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# Fact and fiction : representations of prostitution in contemporary British news media and novels

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FACT AND FICTION: REPRESENTATIONS OF PROSTITUTION  
IN CONTEMPORARY BRITISH NEWS MEDIA AND NOVELS

by

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A dissertation

presented to Ryerson and York Universities

in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

PhD

in the Program of

Communication and Culture

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## **Abstract**

Fact and Fiction:

Representations of Prostitution in Contemporary British News Media and Novels

Ph.D.

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Communication and Culture

Ryerson and York Universities

Prostitution remains a controversial issue in the United Kingdom. The period of 2000 to 2009 saw a range of disparate solutions, from legalization to abolition, debated by policy makers and feminists and covered extensively in the news media. The debates raised questions about the public's rights, the treatment of prostitution as a legitimate form of work in the liberal economy, the limits on women's choice to enter sex work, and the extent of violence and harm experienced by sex workers.

Definitions of prostitution are enacted via a complex relationship between legal and cultural discourses. The media uses certain tropes that create discursive boundaries in the debates. The first principal research question is, "How are competing discourses of prostitution conveyed in contemporary British news media?" The project provides an empirical analysis of the competing constructions of prostitution in British news media over the last decade, focusing on the depiction of sex workers, clients and the phenomenon of prostitution generally. Previous operationalizations of Habermas' theory

of communication suggest that it is an effective approach for revealing distortions in media discourses. The study operationalized the validity claims of Truth, Sincerity and Legitimacy and systematically applied them to a sample of 342 articles from *The Daily Mail* and *The Guardian*, theoretically representing both the popular political right- and left-leaning framings of issues. Key findings of this project were that many media discourses are distorted compared to empirical realities, and that they are often expressed in dualisms and dichotomies.

Media constructions of prostitution also reflect long-standing cultural themes. Nineteenth-century discourses of prostitutes as “fallen” – simultaneously doomed victims and immoral seducers – also appeared in many of the media characterizations of sex workers today.

Finally, the dissertation argues that the neo-Victorian novels of Michel Faber and Sarah Waters consider prostitution with particular attention to the persistent historical cultural tropes. A second key finding of the project is that literature provides alternative ways of conceptualizing questions of “choice” and “harm.” By including an examination of literature, the dissertation explores alternative, more nuanced perspectives that may allow superior understandings of the phenomenon than many of the “factual” media accounts.

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## **Dedication**

This work is dedicated to my family, who gave me unlimited support, help and encouragement, as always.

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## **Introduction: Prostitution in U.K. and the Aims of this Project**

This dissertation examines the competing discourses surrounding prostitution in the United Kingdom. Generalizing, essentialist, trans-historical or cross-cultural discourses are not sufficient to describe sex work. This thesis aims to critically explore how discourses of prostitution are constructed in the British cultural context. Accordingly, it is a critical analysis of some of the news media discourses and fictional treatments of non-coercive prostitution in the United Kingdom over the last decade. It also investigates how the issue of prostitution has been conveyed in historical discourses and policy. It will present a systematic critical analysis of news media discourses. It will also contribute a critical analysis of prostitution discourses in contemporary British literature, arguing that fiction often articulates valuable, alternative framings. The intent of this thesis is not to validate or confirm sociological evidence that prostitution is related to conditions of poverty and violence. Nor will it assess the strategic benefits of the sex work discourses or legalization. Rather, it will attempt to identify the dominant and competing discourses of prostitution in British media and fiction today, and explore the ways in which the discourses have historical roots. This first chapter will provide an introduction to the issue, describe the cultural context for the debate and outline the structure of the dissertation.

Cultural context is important to understanding the issue of prostitution. Historical framings, legal definitions, public perceptions, current policy and critics' views of such policy shape and reflect discourses in the media.

Despite the specificity of prostitution across cultures and in time, its conception as a trans-historical phenomenon – for example, in its portrayal as “the world’s oldest profession” – often renders it as a powerful, timeless fact that resists more critical analysis. There are significant variations in the sex trade around the world because socio-economic, cultural and legal factors largely determine rates and conventions of prostitution. Different rates of prostitution in different countries are demonstrably linked to both poverty, and prostitution’s cultural normalization (Matthews, 2008 p.128). The catchphrase “oldest profession,” used in the West, often imbues it with a certain venerability and inevitability. But such terms may conceal the fact that many sex workers,<sup>i</sup> rather than belonging to an organized and socially respected labour group (as “oldest profession” would imply), are members of a fragmented and stigmatized sector of society that has not held the privilege of determining its own image or discursive self-identification.

While research suggests that the practice of exchanging sex for money or other material items has existed for at least 4,000 years (Salmon, 2008, p. 121), in many cases, descriptions of prostitution in different cultures across time may be a misunderstanding of sexual practices in history. The conditions of ancient prostitution may differ too much from contemporary conditions to be comparable. Brooks Gordon (2006), McKeganey and Barnard (1996) argue that prostitution has existed in similar forms since Cato’s Roman Empire and ancient Sumeria. Salmon (2008), however, notes that Mesopotamian temple priestesses offered sexual services, but likely as fertility or harvest rites and not for personal gain (p. 121). Matthews (2008) also argues that “hetaerae” (the nineteenth-century term for Greek courtesans) are often misconstrued as prostitutes. He notes that



hetaerism is actually “directly traceable to group marriage, to the sacrificial surrender of women whereby they purchased their right to chastity” (p. 23). This hetaerism is not comparable to modern forms of prostitution. Critical historians note that the claims that prostitution has existed throughout history depend on the terms of its definition (Bullough and Bullough, 1987, p.1).

Whether modern prostitution resembles ancient forms significantly enough to warrant comparison will not be resolved here.<sup>ii</sup> But, arguably, the claim that prostitution is a transnational, transhistorical facet of human sexuality effectively maintains the status quo, implying that the conditions of prostitution cannot be improved. Matthews (2008), notes that the assertion that prostitution is an enduring social reality is “at heart a defeatist statement that has connotations of both fatalism and naturalism” (p. 22). Moreover, research suggests that prostitution is based on culturally specific definitions, conditions and discourses. This thesis will explore the ways in which nineteenth century constructions of prostitution, in particular, seem to anchor postmodern debates. Fisher (1997) writes that a review of Victorian discourses about prostitution may illuminate contemporary impasses in Britain (xiii).

Definitions of prostitution and prostitutes are enacted via a complex relationship between legal and cultural discourses (Munro and Stychin, 2007). In the United Kingdom, a prostitute is legally defined as “a person (A) who, on at least one occasion and whether or not compelled to do so, offers or provides sexual services to another person in return for payment or a promise of payment to A or a third person” (Sexual Offenses Act, 2003, Sections 48-50).<sup>iii</sup> This official definition of the prostitute has been supplemented by cultural images and discourses that often overtake socio-political

realities. Generally, in British and most Western cultures, prostitution has historically been portrayed as a sin, tied to a Judeo-Christian conception dating back to the story of Adam and Eve, of women as, on the one hand the weaker and less libidinous sex, and on the other, able to exert power over men through their sexuality. The portrayal of prostitutes also has a long history in literature, dating back to the bible (with the alleged<sup>iv</sup> prostitute Mary Magdalene). Victorian literature, with the trope of the “fallen woman,” featured in the works of Dickens (*Oliver*) and Gaskell (*Mary Barton*), for example, emphasized the view of the prostitute as a doomed victim, punished by fate for her transgression from proper femininity.

Nineteenth cultural discourses of prostitute women as “fallen” victims still appear to inform many of the characterizations of sex workers today. Some government programs and feminist groups in the U.K. today, such as the LEA Project, arguably seek to “rescue” prostitutes by offering exit strategies and resources, as the nascent British feminist movement did. Other contemporary framings, of prostitutes as public nuisances or immoral, observable in policy documents and media depictions, also held sway during the nineteenth century.

Contemporary conditions also appear to reflect Victorian ones. For instance, with the mass migrations into the industrializing urban centres during the nineteenth century in Britain, women faced unstable employment, low wages, and challenges of child care, resulting in the birth of the modern sex trade; the same causes for women’s entry are still noted by researchers today (Phoenix 2009).

Likewise, the government and police continue to use many of the approaches used to control prostitution during the nineteenth century, including laissez faire, raids on sex

districts based on local citizen complaints, arrests for loitering, and the enforced rehabilitation of sex workers (Fisher, 1997). The U.K. has also consistently looked to neighbouring European nations for models of regulation – France and Belgium in the mid 1850s (McHugh, 1980, p. 17; Fisher 1997, x, xi), and the Netherlands and Sweden in the last decade (Home Office, 2008).

As of 2010 in the U.K., prostitution is legal, though many of the activities surrounding it are not (Sexual Offences Act, 2003). It is legal for one adult person to work as a prostitute in a private place, or to independently sell sex out of an escort agency, however, it is illegal to operate a brothel with more than one prostitute. The act of purchasing sex from a person who is not subject to force (i.e. trafficked or pimped) is legal. There has been a recent strengthening of laws that penalize clients of coercive prostitution (Home Office, 2008). Though consensual prostitution is technically allowed, street prostitution is effectively prohibited because activities such as loitering for the purposes of selling or buying sex, public solicitation to buy or sell sex, and paying for sex in a public place, are illegal. (Sexual Offences Act, 2003; Policing and Crime Act, 2009).

A brief review of public polls reveals some public polarization, some ambivalence, but, in general, an increasing intolerance of prostitution. In a survey conducted in 2006 by Ipsos MORI on behalf of the Government Equalities Office, 35 percent of respondents agreed prostitution should be illegal, while 47 percent disagreed (Home Office, 2006, p. 13). In 2008, according to a survey conducted by CATI, an increased number of people, and particularly young people surveyed, said they believed prostitution should be outlawed. In this poll, 44 percent of British men and women surveyed stated that paying for sex was exploitive of women and should be a criminal

offense, 21 percent believed it was exploitive but should not be a criminal offense, 17 percent believed it was not exploitive and should not be a criminal offense, and 8 percent believed it was not exploitive but should be a criminal offense. Younger respondents were most in favour of client criminalization, with 65 percent of men and women between the ages of 18 to 24 saying that paying for sex was exploitive and should be illegal, and a further 8 percent saying it wasn't exploitive but should be illegal (CATI, 2008).

British policy on prostitution appears to reflect the same ambivalence and increasing intolerance of prostitution demonstrated in the public polls. Policy considerations have vacillated from liberal tolerance of red-light districts and brothels, to legalization and state management, to more recently, full criminalization.

Some approaches resemble laissez faire policy: a lack of law enforcement in the indoor (online and in-call) prostitution markets, for example suggests an implicit acceptance that these forms of sex work, at least, should continue to self-regulate (Sanders, 2008, p. 5).

Legalization and state regulation has also been considered. In 2004, managed "tolerance zones" were proposed and tested. In January 2006, the government announced that it was debating the legalization and licensing of small brothels, and conducted a comparative study in nine countries. The study devoted particular attention to Holland, which had instituted dedicated, regulated red-light districts. Ultimately, the U.K. public and its policy makers were not prepared to fully commit to legalization. The 2008 Home Office Review, further, concluded that the Dutch model had legitimated, rather than controlled, exploitative practices, stating that, "Women who sell sex have to contend

with long-standing marginalisation and exploitative practices that are embedded within the political economy of the sex industry’” (p. 12).

