 2010:49, p. 226). Additionally, the police and women who have left prostitution have stated that it is not true that the buyers would have gotten worse and more violent since the ban was introduced. However, they confirm that violence is always present in prostitution (SOU 2010:49, p. 221).

Theory and earlier research

Social representation

According to the theory of social psychology, knowledge is without exceptions produced through interaction and communication. The theory looks at the processes through which knowledge is generated, transformed and projected into the social world. The engagement of the human interests is always linked to knowledge's expression. Knowledge is not something that is objectively created but rather originated from the world where people interact and human interests, needs and desires find expression, satisfaction and frustration (Moscovici 2001, p. 2).

The individual is always existing in a context with norms. Context, norms and goals are described to be constraining factors for the individuals own created representation. These are dependent on how society is structured and are therefore connected to the distribution of power (Klempe 2013, p. 3). Social representation is not stable since there are two contradicting factors operating at the same time: the collective/shared representations and the individual representations. These two factors interact and are more or less inseparable. The collective representations are shared in a certain and well-defined group. These lead to boundaries between the individual that are both clear and not clear at the same time (Klempe 2013, p. 2). In the theory of social representation, it is stated that everybody's mind is affected by the prior conditioning which is imposed by representations, language and culture (Wagoner 2012, p. 7).

In the theory of social representation, it is believed that although ideas are existing and anchored within the individual, the ideas are not complete until they are communicated (Klempe 2013, p. 3). Communication is a way of constructing reality. Conversation helps people make sense of reality and transform the unfamiliar into the familiar (Jesuino 2008, p. 395). This is also the way that an individual's own created representations get modified and adjusted to a common understanding. This is where boundaries between the common and individual representations get blurred (Klempe 2013, p. 3).

It is the scientific knowledge that dominates the social life, but the everyday human needs social representations in order to be able to process the continuing stream of knowledge (Lindblom 1999, p. 127 & p. 132). It is described how scientific knowledge loses its precision and substance when leaving the scientific arena for the social sphere (Lindblom 1999, p. 127). The corner stone of everyday communication is to always reduce the complexity of a phenomenon. While within

the scientific field, things are problematized by continuing researches and a strive for new discoveries, the everyday person tries to de-problematize what is problematic (Lindblom 1999, p. 136). When the knowledge is getting simplified in order to transform into the social life, it also gets misrepresented (Lindblom 1999, p. 127). Apart from being simplified, the knowledge also has to be placed in given meaningful contexts. Without this, the social life would not get explanations which it needs to exist and would instead be replaced by confusion and desperation (Lindblom 1999, p. 132). Moscovici calls this common-sense knowledge (Lindblom 1999, p. 127). In the social world, there are centers of power which claim authority and legitimacy in order to regulate knowledge. The idea of social representation can be viewed as the form where collective life has been adjusted to decenter conditions of legitimation. Legitimacy, in the modern world, is part of a complex and contested social dynamic where representations of groups in society are working towards establishing a hegemony (Moscovici 2001, p. 9). Representations are the product of interaction and communication and they mold at any moment as a result of the specific balance of these processes of social influence (Moscovici 2001, p. 13).

In order to understand the scientific knowledge and making it less intimidating, the everyday person constructs knowledge by using social representation. By doing so, a sense of security and wellbeing is created. The social representations are necessary for the knowledge to be transformed from the scientific sphere into the social life, making the knowledge understandable to the everyday person (Lindblom 1999, p. 132). Due to representation, humans in the social world are compelled to make classifications of people and attach signs to them. We require the signs to help us distinguish one representation from another and a representation from that which it represents. A sign will simply say: This is a representation, or This is not a representation (Moscovici 2001, pp. 20-21). When encountering someone or something, we give them a definite form and put them in a known category. We then establish them as a model of a certain type which is shared by a group of people. To be able to understand and code what we encounter, we conform the person or element to fit a certain model, so they become identical to others in the category we place them. This helps us understand what stands for what (Moscovici 2001, p. 22). This does not only entail categorization itself, but also the naming of categories. By placing things within a system of named categories, they are given a position within a culture's matrix of identity. By naming categories of individuals and phenomenon, we can distinguish social identities (Lindblom 1999, p. 133). Because of this, we sometimes fail to see what is right in front

of us. A certain class of people can become invisible to us due to pre-established fragmentation of reality. The classification of the people and the things which comprise it makes some visible and the rest invisible (Moscovici 2001, p. 19). Neutrality is not possible in this system, where each person or element must have a positive or negative value and assume a given place in a clearly graded hierarchy (Moscovici 2001, p. 43). The hierarchy is created by the dominant ideology which is created and imposed by their social class, the state, the church or the school. What an individual or a group say or think is never done outside the dominant class' impact, but rather only reflects such an ideology (Moscovici 2001, p. 29). All of our minds are affected by prior conditioning through representations, language and culture. According to social psychology, we can never get rid of all convention or eliminate every prejudice in order to think in a vacuum. We can however aim to isolate which representations are inherent in the persons and objects we encounter and what it is they represent (Moscovici 2001, p. 23).

Critical social work

Critical social work criticizes traditional social work for maintaining and reinforcing society's oppression and inequalities (Mattsson 2014, p. 8). The creators of critical social work were against the oppressive and conservative nature of social work where in the larger part of the Western world, social work took its stance from a medical, therapeutic model which explains people's problems with their individual personal or psychological shortcomings (Weiss-Gal, Levin & Krumer-Nevo 2014, p. 55). Critical social workers believe that social work should aim towards challenging inequality, marginalization and oppression at a structural level by using structural understandings of social problems (Mattsson 2014, p. 8). The goal of critical social work is to have a full interweave of aims on personal and societal levels. An example on the personal level is to include changing internalized patterns of dominance and oppression as well as expanding consciousness of the oppressive aspects of one's life. An example of the societal level is to include strengthening sense of community, expanding awareness of oppressive practices among communities and changing public discourse on oppressed social groups (Weiss-Gal, Levin & Krumer-Nevo 2014, p. 56). Mattsson (2014) makes this concrete by presenting three steps to follow in order to critically reflect on a specific incident. The first step is to identify a critical incident and describe it as detailed as possible. The second step is to then make a critical reflection on the description. The first thing to do here is to identify power relations operating in the incident. Mattsson states that when understanding how power relations might affect the social

worker, the client and the organization, it is possible to create alternative understandings and actions. The third and final step is to reconstruct and redevelop new and emancipating strategies (Mattsson 2014, p. 13).

There are also different types of critical social work, namely Marxist, radical, socialist, structural, feminist, progressive, anti-oppressive, anti-discriminatory, anti-racist and post-modern. They all share that they criticize the social status quo and the role social workers take in maintaining it (Weiss-Gal, Levin & Krumer-Nevo 2014, p. 55). Radical social work creates a structural analysis of personal problems, an analysis of the social control functions of social work and welfare, an ongoing social critique and goals of personal liberation and social change (Fook 2003, pp. 123-124). According to Marxists, statutory social work is reinforcing middle-class ideology and agency norms (Dominelli & McLeod 1989, p. 105). They mean that the purpose of the social worker is to gain knowledge of the devastating effects of our current social divisions through contact with clients and can explain the social origin of problems facing clients and therefore decrease the stigmatizing effect of their intervention (Dominelli & McLeod 1989, p. 14).

One aspect of critical social work practice is to highlight the power imbalances between the social worker and the client. Generally, the social worker has more power than the client due to the social worker being perceived as an expert, having the ability to shape the discourse and the authority to make decisions concerning the clients and their social position (Weiss-Gal, Levin & Krumer-Nevo 2014, p. 56). Therefore, the social worker might do their job with good intentions but still uphold and reproduce social structures and oppression. Mattsson (2014) present intersectionality to analyze this power imbalance. An intersectional point of view explores gender, sexuality, class and race as complex and intertwined categories and social structures (Mattsson 2014, p. 9). Social work operates in a constantly changing and politicized field due to shifts in social policies. The institutional level entails legislation and prescriptive requirements for practice and ideological expectations of individual social workers (Dominelli 2002, p. 43). Critical social work proposes an open and honest approach with clients to make all this visible. The clients are then aware of the social worker's role and their relationship. When the clients know that the social workers have constraints operating on them and that they are being supervised and accountable, they can also understand the risks of being completely honest with the social worker (Dominelli & McLeod 1989, p. 104). Dominelli and McLeod (1989) believe

that almost all children would appreciate the knowledge that the social worker is near the bottom of a hierarchy and is obliged by law to take certain actions for certain circumstances (Dominelli & McLeod 1989, p. 105).