Subsequent policy appears to be increased moves towards criminalization, with the state aim of reducing coerced (trafficked, pimped and juvenile) prostitution. The Government’s recent stated coordinated prostitution strategy has been to “tackle the problem of commercial sexual exploitation” by targeting pimps, as well as the “demand” (clients). As the 2008 Home Office report stated: “to truly tackle the problem of commercial sexual exploitation more needs to be done to target those that contribute to the demand, those that pay for sex” (p. 10). In 2008, it became a criminal offense to pay for sex from a prostitute under the control of a pimp, and in 2009, buyers’ ignorance of whether or not the prostitute was controlled became irrelevant to the laying of charges (Home Office, 2008, p.15; Policing and Crime Act, 2009, Part 2: 14, 15).

Recent policies have focused on strengthening the laws that penalize traffickers and clients of trafficked women, but policy discourses may conflate consensual prostitution with forced sexual servitude. A debate has surrounded the appropriate prosecution of those who maintain “a person in sexual servitude.” The Pentameter Project, launched in 2007 by Home Secretary Jacqui Smith, was an effort by Britain's fifty-five police forces to fight trafficking and involved collaboration with the U.K. Border Agency, the Serious and Organised Crime Agency, the Foreign Office, the Northern Ireland Office, the Scottish government, the Crown Prosecution Service and various NGOs. The project originally claimed it was using the definition of sex trafficking contained in the UN's Palermo protocol, which includes the use of coercion to transport an unwilling person into prostitution. In 2009, however, reports emerged

suggesting the Pentameter project may have conflated a willing sex worker with a trafficked victim, depicting both as a candidate for rescue. An investigative report by *The Guardian* claimed that “Pentameter used a very different definition, from the U.K.'s 2003 Sexual Offences Act, which makes it an offence to transport a man or woman into prostitution even if this involves assisting a willing sex worker” (Davies, 2009, par. 14).

The public's increasing awareness of trafficking may be influencing the government's more stringent policies. In 2006, only 35 percent of the British public agreed prostitution should be illegal, however, 58 percent supported criminalization measures if they were a way to prevent trafficking (Home Office, 2006, p. 13). The view that abolition might be used as a sweeping method of controlling trafficking seems to illustrate some critics' point that the awareness of trafficking has set off a crusade against prostitution in general (Doezema, 2004; Sanders, 2009, p. 94). In recent years, there have been some high-profile raids on brothels (a formerly tolerated aspect of the industry) where trafficked women were alleged to be working (Kantola and Squires, 2004, p. 79), and the argument that prostitution should be eradicated has prevailed openly in government. Solicitor General Vera Baird and Women's Minister Harriet Harmon, among other Labour MPs, have considered abandoning so-called half-measures in favour of making it illegal for men to pay for sex (Prince, 2008; Malkin, 2007). The criminalization of the purchase of sex has also been put forward in amendment bills by MSPs in Scotland; the bills were not, ultimately, passed (Johnson, 2010; Scottish Parliament, 2010).

Moreover, many prostitution policy discourses express concern about the welfare of prostitutes, especially trafficked women, but they also cite the negative effect of

prostitution on public health, safety, and quality of life. Hubbard et al. (2008) note that many policy discourses express the view that prostitution is socially transgressive. Those engaging in contemporary policy debates about prostitution are less likely to name their “moral concerns” than historical lawmakers, but policy discourses about public nuisance may be masking anxieties about moral and civic propriety (Hubbard et al., 2008, p. 149). The Home Office’s 2008 Review, “Tackling the Demand for Prostitution,” though repeatedly highlighting government interest in protecting street prostitutes’ well being, still emphasizes the public’s interest in reducing the unpleasant visible signs of prostitution, such as persistent kerb-crawlers. It repeatedly features statements of concern for vulnerable street prostitutes followed by acknowledgments about prostitution’s effect on public civility. For example the Review notes that “[r]educing the demand for street prostitution can help tackle the associated problems of drug use, nuisance and anti-social behaviour, which for many communities will be their primary experience of prostitution” (Home Office, 2008, p.18).

In the last five years, many policies to control non-trafficked prostitution have been described as “welfarist.” Programs have included attempts to reform persistent users of prostitutes and to help prostitutes find a way out of the profession. Policy strategies to enable women to exit prostitution have included pilot projects, as set out by the Home Office’s 2006 Document, “A Coordinated Prostitution Strategy.” The government has recommended that it should work further with voluntary outreach agencies to develop best practices to help women “increase choice and move towards their goals” (Home Office, 2006, pp. 22-23). Various reform programs have also sought to educate men

about the socio-economic conditions of sex workers' lives and the impact of prostitution on sex workers and communities.

Some critics of these recent moves to criminalize and rehabilitate “kerb-crawlers” claim they mark prostitutes simultaneously as victims and deviants, and are, at heart, an attempt to control public behaviour. Kantola and Squires (2004) suggest that the campaigns are motivated by local fears about “moral pollution” as well as a patriarchal sense of the protection of “innocent” women who might be hassled or observe “conspicuous sexuality” on the street (pp. 68, 71). Some critics also suggest that the latest policies to target male buyers of sex and depict prostitutes as victims may be a relocation of stigma onto the client that maintains the deviant associations of prostitution. Sanders (2009) argues that rehabilitation programs are an attempt of the state to control undesirable forms of sexuality and behaviour. (She describes a 2006 “kerb-crawler rehabilitation program” in Hull, England. This “‘re- education’ programme” detained men arrested for kerb-crawling for a half-day at a police station, where they were informed about “how prostitution was abuse against women.” Programme participants also learned about Anti Social Behaviour Orders, the impact of kerb crawling on residents and children, and the health risks associated with using prostitutes. Finally, the men were fingerprinted and a swab of their DNA was recorded [p. 81].) Sanders argues that so-called rehabilitation programs are replete with New Labour discourses about the social order, are legally questionable and are essentially a form of “moral engineering” (p. 77).

In short, prostitution has been a somewhat polarized issue in the U.K. during the last decade, with a range of disparate solutions – from laissez-faire to legalized



regulationism, abolition to harm reduction – being debated and implemented by policy makers, with input from women’s groups and investigations in the media. At issue are questions of civil, individual and women’s rights, state interventionism and moralistic paternalism.

Among feminists there are also disagreements about prostitution, its significance, and appropriate policy responses to the issue. Some critique the abolitionist movement, citing the growing conflation of trafficking and prostitution as its underpinnings (Doezema, 2004). Some pro-sex worker activists argue that abolition denies the self-determination and choice of women participating in non-coercive prostitution (Scoular and O’Neill, 2007; O’Connell Davidson, 2008). Some advocate for legalization, arguing that women are unfairly targeted and further marginalized by the criminalization of prostitution. Others counter that legalization with state regulation would provide inadequate protection in the face of the ongoing public stigma surrounding prostitution and the high levels of violence presented by research (Matthews, 2008). They fear that both abolitionist and prevailing regulatory approaches (e.g. limited tolerance zones) have hidden imperatives of public propriety, and that these approaches mean that sex workers continue be marginalized in underground spaces of exclusion outside of “respectable society” (Hubbard et al., 2008, pp. 138, 149). Some feminist activists suggest that women need resources to exit (Eaves, 2010). However, empirical research reveals that prostitution has many facets, making it difficult to generalize about conditions or impose blanket policies (Sanders 2005). Many apprehend the complexity of the issue, the deficiency of categorical debates, and urgency of well-informed policy.

Following this Introduction, the second chapter will be a review of the empirical (sociological, criminological and epidemiological) studies of prostitution undertaken recently in the U.K. and in British history. Researchers have long cited some common causes and conditions of prostitution, particularly women's inequitable incomes, lack of work options and childcare. This review will also provide a general basis against which to compare the claims of the news media.

The third chapter will review feminist conceptions of prostitution (more recently expressed as "sex work") in the United Kingdom. Prostitution was, historically, an issue that galvanized the nascent British feminist movement. Feminist conceptions of prostitution, sex workers, and clients continue to influence public opinion and policy, with many feminist researchers contributing to policy and news media Op Eds. Within its own ranks, the British feminist movement also continues to debate the meaning of sex work, research approaches and appropriate policy.

The fourth chapter will outline the methodology of the analyses of media and fiction. Following Habermas, this thesis explores how the media reflects and influences public and policy discussions. Adding to the existing criminological, sociological and feminist studies of prostitution, whose analyses of prostitution discourses in media tend to be selective rather than systematic, this project contributes an empirical analysis of the competing constructions of prostitution in British news media over the last decade. The analysis focuses on the depiction of sex workers, clients and the phenomenon of prostitution generally, with a systematic, empirical approach proposed adapted from Habermas' theory of communication (Habermas, 1981/1984). The chapter outlines an approach to assess the claims of Truth, Sincerity and Legitimacy presented in the British

news articles on prostitution. The chapter suggests that fiction too, is an influential medium that conveys certain discourses of prostitution. Historical fiction has been mined for its rhetorical contribution to constructions of prostitution in times past, but scholars have not developed an approach to using fiction as research on contemporary prostitution. This chapter lays the foundations for the use of fiction in research. This project will consider the contributions of the contemporary British writers Michel Faber and Sarah Waters, who have set their novels in the Victorian era, to the issue of prostitution. The particular “neo-Victorian” mode of the selected works is also relevant to the interpretation.

The fifth chapter will present the results of the media analysis, the first principal contribution to current research. It will demonstrate how certain discourses of prostitution are (re)produced in the news media. The method of analysis outlined in Chapter Four was applied to a sample of 342 articles from *The Daily Mail* and *Guardian* newspapers, chosen because they represent popular, politically right- and left-wing British media discourses (respectively). The discursive strategies of the newspapers include the claims, characterizations, nomenclature, framings and sources used to represent sex workers, clients, and the phenomenon of prostitution generally. This chapter will: report on the empirical findings of the analysis, ranking the claims, language and sources in terms of their occurrences; provide examples from the articles; assess the validity of the claims and the legitimacy of the sources; and provide some qualitative analysis of the patterns and content in the articles, for instance, the different cultural, political, economic and educational capitals of the papers that make certain claims possible. The analysis reveals a tendency to discuss prostitution in simplistic, generalizing or extreme terms.

Prostitution is often presented as either exploitive to women, an immoral blight on society, or the right of consenting adults and an industry that should be legal (and taxed) like any other. Sex workers are portrayed as pathetic victims of male violence, featured in sensational reports about the squalor of red-light districts, and also as women pragmatically capitalizing on men's naturally excessive sexual appetite. The tendency of the newspapers to resort to sensational depictions may reflect an attempt to appeal to the preferences of readers. Likely, it also reflects a lack of more nuanced evidence.

The analysis of the associative values brought by the claims, framings and nomenclature in the articles suggests that certain historical associations have been brought to the discussion by the reporters. The sixth chapter will offer a longer view of the main claims observed in the news media. It will explore some of the historical influences on the dominant and competing discourses, in particular post-Darwinian gender discourses and liberal capitalist economic philosophies, to illuminate some of the patterns observed in the media.