One's self-image is created through other people's reaction to oneself. Their reaction can be expressed through facial expression, vocal tone and demeanor. Positive interaction is where the capacity to think about the self is developed and expressed. Social work can be seen as a form of symbolic interaction. Therefore, it is important for the social worker to cultivate a positive self-image for the client by focusing on the quality of the social interaction when professional encounters occur. By doing this, the social worker can help decrease stigma and labelling of the client (Houston 2016, p. 11). Houston writes about Honneth's exposition of disrespect and violation. He writes about violation of a body through abuse. In addition to the physical pain, a "feeling of being defensively at the mercy of another subject, to the point of feeling that one has been deprived of reality" arises (Houston 2016, p. 132). Violation leads to loss of confidence and trust in others and the victim loses autonomous control of its own body. The victim can be said to have experienced a psychological death. Another kind of disrespect is denying someone its inviolable rights. Here, one's personal autonomy is affected, and the status of fully-fledged citizen endowed with moral entitlements to take part in social interaction is lost. The person is no longer seen as capable of making its own moral judgements whereas their moral self-respect is lost, and shame is experienced (Houston 2016, pp. 13-14).

Another aspect of critical social work is the social worker's understanding of the power of language (Weiss-Gal, Levin & Krumer-Nevo 2014, p. 57). Language is also an important variable in the theory of social representation. A word and its definition, according to Moscovici, contain a way of classifying individuals and expresses theories regarding the reasons for an individual's behavior (Moscovici 2001, p. 26). Language is further described as a way for a group to come to terms with the unfamiliar (Moscovici 2001, p. 39). It has been stated that women and girls have been the primary object of investigation, classification and documentation. Studying the moralistic discourse that had ruled the social reforms in the 19th and 20th centuries, revealed a discourse that blamed young women, especially the poor, for immoral sexual behavior. Professional discourse is included on the production of social organization and creating a social picture of reality where it is made clear what is human suffering regarding public morality

(Krumer-Nevo, Berkovitz-Romano & Komem 2015, p. 426). There is deep-rooted fear of the strange, and when we experience something that is unusual, or an otherness, we first reject it because it threatens the established order (Moscovici 2001, pp. 38-39). Re-presentation is done through language when we transfer the unknown which disturbs and threatens us by separating normally linked concepts and perceptions, setting them in a context where the unknown can be included in an acknowledged category (Moscovici 2001, p. 39). The professional discourse does not only say something about the people they are writing about, but also about the professionals themselves and their attitudes towards the clients. These attitudes can adjust and serve the hegemonic view or defy them (Krumer-Nevo et al 2015, p. 426). Krumer-Nevo et al (2015) presents four different types of discourses regarding girls: the discourse of pathology, vulnerability, agency and intersectionality (Krumer-Nevo et al 2015, p. 431). The discourse of pathology was similar to a moralistic discourse, where the explanation for the girls' behavior was their weak egos. This was however not connected to the statement that it was possible that these girls had been victims of sexual abuse (Krumer-Nevo et al 2015, p. 432). The discourse of vulnerability included the following aspects: considering girls as vulnerable instead of deviant, perceiving the girls as subjects instead of objects, explaining vulnerability as a result of restricting social structures, institutions and construction and finally perceiving the girls' pre-conditions as something they share with all girls (Krumer-Nevo et al 2015, p. 435). The discourse of agency entailed an interest in the girls' actively navigation between restrictive social forces. The girls' voices were taken into account. The girls were also placed in the context of gender inequality, and this was considered the main component for shaping the girls' lives and everyday experiences. Further, the girls were characterized as aware of the limitations that the social structures put on them and from this creating their own culture as active agents (Krumer-Nevo et al 2015, p. 437).

[Feminist social work](#)

It is described that girls with non-normative behavior have always been one of the main targets for social work intervention (Krumer-Nevo et al 2015, p. 426). Dominelli and McLeod (1989) have determined the five main elements of feminist social work as following: the definition of social problems, the development of feminist campaigns and networks, feminist therapy and counselling, feminist statutory social work and lastly feminist working relations (Dominelli &

McLeod 1989, p. 156). I will first and foremost focus on the feminist social work that is conducted in relation to the clients.

Regarding redefining the social problem, feminist social work has identified women's experiences of their existence, highlighting the lack of resources, power and emotional fulfillment which hold women down. It is shown that women are in a subordinate and powerless social position (Dominelli & McLeod 1989, pp. 22-23). It has been stated that young women are processed into care in a way that young men are not due to the women's sexual promiscuity which threatens to escape family control. For example, social work supervision tries to foster women offenders to the routines of domesticity. Dominelli and McLeod (1989) are not against controls being put at certain individual's behavior but mean that a feminist approach first and foremost investigates the ways in which women's behavior is controlled to the detriment and subordination of their welfare (Dominelli & McLeod 1989, p. 112). The plight of the women has clearly been put on the agenda for social change. Through feminist social work, women have been given the space to produce their own narratives about their problems and pinpoint the social origins of these problems. This makes it clear to the women that their problems are universal social phenomena and not individual peculiarities which also then strengthens the evidence for the professional analysts that this is the case. As a result, the social work with "women's issues" are further legitimized (Dominelli & McLeod 1989, p. 12). One major component of feminist social work is namely this; to make women's private problems public. To re-examine the division between private and public life is described as the biggest difference between women as a group and men as a group in social work (Dominelli 2002, p. 21). To be able to explain events in social life, social workers must theorize the interconnection between the personal and the public (Houston 2016, p. 4). The discrepancy between the professionals' perception of the women's social problems and the women's own experiences leads to the women receiving help which violates their needs, and the professionals may fail to address identity issues relevant to the group of female clients (Dominelli 2002, p. 72). Further, the relationship that women have created to other women in the same situation, have given women confidence enough to challenge the professional's understanding of their situation, their definition of women as passive victims and difference in power between the female clients and the professional social workers (Dominelli & McLeod 1989, p. 34). Previously, women have been seen primarily as caregivers and they have been defined as dependent on others which devalue their ability to act as agents who shape their

own lives (Dominelli 2002, p. 19). The relationships also give the women strength to end their feelings of isolation. This has given the women a sense of solidarity and that they can gather with others for a common cause. They can therefore redefine their situation and their private problems can be transformed into issues of social concern with a fight that will benefit humankind (Dominelli & McLeod 1989, p. 33).

One of the biggest challenges for social workers in this regard has been that they are part of the public patriarchy but yet been condemned to practice in the private domain (Dominelli 2002, p. 66). Historically, the profession of social work has been dependent on state and male patronage for its resources. This is an important part of the context from which feminist social work has emerged. It leads to an institutionalized dependency that women experience; individually as well as clients and social workers. The dependency makes professional activities having to compromise according to the political terrains (Dominelli 2002, p. 44). The social work, either it being statutory or community based, collides with local policies. Feminist politics is therefore needed in order for feminist social work to be effective (Dominelli & McLeod 1989, pp. 42-43). Dominelli and McLeod (1989) mean that the state intervenes in every aspect of people's lives and that the separation between the public or institutional power and individual's personal power does not exist. The state intervenes through legislation, welfare agencies, law enforcement agencies and local authorities (Dominelli & McLeod 1989, p. 156).

Another aspect of feminist social work is establishing non-hierarchical relationships between the social worker and female client (Dominelli & McLeod 1989, p. 38). A social worker has more power than the client and can because of that silence the other woman's voice, and therefore oppress her. One example of the power that the social worker has over the female clients, is that they have the power to take the client's children away from her (Dominelli 2002, p. 81).

Intersectionality have been used as an analytical tool to further investigate the power relation between the social worker and the client. One approach regarding intersectionality that has been identified as relevant to social work is the intercategory approach. This approach aims to understand how different social groups are affected by structural inequalities and how identity is created from social structures. Its focus is on diversity within social groups and the lived experiences, multiple identities and standpoint that individuals within the group have, having the knowledge that the people in different groups are at the intersection of numerous oppressions

(Mattsson 2014, p. 10). Feminist social workers aim to empower women instead of oppressing them. This is done through listening to their stories, validating their analyses of situations and engaging them in decisions about their lives (Dominelli 2002, p. 39).