The seventh chapter, and the second principal contribution to research, will be to explore how fictional accounts may provide alternative conceptions to the discourses of prostitution seen in the media. Observing that a wave of fiction with prostitute protagonists has emerged in Britain, this chapter proposes that the popularity of these novels may lie in contemporary readers' dissatisfaction with prevailing discourses. The works include *Tipping the Velvet* (1998) by Sarah Waters and *The Crimson Petal and the White* (2002) by Michel Faber. Drawing on imagined, subjective experience, novels are not comparable to sociological investigations of prostitution. However, the fictional works may be mined for their insights into the historical influences of the prostitution

discourses, and to some of the problematics identified by feminist researchers of prostitution.

Finally, the Conclusion will identify the limits and key findings of the project and suggest directions for future research and discussion.

In summation, this project attempts to empirically identify how discourses of prostitution are constructed in the public sphere of the news media, explore the cultural meanings of media distortions, offer a longer historical view of the discourses, and explore how fiction might be a theoretical attempt to transcend the “beginnings, atavisms and heredities” (Foucault, 1977, p. 19) that continue to impair more progressive public discussions.

## *Chapter Two*

### **Empirical Studies of Prostitution in the Victorian Age and in the U.K. Today**

The U.K. Network of Sex Work Projects estimates that 50,000 to 80,000 women sell sex in the United Kingdom (Thomas, 2009, p. 141). Research into prostitution is often limited by the secrecy, stigma and illegality surrounding it. It is difficult to establish specific numbers and facts due to the “formidable methodological problems of realistic estimations” (Wellings et al., 1994, p. 120). There is often reluctance on the part of those participating in the sex trade to come forward and be respondents in studies.

Nevertheless, an understanding of the causal factors and circumstances of sex work in the U.K. is necessary, in order to improve conditions. Thus, researchers continue to develop strategies for collecting and interpreting evidence about women’s entry and continuance in prostitution. Various studies conclude that different social factors contribute, with marginalization, drug addiction and abuse among the causes often cited; almost all studies point to gendered poverty in the United Kingdom as an overarching reason for women’s participation in sex work.

A review of research beginning in the nineteenth century demonstrates that singularly British social, cultural, economic and legal conditions characterize prostitution in the U.K.. Many of the conditions and laws surrounding prostitution in Victorian times continue to define it. As contemporary researcher Jo Phoenix (2009) writes,

Two centuries of research on the empirical realities of selling sex in the U.K. has told a remarkably consistent tale...Now, just as when Mayhew (1861) did his

survey of Victorian London, selling sex is a form of economic survivalism in an environment where women have few opportunities for independent financial and social security (p. 3).

A review of historical and contemporary research into prostitution reveals enduring themes of gendered poverty, inequitable employment opportunities, violence and stigma.

This chapter will begin with a review of the empirical studies conducted in nineteenth century Britain into the causes and conditions of prostitution, an emergent issue during the industrial revolution. Next, it will review the most recent literature on contemporary sex work. The review of current literature will also be limited to the U.K.. This chapter will be a general overview of some of the major British literature on consensual sex work and its findings. An assessment of the researchers' empirical claims is beyond the scope of this thesis, but methodological approaches will be identified.

#### *Historical factors contributing to women's entry into prostitution*

In the nineteenth century, investigations of prostitution were conducted by doctors and journalists who were pioneers in the emergent field of sociology. These included Greg (1850), Acton (1857), Mayhew (1861), Hemyng (1861) and Taine (1872). Their research will be outlined here. Historians such as Sigsworth and Wyke (1972), and Judith Walkowitz (1980) who have reviewed the original documents used by the researchers (such as the Contagious Disease Acts, parliamentary proceedings, pamphlets, and Repeal movement documents,) and investigated the broader legal conditions for women in the nineteenth century, have noted that these surveys were methodologically flawed, i.e., that the researchers' access to prostitute subjects was limited, and that their approaches were

often biased by certain ideas of gender and class (Walkowitz, 1980, pp. 36-37). For example, prostitution was mainly conceptualized as a problem caused by male lust and women's moral and physical seduction, or "fall." The researchers' interpretations were also coloured by class biases that proposed that certain qualities inherent in some lower class women such as "licentious inclination" led them to become prostitutes. In spite of these biases, Victorian researchers also recognized the socio-economic disparities facing many women. They often concluded that a lack of employment and low wages led women to prostitution. The studies are valuable glimpses into patterns of prostitution as created by historical industrial capitalism, urbanization and laws.

The emergence of social science in the nineteenth century resulted in the study of prostitution as a phenomenon, with a number of surveys in Britain undertaken during the early 1840s and over the next four decades. At first, the rate of industrialization of Britain outstripped many infrastructures, including the collection of statistics. There was, R. J Evans (1954) writes, "an almost complete ignorance of the true state of affairs. The march of events had been too rapid... There was no tradition of remedy through state action, and no trained Civil Service to collect information [or] compile statistics" (p. 25). Gradually, investigations of prostitution were conducted by nineteenth-century social scientists, a then emergent group.

In the mid-nineteenth century, no clear laws defined prostitution, and the numbers of brothels or women selling sex were unknown to police or researchers (Bartley, 1999, p. 3; Picard, 2006, p. 255). Historical texts offer some numbers, but they are presented as estimates. Researchers of the era used different statistical and empirical methods to attempt to calculate levels of prostitution activity in various locales. Prostitution was



mainly confined to the ports, army towns, major cities and resort towns of the U.K. (Bartley, 1999, p. 3).

William Tait (1842), a Scottish “lock hospital” surgeon (an institution that forcibly confined “diseased” prostitutes,) entrusted by The London Society for the Protection of Young Females to research prostitution, notes that in Edinburgh, there were “difficulties to be encountered in determining the number of prostitutes” due to women’s denial when asked if they were prostitutes (p. 2) and tendency to work seasonally (p. 3). Based on the number of brothels and private homes known for prostitution (200), Tait estimated that the number of prostitutes in Edinburgh was 800, or “one to every eighty of the adult male population,” while in London, “there is one for every sixty” (p. 6). Tait also extrapolates from a sample of 300 seamstresses, of whom 130 are known “to deliver themselves partially up to a life of prostitution.” He thus estimates that the number of “sly prostitutes” in Edinburgh swells total numbers “1160 and upwards” to 2000 (p. 10).

William Acton (1857), a medical doctor, combined his own observations, interviews with police, and official records of arrests, disease and numbers of children born to unwed mothers, to calculate numbers of prostitutes. Acton submitted that in London, the proportion of prostitutes to male clients was closer to one prostitute per 81 men (p. 19). Henry Mayhew (1861), a journalist, observed and interviewed various figures among “the London poor,” including prostitutes. Both Acton and Mayhew conclude that there were approximately 9,000 prostitutes in the British capital known to police, but both speculate that the number might be as high as 80,000 (Acton, 1857/1972, p. 3; Mayhew, 1861/1968, p. 213). The higher figure has been disputed by later

researchers. Nield (1973) suggests that the inflated number illustrates the seeming intractability of the problem to social researchers of the time (p. 3).

Research about the socio-economic origins of women involved in prostitution in Victorian times is not definitive but much of it suggests that women came from the working and lower classes. In Mayhew's observational study (1861), prostitutes are defined according to their clientele. Mayhew described six main types of prostitutes: kept mistresses; demi-mondaines; low lodging house women; sailors and soldiers' women; park women; and thieves' women. From these categories, historians such as Bartley (1999) have deduced that prostitutes were not a homogeneous group (p. 3). The origins of the women servicing these different classes of clients are more difficult to ascertain from historical texts. Unempirical literature of the time – the writings of the “reformers” inspired by religious missions to rescue “fallen” women – describe prostitutes as coming from the low working classes.

Those involved with the rescue and reform of prostitutes believed that dressmakers, seamstresses, milliners, bonnet makers, shop girls, agricultural labourers, barmaids, shopgirls and above all, domestic servants made up the majority of the prostitute population. (Bartley, 1999, p. 3)

Some empirical evidence supports the demographics presented by these religious texts. In interviews conducted in the mid-nineteenth century with 16,000 prostitutes by the chaplain of London's Millbank prison, 40 percent of the inmates stated they had been domestic servants (Bartley, 1999, p. 3). While the methodological reliability of the interviews is unknown, the large sample of prostitute interviewees is notable. Tait (1842) also concludes that, before turning to prostitution, many women had been “dress makers,

sewers, bonnet makers, shop girls, house servants and fishwives” (p. 3). Hemyng (1861) investigated the level of education among prostitutes who had been arrested in London between 1837 and 1854. For every 10,000 he found that: 3,498 were completely illiterate; 6,129 could read only or “read and write badly”; 351 were able to “read and write well”; and 22 were “educated in a superior manner” (Hemyng, 1861, p. 218).

It is not surprising that prostitutes were understood in relation to their male clients; at the time, prostitution was mainly conceptualized as a problem caused by male weakness. Prostitution was seen as a natural, if not morally or socially desirable, outcome of male lust. Acton (1857), first and foremost viewed “the natural instinct of man” as the main cause of prostitution (pp. 163-165). Acton, though purportedly a social scientist, offers a speculative theory of male and female natures that is consistent with his time. He believed that it was “impossible to exaggerate the force of sexual desire in men,” which is innate since puberty. That men had powerful, undeniable, physiological, venal desires was a widely held view during the nineteenth century (Walkowitz, 1980, p. 70).

Researchers suggest that this prevailing cultural acceptance of prostitution as natural, if not morally desirable, made it likely that male demand was high. “It is well documented that it was a tradition throughout Victorian England for upper-class men to have their initial sexual experiences with prostitutes,” writes Brooks Gordon (2006, p. 6). Briggs et al. (1999) argue that most clients, however, were poor men “paying very small sums to even poorer women” (p. 199). Though it is difficult to reconstruct the Victorian client, Hall (1991) argues that large amounts of men from all social classes paid for sex.

Statistics of the era suggest that prostitutes were mainly young. Tait provides a glimpse into the average ages of known prostitutes. Of 1000 patients admitted at his lock

hospital for venereal disease during the previous seven years, he reports that: four percent were under fifteen years; 66 percent were fifteen to twenty years; 20 percent were 20 to 25 years; seven percent were 25 to 30; two percent were 30 to 35; and the remaining one percent upwards of 35 years (Tait, 1842, p. 32).

Writing in an era before child labour reforms, Victorian researchers do not conceptualize the girls involved in prostitution as abused. Rather, following the theory that men's powerful lust caused prostitution, they concluded those women's correspondingly passive natures had allowed them to be seduced into prostitution. Women, wrote Acton, were "created to be the companion of man," has a nature that is the "exact counterpart of his" – that is, unbothered by sexual desire (p. 162). Based on their observations and interviews, many researchers concluded that, in many cases, women's helpmate natures made them vulnerable to seduction. These conceptions of gender that regarded women as the passive dependents of men were prevalent in nineteenth-century England and coloured empirical research. Greg (1850) concluded that many women "are deceived by unreal marriages...Many fall from pure unknowingness. Their affections are engaged, their confidence secured" (Greg, in Nield, 1973, p. 459).

The conclusions of the researchers also reflect the limited choices and stigma for women who had relations with men outside marriage. Based on his interviews with prostitutes, Acton (1857) reasoned that "misplaced love" was often a cause of a woman's downfall – that is, loss of virginity and social dignity, and a subsequent turn to prostitution (p. 188). Bracebridge Hemyng (1861), writing with a journalistic, observational approach in an 1861 edition of Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor*, expressed a similar view of women's inclination to pure love, and her susceptibility

to corruption. “The love of woman is usually pure and elevated.” Her dedicated nature was often the reason for her fall.