Subjugated knowledge

Subjugated knowledge is the knowledge of "the Other" (Hulusjö 2013, p. 177). The Other is created through a process in which the dominant group defines, categorizes and constitutes its Others. The Others are prescribed ideas about difference and social significance (Hulusjö 2013, p. 178). Moscovici (1993) means that a society cannot be created by mixing individuals together (Moscovici 1993, p. 70). Scoular (2015) means that by making the laws on prostitution, they created the category prostitutes which meant a separate class of women, separating them from their working-class communities (Scoular 2015, p. 46). The Other is tightly connected to the idea of "us", which is the dominant group. The dominant group defines themselves through its representations of the Others; the Others are what "we" are not. The dominant group controls the Other's process of representation, as a way to control the group itself. Being defined and categorized as the Other means stigmatization, disempowerment and silencing. The Other process are done by the structures and forces of power and knowledge (Hulusjö 2013, p. 178). The dominant group has to try to see reality from the perspective of the dominant group in order to discover subjugated knowledge (Figuera-McDonough; Netting & Nichols-Casebolt 2001, p. 412). It is claimed that if social workers want to detach themselves and their work from subjugated knowledge, they must understand that women have various experiences, views on the world and interpretations of social facts (Figuera-McDonough et al 2001, p. 414). The social workers need to step back from the role as experts

with authority and look at the power-knowledge relationship (Hartman 1992, p. 483). They should no longer see themselves as objective observers and the clients as passive subjects who the social workers will examine and interpret, but rather listen to the clients' voices, narratives and construction of reality (Hartman 1992, p. 484).

Design/method

Qualitative method

I have chosen to use qualitative methods instead of quantitative methods. Qualitative research tends to perceive the social reality as changing while quantitative research tends to perceive it as static. Quantitative researchers also tend to explain the social reality as something exterior and imperative in relation to the actors. Qualitative researchers, however, stress the importance of studying the processes in which the social world is created. They mean that the social reality is something that is socially constructed (Bryman 1995, p. 123).

Further, qualitative methods are distinguished by wanting to see the subjects of the studies' perspective (Bryman 1995, p. 77). These are then tried to be understood from the context in which the subjects are in (Bryman 1995, p. 80). In the non-positivistic qualitative approach, there is a belief that there is not one correct version of reality and knowledge. The multiple versions of reality are also depending on the context (Braun & Clarke 2013, p. 6).

Abductive analysis

Qualitative data can be analyzed through abductive analysis where theory is constructed (Timmermans & Tavory 2012, p. 189). Abductive analysis differs from deductive and inductive analysis by that it entails a process of forming an explanatory hypothesis from the observed consequences (Timmermans & Tavory 2012, p. 171). Although this analyzing method provides less certainty than inductive and deductive analysis, it is described to have a logical form as it seeks a situational fit between observed facts and observed rules (Timmermans & Tavory 2012, p. 170-171). In the abductive method, theory is sought, and explanations suggested (Timmermans & Tavory 2012, p. 171). Identifying meaning out of the observed consequences have three parts that are interlinked. These are a sign, an object and an interpretant. The sign does not exist by itself, only in relation to the object. The interpretant is the transformation that gives the sign meaning. Creating meaning is therefore not something abstract, it is a practical work that is taking place in action (Tavory & Timmermans 2014, p. 23).

Ethical considerations

Ethics in social work research

One aspect that is considered to separate social work research from other types of research is that it often aims to conduct in-depth explorations of personal experiences and feelings (Shaw &

Holland 2014, p. 107). Another aspect of social work research is that social work researchers first need to consider ethics and values with their profession (Bell 2017, p. 42). It is important to weigh the benefits for a greater number of people with the potential harm for the individual (Shaw & Holland 2014, p. 107). There is evidence of qualitative interviews leaving emotional distress for the participant, but it is however no indications of the distress being any more substantial than in everyday life or that it requires counselling (Shaw & Holland 2014, pp. 24-25). Social work research can even be beneficial for the participants; as a group as well as for the individual. Individual participants have been motivated to share their difficult or abusive experiences because they hope to help others (Shaw & Holland 2014, p. 107). Further, the participants can find satisfaction in knowing that their experiences are valued and of interest. It can also give them new insights of themselves (Shaw & Holland 2014, p. 108). Bell (2017) present basic ethical considerations to increase the chance of it benefiting participants: respect for human dignity and self-determination, fair treatment, respect for privacy, gaining informed consent, explaining the nature of the research as fully as possible to the participants and not coercing people into participating (Bell 2017, pp. 47-48).

The youths

I would preferably have wanted to interview young adults who are or have been placed in treatment centers and who have had sex for compensation. My aim is to investigate how social workers can work with individuals who have sex for compensation. Therefore, I would have found it interesting to interview the youths about how they have experienced the help society has given them contra the vulnerability they have been exposed to. I however do not think that I could do this from the ethical perspective. It is stated that we do not really perceive everyone as having equal rights to privacy and confidentiality. Very little harm is considered to follow from breaches of privacy alone. Rather, the rights to privacy should be related to the social role someone is playing the ownership of the space they are occupying and the legality of their activities (Gomm 2004, p. 310). The youths that I would have liked to interview would in some cases not consent of being placed in a treatment center. Therefore, it can be assumed that they cannot present themselves in the social role which they would prefer to present themselves. By authorities and the adults around them, they might have been given the role as solely a victim or perpetrator. The chances of them playing ownership of their space would not be great. Further, they might not have an adult who listens to them or believe their stories. It might be

disappointing if not harmful for the youths to open up about what they have been or are going through, without the adult being able to give them support in any way. Gomm (2004) states that researchers have to be able to predict what topics people will find upsetting (Gomm 2004, p. 314). From what have been presented in the literature review, I have to assume that this topic is one that the participants would find difficult to talk about.

Although I would not interview the youths themselves directly, they are the end beneficiaries of my study. Therefore, there is of great importance to understand the concept of sensitive research (Shaw & Holland 2014, p. 24).

Informed consent

With the request for participation as an interview subject in my thesis, I have included informed consent. Informed consent entails that the interviewees are informed of the general purpose of the study, how it is structured and what risks and benefits that comes with participating. Further, informed consent includes voluntary participation and that the interviewees can end their participation whenever. The foundational principles of informed consent are individual autonomy and to do good (Kvale & Brinkmann 2014, p. 107).

Feminist research

Qualitative methods are preferred in feminist research since it unlike quantitative research is considered to allow women's voices to be heard (Bryman 2016, p. 403). Feminist research is seen as similar to social work research in that it has a desire to illuminate and focus on the marginalized groups. They also look at the social structures that maintain the processes of marginalization. I also combine the ideas of social work research and feminist research by doing an emancipatory research. This research entails recognizing that differing personal, social and institutional location affect how different parties experience and interpret the world. Therefore, it is not possible to conduct a research that is natural and free of values. Emancipatory research also attempts to question and challenge power relations in research as well as legitimatizing other ways of knowing and of expressing that knowledge. Further, emancipatory research aims towards changing perceptions of oppressed groups or changing practices and policies (Shaw & Holland 2014, p. 263).

Feminist research differs from other research regarding ethical considerations in that the feminist researchers consider themselves primarily accountable to the oppressed group instead of to the

research community. Their belief is namely that the purpose of research should be to improve the circumstances of the oppressed rather than contribute knowledge in academia. In other research, the researchers aim to do the participants no harm while feminist researchers aim to do good to a certain category of people (Gomm 2004, p. 302).

Power

Especially in feminist research, it is considered to be of utmost value that the researcher understands the difference of power between them and the participants. For instance, the researcher has the power to interpret what the participants express. It may be that the researcher suspects that the participants misunderstand their way of life. By assuming that this is the case, we imply that there is a correct and an incorrect way of understanding reality (Shaw & Holland 2014, p. 11). This is particularly important to keep in mind in my thesis, since one of the feminist ideas about prostitution is that the prostitutes that say that they have chosen it themselves have in fact a false consciousness.

It is further important to understand power relations when doing social work research since what passes for social reality is closely linked to the distribution of power. Therefore, language and structure are important to consider within the social work contexts (Shaw & Holland 2014, p. 18).

Knowledge

The postmodern idea of pragmatism does not explain knowledge as a representation of reality (Kvale & Brinkmann 2014, p. 75). Here, it is believed that language and knowledge do not copy reality but are tools with which one handles a changing reality (Kvale & Brinkmann 2014, p. 74). The interview in research is producing knowledge, and this knowledge is created socially in the interaction between the researcher and the participant. The knowledge is here perceived as interrelation and intersubjective (Kvale & Brinkmann 2014, p. 77).

Data and theory

Interviews

My collection of data was done through four semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are the dominant type of interviews and is especially used gathering data within a feminist research framework (Braun & Clarke 2013, p. 78; Bryman 2016, p. 488). The semi-structured interview entails that the researcher has made an interview guide before the interview.

This can include questions or topics that is going to be covered. The interview guide is not set in stone as to the precise wording or order of the questions. The interview process is flexible, and the participant can raise issues that are not included in the interview guide. What is important here is how the participant frames and understands issues. In a semi-structured interview, the participant is given space to address what he or she believes is important in explaining and understanding events, forms of behavior and social phenomenon (Braun & Clarke 2013, p. 78; Bryman 2016, p. 488).

Since I am a social worker, access to these groups is possible through my studies and work experience. However, I have chosen not to interview closer coworkers, since that would not give me a variety of geographical or workplace perspectives. Therefore, I posted a search on Facebook, asking if there was someone working with youths that I could interview. From this I got in contact with four people and decided to interview all of them. The interviewees all work at social services with youths, one of them work with unaccompanied refugee youths. None of the interviewees work at departments specializing in sex for compensation since there are none for youths. The social workers work in different parts of Sweden. Two of them work in two of the three biggest cities in Sweden and two work in small cities.

The interviews were conducted over telephone since I wanted to interview people from different municipalities and I had limited time and resources. My aim was initially to record the phone calls and then transcribe the interviews. Due to technical difficulties the recording from the first interview was lost. Since this would hinder me from transcribing and make a discourse analysis of the interviews, I decided to go with consistency and carry through all the interviews in the same way. Instead, I took notes during the phone calls as closely to what they said as possible and wrote it properly immediately after the completion of the interview.

Discourse analysis

In social representation, communication through mass media plays a big part (Jesunio 2008, p. 395). Lindblom (1999) means that mass media plays an important role in it being a link between science and the everyday life. For scientific knowledge to be introduced in social life, it first has to be transformed through mass media; it is the main channel between science and the social life. We cannot expect the scientific knowledge to gain legitimacy for the everyday person unless mass media has legitimized it first (Lindblom 1999, p. 15). Because of this, social representations

can be seen as becoming mainly constructed in media (Lindblom 1999, p. 129). Since I want to see what social representations has been created around sex for compensation in Sweden, I believe that it is important to look at what and how mass media has written about youths having sex for compensation.

One of the research questions was if the main discourse of the social workers is aligned with the discourse in society regarding sex for compensation. For this, I chose to search for Swedish news articles about youths having sex for compensation.

The news articles were searched on the university libraries' media archive. Two searches were made, the first one using the search words "Young Persons' Act prostitution" (but in Swedish, "LVU prostitution" and the second "youths prostitution" ("ungdomar prostitution"). One may argue that by using the word "prostitution" in the search, one has already chosen what kind of articles one will find. Prostitution is the word that the radical feminists use, while the liberals use the word "sex work". However, I do not believe that this have made a difference since I have found articles that do not use the word prostitution. Since buying sex is illegal in Sweden, it is a fair notion to have that the newspapers will use this word disregarding what their views on it is.

All in all, 99 news articles were saved and read. From these 99 news articles, 37 were used in the results. Sometimes, there were several identical articles published in different papers. This was the case when the article comes from the Telegraphic News Agency. Some articles were filtered out because they did not have much substance in them about the topic, maybe the word was just mentioned.

The news articles that I used was between the years 1992 and 2017. That means that they are from before and after the sex purchase law was implemented in Sweden. The choice of sampling period may allow us to study how the discourse has changed pre- and post the introduction of the new sex purchase law. This, however, lies outside the scope of this study.

The 37 news articles that were chosen has been regarded as one sample. The sample has been read as a whole with different perspectives in mind. The perspectives consisted of the same theoretical themes as the interviews. These are social representation, knowledge, critical social work and feminist social work and subjugated knowledge. The articles have not been read one at a time with all the perspectives at once. Since they have been read perspective per perspective,

the news articles that have included more than one theme have been used as an example in more than one category.

The choice was made to not include op-eds or letters. The news articles sometimes consisted of interviews about the phenomenon with youths having sex for compensation. Others with police officers, social workers or other professionals working with the issues. Sometimes they consisted of reporting about a specific event, such as if sex buyers had been caught. One could argue that some interview subjects may be perusing an agenda. For example, there is one police officer specializing in sex work/prostitution who is an active voice against legalizing having sex for compensation.

I have chosen news articles from large and small Swedish morning and evening newspapers, and some from public service news agencies. Some of the papers, national as well as local, have a more or less ideological profile. Some are known to be more conservative, some are liberal and some are socialist. Some of the newspapers are more distinguishable politically or ideologically positioned. One of the papers is a Christian paper and another has the name social democrat in its name.

I do not believe that it would have been possible to choose articles that were not ideological positioned in any way. I think that the closest one could come would be the public service channels. One could however argue that those are not either free of ideological or political agendas since it is the current government owning them. Instead, I have tried to get such a broad view and perspective as possible by choosing news articles from newspapers that differs in their positioning, so I would get a large spectrum. I also tried to include articles from evening papers, morning papers, national papers and local papers from different parts of the country.

The news outlets reflect the search sample from the media archive. I would say that the news papers in the sample are established and well-known papers. Since I want to study a “mainstream” discourse, I have chosen to only use this search method, and not find more obscure publications.

The method used to analyze the data from the news articles was discourse analysis. Discourse entails language, nonverbal communication and visual images (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 2000, p. 39).

Critical theory is a form of quality content analysis and the one that mostly resembles discourse analysis. This theory applies social sciences' theories on texts and then critique social and cultural structures. Reading a text using critical theory, one interprets the meaning of texts and symbolic expressions. Contemporary critical social analyses also look for socially structured systems of power and domination (Drisko & Maschi 2015, p. 83). Discourse analysis focus not only on the content, but mainly on how the content is expressed. It focuses on the language and the pattern of the language (Jorgensen & Phillips 2002, p. 9). In discourse analysis, it is believed that language is constructive. It is a mean to constitute one's perception of social reality (Bryman 2012, p. 528). Discourse is rhetorically organized to persuade others with different views on reality that one's own is the correct one (Bryman 2012, p. 530). Johnstone (2008, p. 10) claims that with discourse analysis, we see that people's memories of previous discourse helps shape their expression, and makes us explore the relationship between the text, its writer's goals and social relationships.

In discourse analysis, language is seen as communication which is not only produced by talking (Bryman 2012, p. 528). Further, it is believed that language is constructive. It is a mean to constitute one's perception of social reality. Analyzing the material with discourse analysis, the language the news articles use is believed to reveal what they think of a topic or their behavior and the reasons for it. The language used will reflect on the person expressing it, since that person has made choices springing from how they see reality. This also means that discourse is a type of action and language a practice used to make an argument, attributing blame and presenting oneself in a certain way (Bryman 2012, p. 530). Chouliaraki & Fairclough (2000) write that language is used "indexically", meaning that expressions used to describe reality are vague and general pointers in which the recipients of the discourse fill out with their shared knowledge and experience, namely their "common sense" (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 2000, p. 40). Language is seen as a power resource connected to ideology (Bryman 2012, p. 536). The method is also based on the knowledge that the social world is created in power (Jorgensen & Phillips 2002, p. 18). Discourse analysis then investigate and analyze the power relations in society (Jorgensen & Phillips 2002, p. 10). When there is a struggle between different discourses, it becomes obvious that different actors are trying to persuade others of their way of organizing society. However, our social practices can seem so natural that we cannot see that there could be other alternatives (Jorgensen & Phillips 2002, p. 36). Still, although discourses can seem uncontested at times, there

are always other conflicting discourses. The neutralized discourses are not stable and can shift with social change, disturbing the perception of an objective view of social reality (Jorgensen & Phillips 2002, p. 45).

Themes

The themes of this thesis are created by theoretical concepts.

A theme includes something significant about the data in relation to the research question. It also has a central organizing concept but will also include other ideas and aspects connected to the central organizing concept (Braun & Clarke 2013, p. 224). The central organizing concept is also what distinguishes a theme from a feature of the data. They both capture something that is recurring in the data, but a theme tells us something about the concept of the data that is meaningful (Braun & Clarke 2013, p. 224). When looking for themes in data, one should search for repetitions: topics that reoccur again and again. Further, one should look for indigenous typologies or categories. These are local expressions that are unfamiliar or used in an unfamiliar way. Transitions where ways in which topics shift is another thing to be aware of. One should also look for similarities and differences. Here, it is explored how participants discuss a topic in different ways. Lastly, one should search for linguistic connectors, for example "because" and "since" as such terms point to casual connections in the minds of the participants (Bryman 2016, p. 586). One of the most common critiques of a thematic analyze of data is the risk of losing the context in which the data appeared, and the social settings can be lost (Bryman 2016, p. 583). I will try to avoid this by being as transparent as possible regarding in what context the participant says something.