When she devotes her affections to a man who realizes her ideals, she does not hesitate to sacrifice all she holds dear, for his gratification, ignoring her own interest and her own inclination... this heroic martyrdom is one of the causes...of the stream of immortality that insidiously permeates our social system (Hemyng, 1861/1968, p. 214).

The researchers’ interpretation of their interviews were also coloured by class biases. Though Tait (1842) suggests that women had pure natures that became corrupted by prostitution (pp. 155-56), he also lists among the “natural causes” of prostitution, certain qualities inherent in some lower class women such as “licentious inclination” (p. 83), “irritability of temper,” (p. 85) “dishonesty” (p. p. 90) and “indolence” (p. 92). Acton (1857) also argued that among the contributing reasons that women – particularly lower class women<sup>v</sup> – turned to prostitution were “Natural desire,” “Natural sinfulness” and the “preferment of indolent ease to labour” (p. 165).

The research of the historical sociologists, while attempting to be objective, was often underlined by the conception that men’s natural sexual needs and the weak character of lower class women made prostitution inevitable, as well as a moral conviction that it should be eradicated.

However, nineteenth-century researchers also concluded that prostitution for many women was a consequence of socio-economic conditions: rapid industrial development, mass migrations to urban centres, shifts in employment roles and women’s general vulnerability to losses of social and family structure. Greg (1850) argued that

though difficult to prove empirically, poverty was a major cause of prostitution.

“[T]hough we have no adequate statistics...no one doubts” that poverty was the “chief determining cause” of prostitution (Greg in Nield, 1973, p. 461).

Many researchers observed how the industrial revolution had created a huge subclass of people, many of them women, who had emigrated from rural areas to find little or disabling work, unsanitary, even deadly living conditions, and an inescapable cycle of poverty. Hyppolyte Taine (1872) a Frenchman whose mid-nineteenth-century visits inspired his work, *London Notes*, observed the rampant poverty of Britain’s capital city, and commented on the ruthlessness of industrial capitalism for the most vulnerable. “The great social mill crushes and grinds here, beneath its steel gearing, the lowest human stratum” (Taine, 1872, p. 40). He described prostitute women with sympathy, as the most desperate victims of the social strata that resulted from the industrial project:

I recall, the alleys which run into Oxford Street, stifling lanes encrusted with human exhalations...Every hundred steps one jostles twenty harlots. Some of them ask for a glass of gin; others say, “Sir, it is to pay my lodging.” This is not debauchery with flaunts itself, but destitution – and such destitution! (Taine, 1872, p. 36).

Victorian researchers and proponents of reform recognized the socio-economic conditions that had led women into prostitution.

Research points to women’s general lack of opportunities for financial solvency during the industrial revolution; unmarried working class, as well as impoverished women, may have turned to prostitution for survival. Even women with middle-class origins who were forced to work as governesses by spinsterhood, desertion or

widowhood found little material security (Picard, 2006, p. 262). But working and lower class women, especially, were particularly affected by the uncertain cash economy. They were underemployed, underpaid and faced harsh working conditions. Opportunities varied at different times during the Victorian age, but the major options for lower-class women were housekeeping, factory and piecework; all were, to varying degrees, ill-paid and strenuous, with few protections. Until the invention of the sewing machine in 1846, slop work was particularly grueling. Slightly higher positions included jobs as barmaids, wet nurses, shopwomen and dressmakers. These jobs were also exploitative, with long hours and little remuneration. William Watts M.D., the resident medical officer of a Poor Law Union, testified before parliament in 1843 that women working in the garment industry were forced to turn to prostitution to survive. “It is impossible for young women to produce the necessaries of life...by the present wages they can earn as lace-runners. The consequence is that almost all become prostitutes” (Bullough & Bullough, 1987, p. 198). Hemyng (1861) also argued that prostitution was, first and foremost, based on poor work conditions and low wages that made survival difficult. “The greatest” source of prostitution, he wrote,

and the most difficult one to combat is the low rate of wages that the female industrial classes of this great city receive in return for arduous and wearisome labour. Innumerable cases of prostitution through want, solely and absolutely, are constantly occurring (Hemyng, 1861, p. 213).

Women were brought to prostitution, argues the contemporary historian Nield (1973), “by the discipline and featurelessness of life as a domestic servant, or the ‘redundancy of

half a million women and their ‘superfluidity’ on the marriage market...needlewomen brought to ruin by low wages” (p. 11).

The incompatibility of existing work and child care was another factor cited by Victorian researchers. Acton (1850) also acknowledged that one of the reasons that women entered the trade was “extreme poverty” (p. 165) and noted that needlewomen sometimes entered prostitution because of “the incompatibility of infant nursing with the discipline of the workshop” (p. 29).

In summary, while Victorian researchers commonly theorized that prostitution was a natural effect of male sexual impulses, they also reported that high rates of low-class prostitution followed the social disorder, unemployment and harsh conditions of industrialization.

#### *Conditions of historical prostitution*

Historical and contemporary research suggests that once women turned to prostitution in the nineteenth century, often for their basic survival, their working conditions remained dire – impoverished, unsanitary and dangerous. The social stigma associated with a “fall” into prostitution may also have resulted in women’s continuance in the sex trade. Research from the era suggests that women were affected by marginalization, poverty, imprisonment, abuse, disease, and addiction to alcohol.

Exact statistics about the financial status of working prostitutes during the Victorian era are not available. Acton’s examination of police records from 1841 to 1857 indicate that the greatest number of brothels in the mid-nineteenth century were in the poorest and most disadvantaged neighbourhoods of London: Spitalfields, Houndsditch,



Whitechapel and Ratcliff (Acton, 1957, p. 4). There are reports of some prosperous women working the Strand, and some known mistresses of aristocrats, known as *grandes horizontals*, such as Catherine Walters, known as ‘Skittles,’ rumoured to be the courtesan of the Duke of Devonshire (Acton, 1857, pp. 255-259). Such women were reported to charge up to 25 British pounds for 25 minutes (ibid 259) (approximately 1,475 BP today). But overwhelmingly, prostitutes were “low, infesting low neighbourhoods,” as Acton characterized them (p. 4). He reports that of 8,600 London prostitutes, 5,344 were low women, compared to 921 who were “well dressed [and] living in brothels” (Acton, 1857, p. 4). Taine mentions few upper class prostitutes in his notes and focuses on the poverty faced by prostitutes. He observed that London’s treatment of its poor had resulted in the entire East end becoming “a plague spot” (Taine, 1872, p. 40).

Contagious diseases, including syphilis and consumption, were rampant. Acton speculated that one in four prostitutes were “diseased” (p. 73). Historical documents reveal that among the outpatients at Bartholomew Hospital in London for example, fifty percent had venereal disease, mostly syphilis, which was deadly and, at the time, transmittable to second and third generations (Wilson, 2007, p. 145). At this time, the idea abounded that women prostitutes, not male clients, were responsible for the spread of diseases (Wilson, 2007, p. 146).

Historians such as Walkowitz and Spongberg have demonstrated that government policy to curb the spread of disease worsened conditions by imposing forcible confinement on prostitutes (but not their male clients). In the mid-century, attempts at reform or intervention took the form of discriminatory, coercive Contagious Diseases Acts. Introduced in 1864 and 1866 (with amendments in 1868 and 1869,) they were

passed in Parliament, arousing no debate (Spongberg, 1997, p. 63). The Acts allowed for the detainment of women suspected to be prostitutes, enforced the hospitalization of women with cholera, syphilis, gonorrhea, small pox and other communicable diseases in “lock hospitals,” and forcibly monitored detainees’ venereal status (Walkowitz, 1980). According to the Acts, any woman deemed to be a common prostitute by police within a certain radius of the four garrison areas could be arrested and subjected to a medical exam to discern whether she was carrying a contagious disease. If women were found to have diseases, they were detained in a lock hospital for a maximum of three months (Spongberg, 1997, p. 63). In 1864, if a woman refused to comply, she could be imprisoned for up to two months. In 1866, the Acts were amended, allowing a magistrate to order a woman to submit to a fortnightly examination for up to a year; a woman diagnosed with a disease could be imprisoned for a year with moral and religious instruction (Spongberg, 1997, p. 63). In 1867, civilian doctors organized a campaign to extend the Acts, compelling the local police force to force gynecological examinations on women suspected of being prostitutes in London and other large towns (Walkowitz, 1980, p. 69, Spongberg 63). In 1869, the period of detention was extended to 15 months (Spongberg, 1997, p. 64).<sup>vi</sup>

Although systematically collected data about the level of violence experienced by women is lacking, the reported levels of poverty indicate that the majority of women not detained in lock hospitals were exposed to the harshness of the street. There is also observational evidence of violent clients. Taine described the pitiable state of the “harlots” he encountered in the East end. “Figure to yourself what a lady’s bonnet may become after passing during three or four years...crushed against walls, having had blows

from fists; for they receive them. I noticed blackened eyes, bandaged noses, bloody cheekbones” (Taine, 1872, p. 40). The historian Picard (2006) has concluded that life was likely dangerous for women on the street, citing the Jack the Ripper case. “Men using a prostitute may be violent, brutal, perverted, diseased and drunk,” and, due to prevailing attitudes towards prostitutes, “the police were unlikely to protect her” (p. 256).

Historical social researchers observed that a combination of poverty, coercion by brothel keepers and associates, alcoholism and stigma kept women in sex work. Tait argued that prostitution usually kept “its votaries” entrapped and in poverty (p. 161). He wrote that “it may now be affirmed that, notwithstanding the large sum which each prostitutes may receive during the year, almost every one of them is in poverty (Tait, 1842, p. 161). He observed that “fully one-half” of women’s earnings went “into the pockets of these unprincipled and unfeeling monsters,” the brothel keepers. The rest, he observed, went to bad companions, a want of dress, and whisky (Tait, 1842, p. 164). Acton notes that stigma prevented women from exiting prostitution: they stayed out of “necessity, imbued by the inability to obtain a living by honest means consequent on a fall from virtue” (p. 165).

Research suggests that exiting the trade of prostitution was difficult and unlikely. It is difficult to obtain statistics on women’s “reintegration.” Acton (1857) reported that “the Harlot’s Progress” often included marrying out of the trade and “returning to a more or less regular course of life” (p. 39). There are scattered (and often religiously moralistic) reports of rescued women’s reintegration into society, but the objectivity of the reportage is coloured by the vested moral convictions of Victorian “rescuers” of women from “vice.” Mayhew (1861) offers a glimpse into former prostitutes living as

wives which suggests that some stigma may have followed women throughout their lives. The women emphasize more the loss of status caused by their former profession. One “soldier's woman” says: “I always liked my freedom. I'm not comfortable exactly; it's a brutal sort of life this.... I feel I'm not respected either. If I have a row with any fellow he's always the first to taunt me” (Mayhew, 1861, p. 488). While there is no systematic empirical data, there are limited reports of women, who, after entering rescue homes, were placed in other jobs or married. Charles Dickens became personally involved in Urania Cottage, a reformatory in Lime Grove, Shepherd's Bush and described the fate of some women who had stayed there: “Of these fifty-six cases... thirty (of whom seven are now married) on their arrival in Australia or elsewhere, [and] entered into good service” (Janes, 1992, p. 39). Such anecdotes may provide some insight but can probably not be extrapolated more broadly.