The themes were recognized through coding the results. It is described that in discourse analysis, coding is usually the first step. The material is read and reread in order to identify the themes and place the text in categories (Jorgensen & Phillips 2002, p. 104). The themes found in this thesis were categorizations and signs, knowledge and critical and feminist social work with the subheading subjugated knowledge.

Quality

Some criteria that emanated from when discussing the quality of the thesis is reliability and ecological validity. Reliability raises the question of whether the results are repeatable (Bryman 2016, p. 41). Of course, when interviewing others, the answers were not be exactly the same as

the previous interviewees. In qualitative research when one conduct interviews, the aim is to see the social reality from the participants' eyes. If the eyes are different, the social reality will differ. However, if the aim is to generalize the results, interviewing other persons with the same criteria should lead to a similar conclusion. Ecological validity refers to whether social scientific findings are applicable to people's every day, natural social settings. Sometimes, social research presents findings which may be technically valid but are not in resonance with people's everyday lives (Bryman 2016, p. 42).

There are two main criteria to examine in order to assess a qualitative study, namely trustworthiness and authenticity (Bryman 2008, p. 377).

Trustworthiness has four components: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Bryman 2008, p. 377). A study is considered credible if it has followed good practice and is presented to the studied social world which can then confirm the researcher's understanding of this social world (Bryman 2008, p. 377). This study has aimed at such good practice, in following ethical considerations and correct procedures. This thesis is in the social work field and the aim is for it to be read by others in the profession. Transferability means that the study and its results can be transferred and applied from the small group that has been studied to similar social settings (Bryman 2008, p. 378). In order to enhance the transferability of my study, I have included interview subjects from different parts of the country. They have also worked in different sized municipalities and in different types of social service offices. To ensure that a study is dependable, it is often audited by peers. In order for the peers to be able to audit the study, they have to be able to follow the process. This means that the records of all the phases in the study are saved and can be presented (Bryman 2008, p. 378). The dependability of this study has been ensured by presenting what has been done in the different phases. One can follow my discussions about making the choices I have done in the process. The thesis also presents how the study has been executed, such as how the articles have been found and how I have found my interview subjects. For a study to have confirmability means that the researcher does not try to make the result fit wanted theoretical inclinations or personal values (Bryman 2008, p. 379). As have been stated earlier in the thesis, sex for compensation is something of a divider in the feminist community and one can have strong ideological persuasions about this. My aim for the

thesis has been to see how a law built on one feminist ideological idea affects social work, and not to claim one of the ideologies to be the right one.

Authenticity focus on the political impact of the study. Authenticity have the following components to examine to asses a research's authenticity: fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity and tactical authenticity.

The fairness aspect is on whether the research fairly represent different viewpoints among members of the social setting (Bryman 2008, p. 379). I cannot say that I have done this completely without having to talked with the youths. This choice was made due to ethical considerations, meaning the study lacks some members' point of view. The youths have been interviewed in some of the news articles but their perspective have been filtered through the journalist's agenda and perception. I have tried to get different point of views by choosing news articles from different kind of news papers and social workers from different social services offices to get a broader point of view. However, they are all players with power regarding this issue.

To assess the ontological authenticity, one should ask the question if the research improves members' understanding of their social setting (Bryman 2008, p. 379). The aim of my research has been to examine if the social work's practice is aligned with the main discourse and the law which makes it ontological authentic.

The educative authenticity asks if the research better helps members appreciate the perspectives of other members in the social setting (Bryman 2008, p. 379). In order to compensate for the lack of the voices of the youths, I have included and explored the theories of subjugated knowledge and the power aspect within feminist social work. By doing this, the members might realize that it is those with their powers that define the social issue instead of letting the youths define their problems and their views on it.

The catalytic authenticity examines if the research has given the members a push towards changing their circumstances (Bryman 2008, p. 379). I believe that it has been shown that this research has catalytic authenticity by recognizing that several of the respondents have expressed that they now realize that this is an important issue they should learn more about and work more with.

This leads us to the final criteria: tactical authenticity. Here, the focus is on whether the research has empowered the members to do what is necessary in order to act upon their insights (Bryman 2008, p. 380). I believe that the respondents may have gotten ideas on how this should be done by asking how they detect what youths have sex for compensation and how their workplace is prepared for if they do. Hopefully, this will also be something the reader of the research will reflect on.

Results

All the interviews have been conducted in Swedish and all the articles have been in Swedish as well. Therefore, all the quotes are my own translations.

I wanted to know if the interviewed social workers express a way of social work that align with feminist ideologies on which the law against buying sex are based on. My second research question was what discourse can be seen among the interviewed social workers and if this aligns with the one in the media.

Social representation

This part will help give answers to my question what main discourse can be seen among social workers and if it is compliant with the majority of society. By seeing what categorizations the social workers use, we can also discover what discourse the social workers use. The result from the news articles in this thesis will work as a representative for the majority of society.

By seeing what signs the respondents attach to having sex for compensation, it demonstrates whether they follow the radical feminist ideas (vulnerability in prostitutes from the outset) or if they share the liberal view (anyone have a free will to have sex for compensation but vulnerability is a consequence of social stigma).

There are some expressions in the interviews that the youth having sex for compensation can be anyone. One interviewee says that she would not connect anything in particular to having sex for compensation. Another says that she does not think that it differs between boys and girls, even though most of the youths selling sex for compensation she has met have been boys. What is interesting regarding this is that all the respondents claim that they do not ask questions or give information to youths or parents if they do not suspect that they youths are already having sex for compensation. One respondent said that they inform parents of the risk that their youth may be having sex for compensation if the youth have been using drugs for a longer period of time. There are also other connections between drug use and having sex for compensation made in the interviews:

Those who are heavily addicted. If they run away, come back and won't tell anyone what has happened. If they have bought drugs but won't say where the money comes from.

There are some risk factors, such as addiction. It is very seldom that you give away drugs for free.

The articles seem to be pressing harder on presenting that it can be anyone having sex for compensation. Several articles state that the teenage girls having sex for compensation “can be girls who own horses” (Expressen 1992-07-27 & Helsingborgs Dagblad 1996-07-20). This can be interpreted as a way of expressing that the teenage girls are “normal” and privileged. It is said that a victim of human trafficking can look like “your own or your neighbor’s children (Metro 2013-08-14). A police officer is also saying that the children can be anywhere, as opposed to what many believe. People’s prejudices tend to be that they have to have terrible conditions at home, being drug addicts or having parents who are drug addicts. The writer of the article mean that people would prefer that their prejudices were right, since they are looking for explanation models as to how things could have gone so wrong. But in most cases, the children are not previously known by the social services or police. They come from seemingly well-functioning families. What the police officer has seen as a common denominator is that their parents do not have time for them because they are focusing on their careers (Dagens Nyheter 2012-05-05). In one article, a person who works with these issues state that the youths having sex for compensation are no representation for the normal population. The writer of the article states that earlier studies show that 1-2 percent of youths in Sweden have received compensation for sexual services at least once (Göteborgsposten 2008-05-24). In one article, it is written:

In Malmö, there are about 150 prostitutes. 60 percent of them are addicts. But among the beginners there are also unemployed mothers and stay at home wives without social problems, according to the police. (...) One of them is a luxurious prostitute, living in a house with her family and is living a composed life seen from the outside. (Expressen 1996-06-24)

There are a lot of articles that present what “type of” youths are having sex for compensation. One of these are the same as the most common one in the interviews with the social workers I have conducted, namely youths using drugs. Three of the four interviewees mention that drug abuse is something which put the youths in an extra big risk for having sex for compensation. It is expressed that it also can be a risk if they are in an environment where drugs are present. In the articles, it is described how girls from middle class families start using drugs and then start have sex for compensation (Aftonbladet 2002-01-02). Other articles use another, more stigmatizing, language. The headline of one of the articles about youths having sex for compensation is:

They are drug addicts. The child junkies – in Sweden. (Expressen 1995-02-27)

In another article, it is written:

(...) The drug whores have between five and ten customers per day in order to be able to finance their addiction. (Helsingborgs Dagblad 1996-07-20)

Other aspects that both the articles and interviews bring up is mental health issues and types of abandonments from parents. One article state that the social factors that cause youths having sex for compensation, are the same as the ones causing “adult prostitution”. Here, they mention earlier history of sexual abuse, having more mental health issues and that they drink and smoke more (Sveriges Radio 2004-05-11). Other articles mention that youths having sex for compensation are youths that have been neglected emotionally and care wise, that the youths have low self-esteem and that they are “broken” (Smålandsposten 2008-07-28; GT 2008-05-24; Borås tidning 2008-05-24). In the interviews, the mental health issues are not brought up as such, but almost all of them mention the lack of support and guidance from adults. The respondents state that youths that are at risk are youths that the adults seldom see, youths without a safe home or a stable place to be, lacking a strong social network and lack contact with their parents. The thing that are explained as a consequence of this, is that the youths stay at a lot of different places and no one knows where they are. Lacking these things also mean being dependent on strangers for shelter, money and food which can put them at risk for having sex for compensation.

There are other things that are mentioned in the articles which are not brought up in the interviews regarding what youths are having sex for compensation. Several of the articles make a point of that it is not just immigrant women having sex for compensation. It is written in a sensational style: that it might as well be “regular” Swedish youths. In one article, it is written that the debate (about youth prostitution) tend to be about prostitution as an immigration problem, but that the girls that the author of the article has documented are born and raised in Sweden, stating it is young Swedish women that are prostituting themselves in the streets (Göteborgsposten 1998-10-14). Another article states that it is easy to believe that all problems are among the immigrant groups in the suburbs, but that what this article is writing about is an ordinary Swedish small town; an industrial community where the adults fail Swedish girls and boys (Aftonbladet 2002-01-02). In an additional article it is written that “this is ordinary Swedish youths” and claim that these are often forgotten in the debate about prostitution that tends to focus on foreign women getting tricked to come to Sweden (Etc Norrköping 2017-02-03).

Here, men are buying sex from little girls – Swedish little girls. (Expressen 1993-06-18)

The police have at multiple occasions the last years taken care of kids selling sex at Rosenlund. Both girls and boys. The youngest one is 13 years old. What all the youths have in common is that they are Swedish. (Göteborgsposten 2005-06-23).

One of the respondents says that she thinks that it is both girls and boys that are having sex for compensation, but she has only met boys. The articles also bring this up. Several of them present results from studies where youths in Sweden, Scandinavia and the Baltics have filled out surveys regarding if they have had sex for compensation. The results have shown that young men have sex for compensation to a larger extent than young women (Norrländska Socialdemokraten 2004-11-26; Sveriges Radio 2004-05-11; Smålandsposten 2008-07-28 & Göteborgsposten 2008-07-06). The articles have not only presented the results but have also speculated in why this is. One article presents two theories. One is that homosexual boys have difficulties finding love, intimacy and sexual contacts. Another one is that having sex for compensation is a way of acting out, such as criminality and doing drugs which boys have bigger tendencies to do than girls (Norrländska Socialdemokraten 2004-11-26). In another article, the writer means that the case might be that the numbers are not factual since girls may have tendency to not filling the surveys out truthfully. She means that selling sex for women are tightly bound to the gender linked stigma such as “whore” and “slut”. Seeing one’s sexuality as a sexual capital may also be more connected to the traditional female role. There is not a male equivalent to the promiscuous woman. Contrary, the sexual adventurous men have high esteems (Göteborgsposten 2008-07-06).

Knowledge

It has been stated that mass media is the link between science and the “everyday people”. In the academic gender debates, there is a divide between the liberal feminists and the radical feminists. As mentioned before, the Swedish law on buying sex has its ideological foundation in the radical feminist view on sex for compensation. Therefore, I wanted to see what side of the science regarding this mass media in Sweden are portraying as this can give the everyday persons their knowledge and opinion in the matter. Seeing what the respondents from social services express can also show if they share the view of the sex buying law’s ideology regarding sex for compensation and conduct their work with that in mind.

I have found a lot of common denominator in the articles and in the radical feminist research on prostitution. They show a connection between having been a victim of sexual abuse earlier in life

and having sex for compensation (Göteborgsposten 1998-10-14); Dagens Nyheter 1997-11-04; Expressen 1993-08-23; GT 2008-05-24; Östgöta Correspondenten 2017-05-09 & ETC Norrköping 2017-02-03). This is how one article explains it:

They have been exposed to abuse. They think that their bodies are defiled and ruined and believe that they no longer have any value. Therefore it does not matter how they treat it. (Gefle Dagblad 2006-03-07).

This view is also present in the interviews:

Shame, anxiety. They view themselves as pretty useless. You have to shut off to be able to do such a thing, distance yourself. They have complex about their dignity. A lot of shame.

If you do such a thing, there must be a lot of things behind it. Self-harming behavior, destructivity, addiction.

One thing that is stated in the radical feminist scientific research, the articles and in the interviews are the consequence of having sex for compensation. In several articles, it is written that having sex for compensation leads to anxiety and shame (Göteborgsposten 1998-10-14; Aftonbladet 2002-01-02 & Östgöta Correspondenten 2017-06-26). These are words that are also used in the interviews by three out of the four interviewees. They talk about that a youth's sense of self-worth is affected; that they get a different image of themselves and feel worthless. One respondent said:

It is not good for your self-esteem. They worry about how others will view them. They are ashamed and it is difficult to talk about. It changes the image of themselves and affects what others get to do to them later in life.

In the articles as well as in the interviews, having sex for compensation is explained as a way of self-harming (Östgöta Correspondenten 2017-06-26). In one article it is described that being sold by someone else is the ultimate way of self-harming, one cannot sink lower than letting anyone use them as commodity (Metro 2013-08-14). It is written that it has been known that youths use sex as a way of self-harm for years, but there has not been any help. There is still lacking a common definition of what sex as self-harming is (Svenska Dagbladet 2012-09-03).

I have only found one article that expresses a more liberal way of viewing sex for compensation expressed. It is in an article where a man who sells sex is being interviewed. The man explains how he get aroused, not only by the sex he is selling, but also by the meetings which are

characterized by the discreteness and the quick contact without any aftermaths. The man wishes that there could be a more nuanced debate about sexuality and prostitution and says that it affects people differently (Sydsvenskan 2007-03-11). In the interviews, I have also only found one expression of the liberal way of seeing it. One of the respondents believes that having sex for compensation does not have to include harm for everybody.

The liberal way of seeing having sex for compensation has been brought up in more articles and interviews, but then it has been added that this point of view is wrong. In one article it is written:

Not seldom is the philosophical question of the free will and the right to one's own body in the center of the prostitution debate. The study points to that this is about broken people needing support. More energy should be put to that. (Smålandsposten 2008-07-28).

Another article writes about that youths today have a tolerant view on prostitution, they think it is fine as long as everyone is on board. The author of the article follows this up by stating that it is an abuse that is being repeated and that the victims are hurting themselves by putting themselves through it. It is written that it is not fine, there is no happiness in it but only anxiety and deep pain (Östgöta Correspondenten 2017-06-26). In another article, it is stated that there are no "happy whores" who saves money for travels or education. Rather, it is young women from poor countries (Östgöta Correspondenten 2017-05-09). There are several stories from people having sex for compensation who says that it is harmful to them. One man says that he feels like a speck of dust, an outcast and stared at by society. He states that he does not have any control over himself any longer. The man having sex for compensation shares that he was hit by his father and abused sexually during his childhood. He wants to strongly make the point that he is not doing this by his free will, he would not be doing it if he could get a job. The man says that there is no way that anyone could have sex for compensation by free will and that he would do anything to have an ordinary life (Metro 2015-02-11). In another article, there is a woman interviewed who has had sex for compensation. She states that it does not matter where or how prostitution takes place, it is always sexual abuse and it is always dangerous. She says that it is not the setting of the prostitution which makes it dangerous but the men since those who buy sex are not people that respect other people as humans. The woman further says that the women she has met that also have had sex for compensation are dead, in prison for life or having psychological issues, such as being severely depressed. She cannot understand how anyone could believe that someone being abused by a random man could be happy (DagensETC 2016-06-02).

Critical social work and feminist social work

Here, it can be explored how the social workers see their own work and what space they have to criticize and challenge the main discourse of sex for compensation in Sweden, and if they do this. Since I “only” interviewed four social workers in Sweden, I thought it would be beneficial to see what image the mass media portraits regarding the social services’ work with youths having sex for compensation.