Literature of the time also reflects on the limited chances and options of “rescued” women. In *David Copperfield* (1849), the former prostitute Martha marries, but only after she goes to remote Australia. Nancy of *Oliver Twist* (1873), isn't so lucky, meeting a brutal end. Wilkie Collins' *The New Magdalen*, (1873) follows a "reclaimed" woman's journey through British society. She finds an unusually freethinking man to marry, but must emigrate with him to truly escape her former life. These works may also draw on some women's experiences of re-integration (to an unknown extent).

Historical texts suggest that a “fall” into prostitution in the Victorian era, caused by poverty and disenfranchisement, generally stigmatized women, affected her health, resulted in her confinement, and as Tait (1842) suggests, trapped her in ongoing poverty, alcoholism and abuse.

### *Contemporary factors contributing to women's entry into prostitution*

As in the Victorian age, empirical data about the reasons for women's entry into prostitution today are difficult to obtain. Many researchers suggest that entry results from a complex, variable and dynamic set of conditions including abuse, neglect, coercion, youth, marginalization, addiction and poverty. Almost all researchers contend that gendered poverty impacts women's entry. Unlike during the Victorian era, men are not generally cited as the reason for prostitution, though some researchers note that men create the fundamental "demand" for prostitution. There is limited and inconclusive research about the men who pay for sex in terms of how they may help contribute to prostitution.

The reasons for women's entry into prostitution are difficult to generalize; as in the Victorian era, researchers have drawn conclusions from smaller studies of particular "populations." O'Neill et al. (2009) write that, "There is no comprehensive study documenting the backgrounds of sex workers, although studies of different populations show that sex workers can come from a range of backgrounds, with different routes into sex work" (p. 33). A dynamic of different factors is thought to contribute, in different measures, to individuals' entry. For example, May and Hunter (2006) have pointed out that, while a causal connection between drug use and prostitution is often evident, the relationship is better understood as two associated phenomena stemming from a more complex set of conditions including abuse, neglect and poverty:

[D]rug use and street sex work largely share the same set of interconnecting risk factors, including disrupted family lines, socio economic deprivation, child sexual

abuse, experience of local authority care, homelessness, involvement in crime, disrupted schooling and low self-esteem (p. 172).

Many researchers suggest that the general factors for entry include abuse, neglect, poverty, addiction and marginalization, but that these act in different ways on individuals.

Some researchers of street-based sex work suggest that physical, sexual and emotional abuse by families, as well as time spent in local authority care, are among the factors influencing women's entry into prostitution (Phoenix, 2009, p. 4; Phoenix, 1999, p. 100). A 2001 study of London sex workers also found that two-thirds of those involved in street prostitution said they had experienced some form of child abuse (Matthews, 2008, p. 66).

Researchers do not unanimously conclude that sex workers have experienced higher than normal levels of childhood abuse. Sharpe (1998) has argued that links between prostitution, "delinquency and family background and circumstances is controversial, contradictory and largely inconclusive" (p. 29). Sharpe's 1993 study was based on observation of 100 street workers while on accompanied patrols with vice police in a "Northern English city," and interviews with 40 women. She found that 47 percent of respondents reported a stable home background (p. 31), while 44 percent came from what they described as "a 'broken home,'" with divorced parents and acrimonious relationships (p. 31). Of the 40 women surveyed, 20 percent had spent time in institutional care as children (p. 32). Pearce (2009) specifies that individual youths' particular experience of institutional care also play a role, as do other individual factors. Pearce (2009) reports that of a study of 55 youth in social services, 21 who persistently

sold sex were “the most alienated from services, the most difficult to engage, and carried the largest number of problems at one time” (Pearce p. 127).

Some researchers make a distinction between levels of abuse experienced by street and indoor workers. Sanders’ 2005 ethnographic study of fifty-five voluntary subjects in Birmingham, consisting mainly of women working in indoor sex markets such as brothels and saunas, found that only 27 percent reported having histories of physical or sexual abuse in childhood (p. 47).

The vulnerability of youth is also sometimes cited as a general co-factor for entry, particularly in street sex work. O’Neill e. al. (2009) state that by extrapolating from small-scale local studies it is possible to conclude that a “relatively large proportion of women who work on the streets entered sex work before they were 18 years of age” (p. 34). However, in a medical and fieldwork study, Ward et al. (2004) found that, of 552 women working in indoor and outdoor markets, the median age was 26, with five percent having started at 16 or younger, 12 percent having started between the ages of 17 and 19, 64 percent between 20 and 29, and 19 percent at 30 or older.

There is a “slightly older age profile for women working indoors,” suggest O’Neill e. al. (2009, p. 34); other studies support this. Sharpe’s (1998) study showed an average age of entry into indoor work of 21.6, with 3 out of 40 women surveyed reporting they were under 16 when they started. At the time of Sharpe’s study, the 100 women observed were aged 16 to 59, with an average age of 26.6. Ward et al.’s 2004 study of sex workers who worked mainly in indoor premises such as flats, saunas and escort agencies also reflects an older average age of entry (twenties). In her 2005 study of Birmingham indoor sex workers, Sanders found that the average age of entry into

prostitution was 23.1 years (p. 49). She reported that the age range of the sex workers questioned was 18 to 52 years, with a mean age of 33.5 (p. 47).

Some researchers report that, among youth who have entered prostitution, violent coercion and/or sexual aggression may play a part, but research is, ultimately inconclusive. Melrose and Barrett (2004), and Scott and Skidmore (2006) cite friends, peers or boyfriend/pimps as coercive factors. In a Home Office-commissioned study (2000) that included interviews with 79 people, including 36 sex workers and sixteen pimps, researchers submitted that the role of pimps in “creating” prostitutes is inconclusive. Pimps’ role in “drawing people into sex work is hard to establish with certainty,” states the report, noting that seven out of thirty-six interviewees said that a pimp had drawn them into sex work (May et al., 2000, vi). The report submitted that younger sex workers were more likely to be pimped. They reported that eleven of the sixteen pimps they interviewed had worked with one or more underage sex workers, whom they met through mutual friends, in nightclubs or as drug dealers to the juveniles. Three pimps claimed they directly targeted juveniles in bus stations. All of the juveniles worked on the streets (May et al., 2000, p. 11). In 2004, the U.K.’s Home Office addressed the lack of research into the links between sexual exploitation and prostitution. “More research is needed in terms of how many young people who are identified as being sexually exploited will go on to be commercially sexually exploited and the factors that are involved in this” (“Tackling Street Prostitution,” 2004, xii).

Much research compiled over the last twenty years cites drug dependence as a major factor in entry into sex work, particularly street-based sex work (Phoenix, 1999; McKegany and Barnard, 1996; May and Hunter, 2006; O’Neill et al., 2009). May et al.’s



(2000) government-commissioned research study incorporated police statistics and interviews with 79 people involved in street prostitution drawn from four geographical areas. The researchers reported that in cases where sex workers had pimped, pimps often used drug dependence, versus violence, as incentives (p. vi). Sanders (2005) found that only seven percent of the women she studied were drug (heroin or cocaine) users, but that the majority (four) out of the five street workers in her study considered themselves users or addicts (p. 49). Among the younger women in Sanders' study working in the indoor markets, recreational use of cannabis, amphetamines and stimulants was reported but not usually tolerated by the establishments in which they worked, or considered desirable by the women themselves, who "wanted to stay alert and in control when they were with clients" (Sanders, 2005, p. 49-50). The use of drugs also depended on the "quality" and image of the establishment (Sanders, 2005, p. 50). Echoing Sanders' findings, Sharpe's 1998 study suggests that heroin is observed to be abused among street workers, and stimulants among women working in indoor markets (p. 93).

Studies suggest that drug addiction is a contributing, but not exclusive, factor in street prostitution. Melrose (2009) notes that the Home Office research has found variation in the use of crack and/or heroin by street sex workers across different regions in England, ranging from 45 percent to 74 percent crack use, and 74 percent to 100 percent heroin use, depending on the locale (p. 85). In Scotland in 2001, 50 percent of Edinburgh sex workers were selling sex primarily as a result of drug dependence, while in Glasgow, numbers were reported to be 95 percent (Thomas, 2009, pp. 156-157). Melrose (2009) argues that variation such as this "demonstrates that a significant proportion of women involved in street sex work are not necessarily involved as a result

of drug use.” Rather, she argues, echoing other researchers such as O’Neill (2001), poverty is the common factor among women on the street. “It is poverty, *sometimes but not always in conjunction with drug use* that serves to keep them there” (Melrose, 2009, p. 85).

Many researchers cite poverty and lack of better work options as pervasive factors in women’s entry into prostitution. In Sharpe’s (1998) study, 100 percent of the street workers interviewed said they had left school by age sixteen and only 25 percent had found jobs (p. 32) These previous occupations included low wage clerical work, care assistance and service industry work. In Sanders’ study (2005) 75 percent of the women studied had left school at the age of sixteen or before; the rest had college educations in vocational trades including nursing, however, Sanders reports that virtually all had worked in traditionally “feminized,” unskilled, manual work (“cleaning, catering or caring”) (p. 48), supporting claims that sex work is a choice sometimes made by women in the absence of better paid, but also more satisfying options. (In Sharpe’s study, there appeared to be a culture operating that viewed prostitution as common, perhaps growing out of a lack of options; 57.7 percent of respondents cited their reason for entry as having had a friend or family member already involved [p. 41].)

Single motherhood and lack of childcare are also cited by researchers as a factor contributing to some women’s entry into sex work. In Sanders’ 2005 study, 75 percent of the women were mothers, 50 percent of whom were single. All the women who were mothers cited caring for their children as a reason for entering prostitution (Sanders, 2005, p. 48). Some sex workers’ groups, operating outside the margins of academic research have also argued that a lack of viable options contributes to women’s entry. The

English Collective of Prostitutes has claimed that 75 percent of women sex workers are single mothers (ECP, 1997, p. 90, reported in Brooks-Gordon, p. 15).

Claims that poverty, discrimination, a lack of viable options and the need to provide for children continue to contribute to women's entry into prostitution also draw on evidence about the prevailing inequity for women in the U.K.. A 2008 European Commission report indicated that adult women's financial and social stability remains largely dependent on their relationships with others (men and their families,) and that throughout Europe, women's pay is 17.8 percent lower than men's ("Gender Pay Gap" par. 2). The Commission notes that the gap is widening in some countries. The Commission also reports that women often work in low skilled and wage jobs. "Women are frequently employed as administrative assistants, shop assistants or low skilled or unskilled workers — these occupations accounting for almost half of the female workforce. Many women work in low-paying occupations, for example, cleaning and care work" ("Which are the causes," par. 8). An earlier study (2006) by the commission showed that women who have been subject to abuse or are lone parents also have higher risks of poverty, demonstrating the confluence of factors leading to marginalization and prostitution (reported by Phoenix, 2009, p. 4). The last report of the British Equalities Review (2007) revealed that working and single mothers, ethnic minorities and disabled people are among those most discriminated against, in some cases, to a worse degree than in the past (p. 63). The report calls such findings "stark in their unfairness" (p. 66). Pearce (2009) has also reported that there are 2.9 children living in poverty in the U.K., which is more than one fifth of all children (p. 128). "In the face of such empirical evidence," writes Phoenix (2009),

the notion that women's lives in late modernity are marked by much greater freedoms than ever seen before seems more rhetorical than actual – at least for the significant minority of largely poor, working class women who still face broadly similar conditions of existence than those faced in previous generations (p. 4).

As in the Victorian era, researchers point to factors of poverty and a lack of other options as often contributing to women's entry into prostitution.

There is less research about the men who pay for sex in terms of how they may help contribute to prostitution (Ward et al., 2001, p. 267; Sanders, 2008, p. 7). Research is mostly comprised of demographic data, with minor ethnographic research wherein men have cited the ability to buy specific sex acts, contact with a variety of women, limited responsibility to sexual partners, and the thrill of breaking taboos as factors. Limited research on “kerb-crawling” (the British term for men's solicitation of street workers from cars) suggests that it is often opportunistic (Matthews, 2008, p. 127). That is, many men who solicit sex do not appear to be doing so with regular purpose; Matthews suggests that these men seem to act in response to the appearance of street prostitutes in their field of vision, rather than deliberately seeking sex for hire. Sanders' 2008 research investigating the male clients who mainly bought sex from massage parlours and escort agencies included a review of clients' 134 self-written biographies, and comprised 50 interviews. She categorized men's pattern of involvement as “explorers,” characterized by any age group; “yo-yo-ers,” in their thirties or older; “compulsives,” of any age; “bookends” as men in their early or late life when single; and “permanent purchasers” who buy sex throughout their lives (Sanders, 2008, p. 48).

Most research reveals that men's choice to hire prostitutes is not due to a lack of a sex partner. McKeganey et al. (1994) found that 66 percent of male clients studied in Glasgow were married or living with a partner. Groom and Nandwani's 2006 medical study found that of 2665 men who paid for sex, 43 percent were in relationships. Sanders found that 48 percent were married or had long-term partners (Sanders 2008, p. 34). A 2010 research project studying men in London similarly found that 54 percent had partners (Eaves, p. 9).

In Sanders' (2008) study of the users of indoor sex markets, 86 percent were middle class by U.K. standards (determined by their current employment and/or university-level education), while 14 percent would be considered working class (p. 35). Sanders notes that these percentages are consistent with other studies of men who buy sex in the massage and escort sex markets. Occupations could not be generalized, ranging from academics, members of the armed forces, lawyers, salesmen to factory workers and drivers. Brooks Gordon (2006) argues that the occupations among men who buy street sex are not randomly distributed but reflect certain groups, particularly skilled manual and financial jobs (p. 124). Brooks Gordon's study of 500 men stopped by police for street sex offenses showed that the largest occupational group (23 percent) was those in skilled manual jobs, including plumbers and drivers. The second occupational class/socio-economic group was professional (22 percent) with half of these comprised of men in financial professions, the rest in traditional ones (teachers, dentists etc.). One percent was found to be diplomats (with immunity). The remaining groups were white-collar clerical workers (hotel clerks etc.), unskilled labourers or had declined to give their professions (Brooks Gordon 2006 pp. 107-108).

Research suggests that the age range of clients appears to vary widely. In Sanders' 2008 study, men's ages ranged from 22 to 70 years old, with a mean of 45 (Sanders, 2008, p. 34). Brooks Gordon's 2005 study also showed a distribution of age of 17 to 77, with a mean of 39, but with most clients being 26 to 45 years of age (p. 105).

Researchers have also identified unstated factors for men's use of sex workers, personal and psychological, contributing to their use of prostitutes. Sanders (2008) noted that commonly stated motivations are the ability to buy specific sex acts, contact with a variety of women, limited responsibility to sexual partners, and the thrill of breaking taboos (p. 40). But Sanders interpreted from her interviews that men also buy sex for unstated reasons that require more critical interpretation. Key factors include their emotional needs and stages of life (Sanders, 2008, p. 41). She also lists,

physical unattractiveness, social unattractiveness/psychological maladjustment, poor sexual development, manifestations of cultural gendered role expectations, avoidance of gender role responsibilities and buying sex as an exercise of power for disempowered men (p. 40).

While conclusions about how men may contribute to women's entry in sex work may not be drawn based on demographic or other data, it is presented for comparison, (in future chapters,) with media and fictional representations.

### *Conditions of contemporary prostitution*

In the U.K. today, it is estimated that approximately one quarter of sex workers work in street prostitution, with approximately three-quarters working in indoor markets or as escorts. While some ethnographic research portrays prostitution as allowing for

financial solvency, other research suggests that sex workers remain at higher risk for poverty than women in most other industries. Empirical studies demonstrate that sex workers report much higher than average rates of rape, violence and murder than other professions. Sex workers also report coercion, emotional and mental distress; factors for the distress include high rates of violence as well as the effects of doing socially stigmatized work. Researchers have concluded that sex workers are a heterogeneous group and rates of sexually transmitted diseases cannot be generalized. Some favourable elements of sex work have been reported including women's preference to do sex work over more mundane labour, and enjoyment of the work.

Levels of street-based sex work may have been over-represented in previous prostitution research; recent studies suggest that sex work in indoor premises is more common, however, strictly defined categories may not be applicable. In 2007-2008, TAMPEP, (the European Network for HIV/STI Prevention and Health Promotion Among Migrant Sex Workers, a Netherlands-based civil rights group funded by the European Commission,) used questionnaires distributed to "NGOs, governmental health and social services, civil servants, law enforcement agencies and sex workers' organizations that work directly with sex workers. Their findings estimated that 28 percent of women in Northern European countries, including the U.K., work in street prostitution, with 72 percent working in indoor markets or as escorts (TAMPEP, 2009, p. 32). An older study by Matthews (1997) has pointed to evidence that street prostitution has been over-represented in academic studies of sex work. Matthews studied police records, newspapers and did a telephone survey to conclude that 12 percent of prostitutes in London worked on the street (Sanders, p. 12). However, strict definitions, for example, of

“low” street versus “more favourable” indoor market sex work are not necessarily accurate. Research shows that women may move between markets. For example, Sanders (2005) notes that in her study, 50 of the women were sex workers working from indoor markets such as home, brothels, saunas and out of escort agencies, and five were women who worked on the street. However, 16 of the women had at one time worked on the street, and twelve women had worked in more than one (indoor) market (p. 49).

Ultimately, there are no national statistics for the number of women working on the streets or in indoor locations, and national numbers tend to be extrapolated from smaller scale studies (O’Neill et al., 2009)

Definitive research about the financial status of sex workers is, likewise, difficult to collect and quantify, and researchers submit that a variety of experiences exists among sex workers, however, most researchers agree that women involved in sex work remain at higher risk than other women of poverty. The viability of sex work incomes and financial status depends on factors including where in the “hierarchy” of sex work a woman working, whether she is self-employed, local rates charged and other conditions of security (e.g. local police toleration, exposure to evictions etc.). Self-employment in indoor markets may generally derive more financial benefits. Some studies have reported that sex workers working for pimps on the street may make more earnings than street sex workers with more “autonomy” in their lives, and the freedom to take on fewer clients (May et al., 2000, p. 22).

While some ethnographic research portrays prostitution as a source of women’s social and financial empowerment, it is based on individual cases and may be difficult to extrapolate from. In a close ethnographic study of one sex worker, O’Connell Davidson



(1998) studied “entrepreneurial prostitution” in Britain. She concluded that some women, working from their flats, can attain “financially lucrative” status though she submits that it is “impossible” to conclude whether her ethnographic study of one sex worker is “representative” (p. 89). There are also highly publicized examples of former sex workers who became millionaires, including the British madam Margaret MacDonald, tried in the French courts in 2003 for operating a global “call-girl ring,” and a few documented examples of individuals who attained some wealth based on their individual sex work, such as Belle de Jour, discussed in future chapters.

Empirical studies also emphasize the disproportionate levels of abuse, rape, and murder facing sex workers (Brooks Gordon, p. 185). The literature on prostitution is generally dominated by work exploring its risks and potential improvements, particularly with regards to policy, as well as the conceptual shifts necessary to reduce social stigma (an issue that will be addressed in the next chapter). Empirical research from a variety of sources evinces the case that sex workers report much higher than average rates of rape and abuse than other professions. Many studies also suggest there is under reporting of attacks (O’Neill et al., 2009, p. 44). One Home Office-funded Crime Reduction Programme study found high rates of rape (50 percent) among a sample of U.K. prostitutes in 2004 (Matthews 2008 46). Barnard et al. (2002) argue that a lack of systematic data on the nature and frequency of violence keeps it invisible and resistant to effective policies. Brookman and McGuire (2003) have concluded that sex workers are a high-risk group requiring better police initiatives to protect them from violence. Perpetrators of violence against sex workers include clients, but also boyfriend-pimps (May et al., 2000).

Some research suggests that clients commit a minority of violence but submit that rates of client violence are higher in street prostitution. Kinnell (2006) suggests that only a minority of violence committed against sex workers is committed by clients. Risk of violence is higher for street-working women than women working in indoor markets (Sanders, 2005, p. 42). This may be partly because brothels and massage parlours employ male bodyguards to act as bouncers (Hobbes et al., 2003), or female receptionists to vet clients. Sanders reports that, in her visits to saunas and brothels (2005), seven out of eight saunas employed female managers while a quarter of home premises employed maids to contribute to security (p. 82). Likewise, Sanders observed a process of screening (psychological and other tactics) used by indoor sex workers, all of which might not be available to women working on the street (Sanders 2005, pp. 51-70).

Sanders (2008) reports that, while difficult to quantify, respectful treatment of sex workers may be self-regulated by many clients. Among the 50 men Sanders studied who bought commercial sex from indoor markets, she reported that they did so often to satisfy their emotional need for intimacy and not to express violence. She also reported that in the so-called “punternet blogosphere,” “morality is often high on the agenda in the personal and public narratives” (p. 61). However, over-attachments of clients to sex workers (sometimes leading to violence) are also reported (Sanders, 2008, p. 104).

Ultimately, many researchers agree that violence committed by clients in the sex industry is disproportionately high relative to other businesses, is targeted, and is often devastating. They note that the rates of client violence are high in all facets of sex work. According to a 1999 study conducted in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Leeds, 81 percent of street-based sex workers had experienced violence from clients, 44 percent of whom had

reported it to police, while 48 percent of indoor market sex workers had experienced violence, 18 percent of whom had reported it to police (Thomas, 2009, p. 141). (For statistics of other U.K. cities, see Violence, 2002; Church et al., 2001; and Kinnell, 1991.) Thomas reports that “violence is perpetrated by a small percentage of clients,” but empirical studies show that sex workers remain disproportionately abused, compared to other women and that the violence can be brutal.