In all the interviews I have done, the respondents have said that they do not have written down action plans at their workplace, at least that they know of. They say that they also do not have any routines regarding working explicitly with youths having sex for compensation. Most of the interviewees state that they know however what they should do when the issue occurs. They also know what other instances there are in society that can help in other aspects. Most of the respondents mean that they treat these cases this like other social issue issues and handle individual cases when they arise. One of the respondents however gives this response when asked if she knows what to do if a youth is having sex for compensation:

No, absolutely not and I also don’t think that I would have gotten that support if I had [seen signs that a youth was having sex for compensation]. Some that have seen signs have rather disregarded asking because they don’t know what to do if they get that as an answer, that is my perception.

Some respondents discussed what they think would be the best way to help a youth having sex for compensation:

(About youths being placed involuntary in a locked institution) A lot of them feel better afterwards even though it is so strict. My theory is that it is because they do not have any contact with bad people anymore.

You need to find out how they get a hold of each other and restrict their access of internet and phones.

When asked what support society and social services can offer a youth that is having sex for compensation, the same respondent answered:

I don’t know, the boss has said that you should google it if it occurs. But I would like to know beforehand what you can offer.

As stated in the theory chapter, it is believed that children would appreciate knowing that social workers are obliged by law to do certain things regarding the situation. One may wonder how youths which are being used feel when meeting a social worker that try to ignore

the subject of what the youth is exposed to and also cannot present to the youth what help can be provided.

One respondent said that they thought that this is something that they should think more about since it might be more common than one can think. Another said that one should make more research on their own.

In the articles, there are different ways presented regarding how social work should be constructed when it comes to youths having sex for compensation. One article means that boys tend to act out and therefore receive help faster than girls that does not trouble society in the same way (Expressen 1993-08-23). In another article, it is written that scientists do not believe that actions should be directed towards the youth's prostitution. Instead, the actions should be put towards decreasing the need for drugs, criminality and smoking. If you can prevent these things, you will probably also decrease the selling of sex (Norrländska Socialdemokraten 2004-11-26). A treatment center that is mentioned in one article think that treatment centers should not have both boys and girls, but rather be separated. They saw that mixed treatment center would risk the girls would be overshadowed by the boys and that the girls would continue to be sexually abused and get stuck in the girl's role they were trying to get away from. It is stated that this view was criticized during the 1970's, it was considered old fashioned. At the time of the article however, most centers for youths have special sections for girls since research has shown that the girls prefer to be by themselves (Expressen 1993-08-23). In one article it is argued that social services cannot solve the situation at all. Instead, it is about the fact that there is a demand among men to buy sex. The men therefore need to examine themselves and make sure that those norms and values is not passed on to the younger persons (Gefle Dagblad 2006-03-07).

In one article, it is said that the awareness among the authorities is low. There are receptions in the big cities and online organizations but there need to be more knowledge outside of big cities, there has to be an established way of working with youths having sex for compensation everywhere (ETC Småland. 2015-01-26). It is stated that too many exposed children are not caught up early enough and that the education for the social services must become much, much better. It is said that more money must be put in towards this since the municipalities cannot handle it. There also has to be much clearer guidelines to the social services (Sydsvenskan 2012-11-13). In another article, a woman working with human trafficking at the nation Police is

referenced to, having said that the more we look, the more we find which is believed to be accurate (Metro 2013-08-14). One police say that they had no knowledge about there being children having sex for compensation. However, when they started searching for advertisements, they found that the demand and supply were huge. Since the two of them are the only police officers in Sweden doing outreach work with child prostitution, they believe that they have just seen the surface of it (Dagens Nyheter 2012-05-05). There are several stories in the articles about how youths in treatment centers are having sex for compensation while being placed there. In one of these stories, it is written that the young girls were supposed to get help at the treatment center, but instead they disappeared with sex buyers several times a week without the staff reacting. One girl says that it was at the treatment center she started to have sex for compensation, it had not crossed her mind before to do it. The sex buyers picked the girls up at a place right outside the treatment center. The girl said that the caregivers at the treatment center noticed that they disappeared but did not ask or do anything about it (Expressen 2013-01-11). Another article means that the rest of society are not keeping up with digitalization which has also changed how prostitution is being conducted. It is said that the large organizations working with this has pointed to a lack of knowledge among social workers and professionals in psychiatry (Svenska Dagbladet 2012-04-01). In one article, it is stated that if we have the sex purchase law, we have to be prepared to help (ETC Småland. 2015-01-26).

Subjugated knowledge

In order to answer my question of how the social services follow the feminist ideology, I will in this part explore if the social workers allow the clients to express another view on their situation of having sex for compensation or if the idea of what sex for compensation is fixed through the research and main discourse. To what extent the main discourse allows the youths having sex for compensation explain how they see it, will be shown in the results from the articles.

In several of the articles, it is described that youths having sex for compensation do not view it as prostitution which is being presented as problematic (GT 2007-07-13; Kvällsposten 2007-04-19; Malmö Lund City 2008-10-23; GT 2008-05-24; Borås tidning 2008-05-24 & Dagens Nyheter 2010-09-21):

I am not a whore, but sometimes I have sex with good looking and nice guys. (Kvällsposten 2007-04-19)

They do not realize then that they are selling their body and have a behavior that is very harmful to them. Even if some of them later succeed to straighten up their lives, this makes large scars in their souls. (...) All girls that prostitute themselves are a disaster to themselves. (Expressen 1993-06-18)

They discuss that having sex for compensation has been normalized and that the tolerance for this has become bigger among youths (Göteborgsposten 2008-05-24 & Norrländska socialdemokraten 2004-11-26). One way to address this is by talking about it in the schools' sex education (Norrländska socialdemokraten 2004-11-26). In other articles however, the focus is that in order for the professionals to get through to the youths, they cannot use the word prostitution or stick to the old stigma around this (Kvällsposten 2007-04-19; Malmö Lund City 2008-10-23 & Göteborgsposten 2008-05-24). The youths do not always identify with having sex for compensation. Prostitution is so stigmatized and there is a myth that prostitutes walk the streets and get paid in cash from older men (Södermalmsnytt 2015-06-02 & SVT Nyheter 2012-12-08).

One of the respondents talks about how she was surprised at how a young man she met could so casually say that he had sex for compensation:

He said he would get 'payed in kind'. He said it relaxed, as if it was normal. (...) He does not think it is a big deal.

Another client is brought up in one of the interviews:

She worked at a strip club. I said that it made me worried since it is a venue for things like that [sex for compensation]. I asked if she could find another job. It is her life, but I encouraged her to find another job.

Analysis

Social representation

I believe the results of the interviews as well as the articles show examples of social representation. The social workers say that they do not inform or ask youths, parents and professionals at treatment centers about the youths having sex for compensation unless they fit the risk group, mainly drug use. The articles on the other hand, not only manifest “what kind of youths” are having sex for compensation but they also show a great example of encounters with someone who does not fit the model. The articles write about the discovery that “ordinary” youths having horses, money and a normal family life also have sex for compensation. One aspect that I have seen that they often have emphasized in the news articles, are that the youths selling sex actually can be Swedish. These youths do not fit the model or signs of who is having sex for compensation. They then explain this occurrence, or remodel the youths, by stating that they have psychological issues or do drugs. Here, I believe that the idea in social representation that the categories are not ever neutral is shown. The youths are not represented as complex persons where the categorizations are intertwined, but rather that they are seemingly part of a positive category while really they are secretly part of a negative category.

I have never seen in the literature a problematization or presentation of the female sex workers’ sexuality. Is the lack of it because there is only an issue whether men selling sex are not enjoying it. It is never discussed whether women are homosexual and may not enjoy the sex which they sell to men. I assume this is because the women are seen as subjects and it is not an issue whether they are enjoying it or not while as the boys are portrayed to be agents who sometimes even are using the men buying sex from them. It is said that boys and girls should not be in the same treatment center because the girls are at risk of being further abused. This shows how even the boys that have been victims of something are seen as potential predators when placed with girls. In the older news articles, I can see that women are portrayed more as devious because they are called whores and the issue of drugs are included in this. In the more recent articles however, the victimizations of these girls are being underlined with the headlines that these are Swedish girls who has riding horses as a hobby.

Knowledge

The knowledge presented by the respondents and reproduced in the articles is the same as the research that the radical feminist's idea which the law regarding buying sex in Sweden is based on. This shows how context, norms and goals influence individual's own representation which Moscovici claims. It can portray the example on how the politicians have the power to decide the main discourse which is then distributed down the line in society: to the professionals and the everyday persons through mass media. Since the professionals and the mass media are so in tune with what the law represents and express, one can assume that the individuals have been affected by the collective representations, which the theory of social representation explains. It is clear in the articles that the ones having an individual representation of having sex for compensation is objected by the main collective representation.