The experience of crimes of violence against women selling sex is disproportionate to that experienced by women who are not sex workers, and men appear to seek sex workers out as targets. (Thomas, 2009, p. 141)

Research also reflects higher levels of emotional and mental distress among sex workers than the general population. It is difficult to ascertain whether the sources of such distress reported by sex workers are rooted in ongoing rates of violence or the effects of doing highly marginalized, essentially illegal work. Fear of violence is reported by sex workers in various studies; threats appear to be constant and take forms beyond violent individual clients. For example, in 35 of the 500 cases of kerb-crawling offenses studied by Brooks Gordon, clients were soliciting with one or more than one man, a practice known to create fear amongst sex workers (p. 144). Sanders (2005) states that the vast majority of sex worker respondents in her study reported feeling the stigma of sex work, and also felt concerned because public exposure made them vulnerable to the loss of social support, access to children, and arrest (p. 117). In her study, twenty-eight of the fifty-five women lived with romantic partners, with approximately half saying they kept their work a secret (Sanders, 2005, p. 47). Cooper et al. (2007) state that 29 percent of London-based migrant sex workers studied (from a sample of 17) reported depression

and stress. The English Collective of Prostitutes has argued that the ongoing problems of violence, poverty and stigma experienced by sex workers are rooted in the criminalization and marginalization of the sex industry (Mitchell par. 2). Phoenix generally argues that the financial instability, drug dependence, mental health issues and social marginalization, among the biggest factors influencing women's entry into prostitution, are usually worsened by their involvement in the sex trade (1999, p. 100). May and Hunter (2006) also link some reported mental disorders, such as anxiety and manic depression, to crack cocaine use, which has been cited as an associated factor of street-based sex work.

Levels of women's coercion by pimps or boyfriends to keep working in the sex industry have also been studied. Some studies have found that most sex workers are independent (McKeganey & Barnard 1996; Sharpe 1998). Shackleton (1997) has argued that massage/sauna parlours managers and escort agencies operate on a non-coercive basis, with sex workers essentially acting as self-employed sub-contractors (as cited in Haracopos, 2000). In May et al.'s study (2000), researchers categorized respondents into five groups: pimps who managed street workers coercively; domestic partners of sex workers; sex workers managed by pimps; sex workers with domestic partners; and massage/sauna managers (May et al., 2000).<sup>vii</sup> They reported that nineteen of the thirty-six sex workers interviewed (sixteen women and three men) were in coercive relationships with pimps, which they described as "complex, ambivalent," sometimes "amicable," and characterized by various types and levels of violence ranging from slaps, sexual assault, and attacks requiring hospitalizations (May et al., 2000, pp. 18-19). Of the thirty-six sex workers interviewed "many" were also supporting partners enough to have

them fall under the legal description as a person living off immoral earnings. Researchers described such partners as playing a more active than coercive role (keeping an eye on their partners by maintaining phone contact, taking license plate numbers etc.), (May et al., 2000, pp. 14-15). Of seventeen interviewed sex workers with partners, three quarters had experienced violence from their partners (ibid. p. 22), suggesting that coercion within the relationship might take more subtle forms than outright pimping. Of the fifteen partners, twelve also had what they described as problematic class A (heroin, cocaine) drug problems (ibid, p. 17). The average length of these supportive partnerships was three years (ibid. p. 15).

A recent study (Creighton et al., 2008) reported that female sex workers were a heterogeneous group and rates of sexually transmitted diseases could not be generalized across all populations. Studies from the early 1990s found high self-reported rates of condom use among clients and have estimated that one to three percent of sex workers in the United Kingdom (as of 1992) was HIV positive (McKeganey et al., 1994, p. 111). A 1995 article in the medical journal, *The Lancet* reported that only 2 of 37 people interviewed who “probably acquired HIV-1 infection through heterosexual exposure within the U.K. reported contact with commercial sex workers.” It concluded that most sex workers likely acquired HIV through injection of drugs. (Molesworth et al., 1995, p. 843). Based on the medical data of 1050 women who visited a London clinic between 1985 and 1992, and 1996 and 2002, Ward et al. (2004) found a decrease in STIs in the London sex industry, from 25 percent to eight percent. They found that, other than for oral sex, condom use had increased, except for younger sex workers. “Acute STI was associated with younger age, younger age at first sex work, being new to sex work, and

inconsistent condom use” (Ward et al., 2004, p. 374). Groom and Nandwani (2006) found that 20 percent of 2665 U.K. men who paid for sex had STIs (eight percent chlamydia, one percent gonorrhea, seven percent urethritis and one percent syphilis, with no HIV reported). Sanders (2008) suggests that there is evidence that unsafe commercial sex “is commonplace” but also that “this could not be generalized” (p. 58). Creighton et al.’s medical study of 120 street-based sex workers at an inner-London clinic between in 2006 and 2007 also found frequent reports by sex workers of unprotected sex. They reported that six percent of the sex workers had tuberculosis, five percent were HIV positive, and 10 percent had syphilis. They report that 17 other STIs were also found (Creighton et al., 2008).

Some studies suggest that there are some favourable elements of sex work. Some research shows that some women prefer sex work to more mundane, low skilled and low wage jobs (O’Connell Davidson 1998). Other studies demonstrate that some women enjoy the sexual element of their work. Sanders (2005, p. 145) and McKeganey and Barnard (1996, p. 86), among others, offer evidence from interviews that women enjoy sex work. Sanders frames this enjoyment, however, as an “emotional management strategy” on the part of the women, emphasizing the overwhelmingly risky nature of sex work.

Some research has reported that, in general, sex work is related to higher mortality, STIs, mental health problems and substance abuse; however this study suggested that the relation between sex work and these conditions was complicated. Ward and Day’s unique 2006 study traced the health and movements of sex workers from both an epidemiological and sociological standpoint, exploring both the health and career

trajectories of 130 women (from an original cohort of 354) between 1986 and 1993 in clinic and outreach settings. The researchers found that 59 percent were still in the sex industry, and six had died. The women had a high (93 percent) rate of STI infections, mental health problems (40 percent) and addiction (64 percent), with no differences between those who had stayed in the sex industry or left. A notable number – 37 percent – had completed more education, including vocational and postgraduate work. Their findings illustrate the generally hazardous conditions of sex work, and the complexity of the issues involved, also emphasized by most contemporary researchers of sex work in the U.K. today.

### *Conclusion*

Since the development of empirical approaches in the nineteenth century, researchers in the U.K. have attempted to develop methods for collecting information about women's reasons for entry and continuance in sex work, a complex problem with variable economic, social and individual factors (Sanders 2005). In historical and contemporary studies of prostitution, a highly stigmatized and often underground trade, hard numbers and facts are difficult for researchers to obtain. To this day, no national research studies have taken place in the U.K. (O'Neill et al., 2009, p. 34).

Prostitute groups still face challenges in telling their own stories and influencing public opinion via academic research modes. For example, the sex workers' branch of the British GMB<sup>viii</sup> Union has acknowledged violence within the sex industry, but has questioned some of the assertions of researchers, such as the common finding that "chaotic lifestyles" and drug use are worsened by sex work (Lopes and Macrae, 2003,

par. 7). More marginalized street sex workers may have been disproportionately studied in publicly funded or government research, spurred by policy interests in reducing the public nuisance caused by street sex work. More recently, sex workers in more “favourable” positions in the sex industry may be overrepresented; their perspectives may obscure the conditions faced by others (O’Neill, 2001). Often, there is a wide variety of experiences among sex workers, while policy, and the research it engenders, seeks typicality. Maher (2000) observes that, “the search for typicality continues to plague both sociologists and criminologists” (p. 29).

It should be noted that many studies of sex work are ethnographies, or studies of limited jurisdictions or markets (street, brothel, online); these projects are not always motivated by a search for typicality but rather aim to collect evidence and to generalize as much as possible within the limits of their sample, in order to advocate for appropriate policy. Criticisms of prevailing generalizations about prostitution should not be read as a refusal of all generalization.

Appropriate policy that serves and protects women in this disproportionately risky trade is necessary. Since Victorian times, researchers have used different approaches to gathering evidence, including observation, interviews, police records, health reports and other sources, and have found remarkably consistent data about the causes and conditions of prostitution. These include dynamic factors of child abuse and abandonment, youth, coercion, unemployment, lack of education, addiction, discrimination, violence, mental health problems, disease and social stigma. Most of all, researchers, even Victorian researchers largely driven by the moral implications of prostitution, have emphasized gendered poverty as the major factor in women’s participation in the sex trade.



This chapter provided a general overview of the major literature on consensual sex work and its findings. The research will also be revisited in later chapters, as it is cited in media claims about the causes and conditions of prostitution.

### *Chapter Three*

#### **British Feminist Conceptualizations of Prostitution**

Prostitution has historically been a galvanizing and contentious issue for the British feminist movement. In the Victorian era, a nascent feminist group succeeded in overturning laws that allowed any woman suspected of carrying syphilis or other contagious diseases to be examined and detained (Walkowitz, 1980). While the repealers were concerned with the state's attack on women's civil liberty, the movement was also characterized by moral outrage about prostitution. These feminists conceptualized prostitutes as "fallen" women, who were scapegoats of the government's allowance of libertine "vice." Eventually this movement became concerned with trafficking and successfully pushed for the abolition of any form of prostitution.

During the mid-twentieth century, "second wave" feminism conceptualized prostitution as a product of women's socio-economic inequality. Second wave feminists argued that prostitutes were the victims of a society in which women had fewer financial options than men, and that prostitution was an institutionalization of women's subordinate sexual role.

"Sex work" conceptions of prostitution, arising during the 1980s and 90s, however, questioned the second wave's assumptions that women were passive and helpless victims of the patriarchy and male clients. Building on sex workers' activism, these feminists began to conceptualize prostitution on a spectrum of women's labour activities. Pro-sex work feminists argued that victimization discourses robbed women of their self-determination and continued to stigmatize them as deviant outsiders.

“Third wave” conceptions of prostitution similarly assumed that women had the self-determination to choose sex work, but conceptualized prostitution as a highly subjective and individual experience that could even involve pleasure and empowerment.

There is a similar conceptualization of prostitution in so-called “post feminist” discourses – a popular brand of “girl power” feminism that emerged in Britain during the Thatcher, Major and Blair regimes, however, this movement has been criticized by other feminists for its neo-liberal and traditional gender discourses.

Over the last thirty years, feminists have fought the stigma associated with prostitution among the public and in their own ranks, arguing that it worsens the marginalization of women working in the sex trade. Some have pointed out that the moral stigma of prostitution has shifted to the clients of sex workers but remains, by association, attached to sex workers. At the same time, some feminists argue that the conditions of prostitution make it difficult to accept it as a neutral form of work. Research conducted into the sex industry in the U.K. suggests that it is characterized by socio-economic inequity and high levels of violence (Matthews 2008; Phoenix 2009; Kinnell 2008).

Prostitution remains a contentious issue in feminist theory and research because it brings to a head the debate about women’s agency. Feminists continue to grapple with whether prostitution is the de facto enslavement of marginalized women, or whether it is “work like any other” and a matter of free choice. This chapter will trace the historical feminist debates and discuss how feminists are now conceptualizing prostitution in the U.K.

*Victorian feminist views of prostitution: vice and “white slavery”*

During the second half of the nineteenth century, the Contagious Diseases Acts discriminated against prostitute women based on gender and class. An emergent British feminist movement successfully fought the Acts. But this movement, led by Josephine Butler, also had puritanical views of prostitution, seeing it as inherently harmful, a libertine allowance of male sexual license, and an affront to all women’s dignity. Motivated by moral, as well as socio-political interests, the movement became increasingly concerned with the trafficking of English women to Belgium, supporting abolitionist laws and contributing to less public acceptance of prostitution (Walkowitz, 1980).