One issue is how men having sex for compensation fit into the radical feminists' notion that prostitution is the ultimate form of men's violence against women. The argument that I believe is the most common in this discussion is that whether it is men or women selling sex, it is most often men buying sex and thus is the description of men being perpetrators still true. Whoever is the subject of the men's violence, this is a sign of the toxic masculinity that radical feminists describe. I believe that the globalization and changes in power structures has led to a different situation than the one in 1999. If looking at prostitution from an intersectional perspective, one has to take into account other aspects than just gender. For example, the phenomenon in Sweden with unaccompanied refugee children is something new. It has been shown that teenage boys living on the streets for fear of the authorities that will send them back are selling sex. Also the fact that rich western women going to poor countries to buy sex shows that other factors leads to women having more power than men, which can lead to women being the perpetrators and men the victim, if that is how one sees prostitution.

Even though the law based on the radical feminist ideology may not have taken the fact that many men also have sex for compensation into consideration, the question is if the social worker still can use the feminist social work approach. I have found that the interview subjects as well as in the news articles also describe the male youths having sex for compensation as victims that do not themselves understand how damaging it is to them.

Critical social work and feminist social work

Critical social work advocates an open and honest approach with clients and not being afraid to make it all visible. It can be assumed that being ignored in this way, might make the youth feel even more that what they are doing is shameful. Houston (2016) wrote about how one's self image is created through others reaction to oneself. Not being confirmed in this way can lead to more loss in confidence and trust in others.

What the articles and the interviews have in common is that they highlight the importance of asking the youths about prostitution, and not to stop asking since the youths may not be ready to admit to it at once. It is addressed in the articles and by the respondents that there is a taboo among the professionals, so they get afraid to ask the youths if they are having sex for compensation (Östgöta Correspondenten 2017-06-26 & Aftonbladet 2002-01-02). One respondent said that at her last workplace, the whole atmosphere changed and people looked down at their shoes and went quiet when the subject was brought up. They thought that it would be better if the focus could be put on other social problems that the youth may have had.

The social workers I have interviewed have described the youths as victims of prostitution which is the same as the radical feminist view on people having sex for compensation. Another thing the social workers share with the radical feminist perspective is that they find it worrisome that the youths talk about selling sex as something normal and not shameful or harmful in any way. But does this point of view automatically translate into a radical feminist execution of social work? They do not talk to each other or the youths about it. It does not seem that the management attack the issue head on since there are not many routines about this in the social work officers of the social workers I have talked to. I find it contradictive to have the idea that selling sex is something so harmful and not doing whatever one can do to "save" and help these youths but instead simply ignoring it.

Having sex for compensation may be a sensitive issue for youths to talk about. Critical social work is referring to shame. In the literature, it is described that the social worker can afflict shame onto the client depending for example the facial expression they have. This can affect the stigma and labelling of the client. I believe that this interesting due to the fact that the liberal feminists mean that it is the stigma that the radical feminist approach that is truly damaging to people having sex for compensation. Would a different ideological law change this or could the

stigma decrease in the social work meetings with this approach? From the interviews, it is difficult to say what the interaction is between the social workers and the youths having sex for compensation. However, I might be able to make assumptions due to the fact that interview subjects have stated that this issue is simply ignored in their office. This would probably be transferred into the meetings, and one could imagine that feeling that the social worker was uncomfortable and would rather not be talking about the issue. It would be beneficial to see how countries with a liberal standpoint on selling sex works with these issues and to see if people selling sex feel better about being treated from the point of view as victim or agent. Is it less shameful to talk about when it is not illegal to buy sex and it is seen as individual's own choice to sell sex? Would the stigma decrease, and it would it be easier to talk about for those selling sex if it was viewed as any other job by society? Or is there a way to have a radical feminist view on selling sex and still have conversations with youths selling sex which would help them get out of the situation so they are not to experience all the negative consequences of selling sex that radical feminism describes?

According to feminist social work, the women should be able to identify the origin of their problems by themselves. This will open up to the consideration that their problems are universal and not created by individual factors (Dominelli & McLeod 1989, p. 12). Social workers must also show the connection between the private and the public (Houston 2016, p. 4). In none of the interviews has the patriarchy and men's violence against women been presented as an explanation to why youths having sex for compensation. Men's oppression over women is the explanation model on which the law against buying sex are based. Neither is the fact that it can happen to any woman because of the patriarchy, but rather are individual factors brought up as reasons. This is then put on the client who get the explanation that drug use is a risk for being exposed to having sex for compensation. One way would be to talk about sex for compensation as something universal and a part of systems of oppression. Instead, the explanation given to the client is that it is something wrong with them which has put them in this position which can increase their shame and feeling of guilt. Dominelli (2002, p. 66) states exactly this, that one of the biggest challenges for social workers is existing in public patriarchy but working in the private domain.

Subjugated knowledge

By the social workers and mass media believing that they are experts and have the “right” knowledge and can tell these youths that they are wrong in believing that having sex for compensation is not a “big deal”, they show example of how the dominant group defines and controls the Other’s (youths having sex for compensation) representation, and therefore control the group. In this process, the youths get stigmatized, disempowered and silenced (Hulusjö 2013, p. 178).

This can be seen in the news articles and the interviews. The social workers talk about how the youths seem to think that having sex for compensation is something “normal”. It may be more difficult to avoid the issue of subjugated knowledge and letting the clients define their own issues since most of these youths are under the age of 18. This means that they can get care against their own will under the Young Person’s Act and that there is a larger responsibility on the social worker to protect and take actions. The social worker may have to report it to the police as well as place the youth under care. In the literature it is stated that the child would appreciate the social worker explain that they are in the lowest of the hierarchy and are by law obliged to make certain things. It would be interesting to see if explaining for the youth about how the sex purchase law in combination with the Young Person’s Act give the youths the chance to define their own problem while at the same time understand that in this society the social worker has to follow the law.

Conclusion

[Do the interviewed social workers express a way of social work that align with feminist ideologies on which the law against buying sex are based on?](#)

What the interviewed social workers share with the radical feminist idea is that they describe individuals having sex for compensation as victims. What differs is that the focus in the explanation is on individual factors of the youth and not men's structural oppression over women. Also, it is not said in the interviews that the youths are victims of violence or sexual abuse.

The social workers do not really focus on the “perpetrators” and saying how this is their fault as a way to oppress women by sexually violating them. Of course, as a social worker you have to focus on the youth in front of you. It is your job to make sure that particular youth is safe and not on changing the whole society. I haven't seen many examples of critical social work where the structures of society are a part of it. It would however be interesting to see how youths would react to the social worker sharing this point of view as an explanation: telling them that this is something expressed by oppression in the whole of the society instead of trying to find individual factors as to why this particular youth did it. Would this make the youth view themselves as victims and not agents which would decrease their empowerment and make them feel that they can't do anything to change their lives? Would this differ between telling the youths depending on where in the intersection they are: if it is due to sexism or racism? Or would this make the youths feel less shame and more empowerment because it is not their fault, and maybe they can feel that they are alone in this? If the shame is decreased, will it make it easier for the youths to talk about it? Will it make a difference whether this explanation is stated by the social workers in the beginning of the meeting, where the youth is yet to say what they have been through or after they have told them?

[What discourse can be seen among the interviewed social workers? Does this align with the one in the media?](#)

I have found that articles (which I have let be an expression as the main discourse in this thesis) and the social workers I have interviewed sees the youths having sex for compensation as victims rather than agents. This finding would mean that they do follow the discourse and point of view as the radical feminist ideology on which the sex purchase law is based on. The social workers'

explanations on why youths have sex for compensation do not follow the radical feminist ideas since they focus on the individual factors.

Most of the explanations given by the interview subjects and the news articles as to why youths have sex for compensation seem to be individual factors such as drug use, low self-esteem or a troubled upbringing.

Further research

It would be of interest to do a comparative study to explore if other societies with other legislations and discourses and see if that makes way for other types of social work and how the issue is being addressed. Of course, most countries have laws against buying sex from children (under the age of 18). These laws may not however be as symbolic and wanting to make a feminist ideology statement. Could it be in Sweden that the issue is hard to talk to the youths about, since it has become stigmatized. If the perception is that it is not “the ordinary youth”, it is then an accusation that one will be afraid to do, and bluntly more or less question if the youth is a “whore”. Or would it be in other societies said that it could be an option for financial support as long as someone is an adult?

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