During the mid-nineteenth century, regulationist lobbyists in the U.K. looked to France and Belgium for models to “manage” prostitution (McHugh, 1980, p. 17; Fisher 1997, x, xi). The desire for a way to effectively manage prostitution arose due to public alarm at the high levels of sexually transmitted disease among middle, upper class and enlisted men who were frequent clients of prostitutes. Military and political authorities initially played on public fears of soldiers being infected with cholera and unable to defend the British nation (McHugh, 1980, p. 17). As noted in the previous chapter, civilian doctors organized a campaign to extend the Acts in 1867 in order to clamp down on other communicable diseases such as syphilis, which was then rampant, compelling the local police force to detain and force gynecological examinations<sup>ix</sup> on women suspected of being prostitutes. Until the early 1860s, authorities were not challenged by the public to legitimize the Acts (Walkowitz, 1980, p. 69). As some public opposition mounted, medical authorities were obliged to articulate the “moral and social benefits

attendant upon the acts” (McHugh, 1980, p. 71). Their defense was that the Acts were a way of keeping prostitutes disease-free, so that upper-class men could remain clients, while the “pre-marital virtue” of upper-class females could be preserved (McHugh, 1980, p. 17).

Activists such as Josephine Butler soon condemned the government’s hypocrisy in detaining female prostitutes suspected to have contagious disease but not male clients, and of maintaining prostitution for the use of gentry and soldiers, while decrying pre-marital sex. At the time, it was widely accepted that upper-class men had their first sexual experiences with prostitutes (Brooks Gordon, 2006, p. 6). Butler fought against the social view of prostitute women as the sources of disease, and advocated for their legal protection. She attacked the “aristocratic” interests that both maintained “male vice” and allowed for the medical control of women. Butler’s campaign in large part led to the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Act in 1886 (Walkowitz, 1980, pp. 97-99). Many repealers believed that prostitutes were the victims of a double standard: the “scape goats” of what was actually a socially pervasive and covertly accepted practice.<sup>x</sup>

However, the advocates that constituted the repeal movement represented a range of political interests, so that it cannot strictly be called a feminist movement. Walkowitz, (whose definitive history, written in 1980, is often cited by historians of feminism), McHugh (1980), Fisher (1995, 1997) and deMarneffe (2010) among others, have traced the history of the repeal movement and report that some repealers, such as Butler, were concerned with the CD Acts’ threat to all citizens,’ but particularly women’s liberty. But they also note that many protests against women being subjected to testing by a public body were more deeply rooted in moral convictions. This group found prostitution

morally intolerable, and was outraged by what they considered a pragmatic attitude on the part of the government. This lobby preferred prostitution's abolition to any kind of state involvement that carried with it an implicit acceptance of prostitution (McHugh, 1980, p. 16). Their protests also sometimes focused on the threat of the Acts to "virtuous" working class women, who might be unfairly held and examined; these arguments essentially upheld conventional double-standards vis-à-vis "virtuous" versus "fallen" women. As McHugh writes, the repeal movement was fought and won by a wide variety of campaigners: "moralists, feminists, individualists, [and] opponents of medical pretensions and military arrogance" (p. 16).

Walkowitz reports that feminist interests were able to control the discourses on prostitution to an extent during the repeal campaign, but that eventually, more puritanical values took hold. She argues that, "Through the repeal campaign, [feminists] were able, for a time, to dominate and structure the 'public discourse' on sex, and to arouse popular female anger at male sexual license. Yet this anger was easily co-opted and channeled into repressive anti-vice campaigns" (Walkowitz, 1980, p. 7).

An anti-trafficking movement, argues Fisher (1997), had the result of further uniting moralists with feminists. A Puritan reaction to regulationism had garnered strength after 1869 and an abolitionist lobby crystallized with the growing public awareness of "white slavery" – the phenomenon of British women apparently being kept against their wills in brothels on the Continent (Fisher 1997 xi). In 1879, Alfred Dyer, a publisher and "member of a committee of moralists dedicated to helping the campaign against the Contagious Diseases Acts," uncovered and publicized the phenomenon of English women and girls being kept as slaves in Brussels (Fisher, 1995, pp. 44-45). After

forming the “London Committee for the Exposure and Suppression of the Traffic in English Girls for the Purposes of Continental Prostitution,” Dyer published *The European Slave Trade in English Girls: A Narrative of Facts* in 1880. Josephine Butler soon championed his cause, and investigations by the Belgians and the British Foreign Office followed. The British investigation confirmed to doubtful officials that “white slavery was not a figment of the fevered imagination of religious zealots or feminist campaigners” (Fisher, 1995, pp. 47-50). With increasing public belief in white slavery, the moral purity lobby gained steam, finding a driving focus in the National Vigilance Association. While the C.D. Acts were removed from the statute books in 1886, they were not replaced by a movement to further prostitutes’ rights, but a rise in social purity crusades and police crackdowns on streetwalkers and brothels (Walkowitz, 1980, p. 7). A consequence of this clampdown on prostitution was also that streetwalkers were pushed to marginal spaces where they became easy quarry for predators such as Jack the Ripper (Fisher, 1997, xi).

Still, in general, the second half of the nineteenth century saw a dramatic shift in gender politics – possibly galvanized by the CD Acts and a repeal campaign which identified the fact that women were discriminated against by their gendered and socio-political status. The late nineteenth century saw the emergence of the New Woman, a feminist independent ideal. Wilson (2007) notes that, despite some feminist reversion to Puritanism, paradoxically, the introduction of the CD laws were a turning point for women and the point of emergence of political feminism in a form recognizable today (p. 145).

*Second wave feminism: women's subordination in the patriarchy*

By the mid-twentieth century, with the rise of second wave feminism, British feminists argued that prostitution was a symptom of women's gendered sexual servitude and economic inequality. Conceptualizing prostitution as categorically demeaning, many second wave feminists considered that abolition and intervention to help prostitutes exit the trade was necessary.

Second wave feminism usually refers to feminist activity that came to the fore during the 1960s and 70s.<sup>xi</sup> The movement's best-known figureheads –the U.S. National Organization of Women, Gloria Steinem, Kate Millett and Germaine Greer – are not British, but the concept of the second wave or women's liberation movement is widely used in the West. The second wave sought to dismantle systemic iniquities and advance women's liberation from the limits of prescribed gender roles, usually by using an analytic standpoint that viewed sexuality as socially constructed. It also identified the socio-structural limits to women's full equality. These included gendered, racialized, and economic conditions. In the second wave, feminist values were shaped by timely social and legal concerns. Women's liberation was partially defined in terms of parity with men, including equal access to the political process, educational and career opportunities, and to financial independence. Hollows and Mosely (2006) describe second wave feminism,

As a social movement that was 'outside' of, and frequently oppositional to, the dominant culture and therefore [offered] an alternative set of ideologies that sought to challenge hegemonic ideas about gender. In this period, the women's movement was far more visible as a social movement engaged in struggles over a



range of issues such as reproductive rights, equal pay for equal work, domestic and social violence, and the sexual division of labour. (p. 4)

In short, second wave feminism sought to dismantle systemic iniquities and advance women's liberation from the limits of prescribed gender roles.

Second wave feminists asserted women's right to define their sexuality for themselves, even in contradiction to mainstream values, however, this did not extend to working as a prostitute. Prostitution, argued second wave feminists, was essentially men's use of women's bodies based on socially constructed, unequal sexual status.

For example, British feminist and sociologist Mary MacIntosh's 1978 article, "Who needs prostitutes?: the ideology of male sexual needs," challenged the contention that men have higher sex drives that require the use of prostitutes. She countered that sexual behaviours conceived as natural and timeless are in fact social constructions. Sexual behaviour "is socially scripted behaviour and if men and women behave differently it is because the socially available scripts for them to learn are different" (MacIntosh, 1978, p. 64). She argued that prostitution was based on an economic and cultural pre-conception of male and female sexuality in which men are the commanders of sex. MacIntosh wrote, "It is taken for granted on all sides that men 'demand' sex, and women 'supply' it" (p. 53).

Many among this movement argued that prostitution was categorically demeaning, in effect, (if not officially,) an institutionalization of women's sexual role as subservient to men. They argued that prostitution was a matter of abuse and exploitation, not a matter of free choice for women, who, categorically, had fewer economic options than men and higher vulnerability abuse. Consequently, many also argued that abolition

of prostitution, and that programs to enable women to leave the trade were necessary (Rickard, 2001, p. 112). For further reading on abolitionist feminism see Sullivan (1995), Chapkis (1997), Bromberg (1998) and O'Neill (2001).

Another effect of the mid-century women's movement and sexual revolution was that the male client was increasingly conceptualized as deviant and unethical. Sullivan (1997), argues that with better contraception, increased pre-marital sex and emphasis on women's sexual desire (in both feminist discourses and popular culture,) men who paid for sex were viewed as social misfits, or worse, perverts who found the power imbalance of client-prostitute relations appealing.<sup>xii</sup>

#### *Sex work feminism: prostitution conceptualized as labour*

Beginning in the 1980s, a pro-sex work movement began to conceptualize prostitution as a form of labour. Its goal was to dismantle the stigma surrounding prostitution and redefine it as a neutral, or even, empowering choice for women within the larger economy. The pro-"sex work" movement that sought to dismantle the normative stigma surrounding prostitution also challenged and transformed an historical feminist tradition that found prostitution politically and morally objectionable.

This movement was built on the writing of non-academic sex workers' groups (O'Neill, 2001, p. 16). Several organizations representing prostitutes, such as Prostitutes United for Social and Sexual Integration (PUSSI), Prostitution Laws are Nonsense (PLAN), Programme for Reform of the Laws of Soliciting (PROS), as well as the English Collective of Prostitutes (ECP), campaigned for prostitutes' rights, and specifically the abolition of sex workers' imprisonment (Kantola and Squires, 2004, p. 64). The ECP,

which in 1982 initiated a legal service for women and organized a strike to protest police harassment, was a pioneering U.K. group devoted to raising awareness about the legal and economic impact of legislation on women. The ECP emphasized women's broad political-economic status, including the dearth of equitable choices that kept them in prostitution, but argued that the problems of poverty and violence experienced by prostitutes were rooted in the criminalization, stigma and marginalization of the sex industry. The ECP remains a high-profile organization concentrating attention on conditions for sex workers.

The decision to enter the sex trade was conceptualized by these pro-sex work activists as a rational choice in the face of economic disparities for women (Brooks-Gordon, 2006; Scrambler and Scrambler, 1997). This feminism defended women's individual criteria for entering the sex trade as a rational choice within a discriminatory economy.

Sex work discourses initially stood in contradiction to sanctioned academic feminist values. Some sex workers argued that the destructive stigma surrounding prostitution, resulting in sex workers' marginalization and ongoing poverty, was partly perpetrated by academic feminists unwilling to address their own elitist and moralistic positions. They argued that conceptions of prostitution had been dominated by white, upper middle class women, and could only reflect associated values (Karlyn, 2006, p. 60).

Eventually, during the 1990s, pro-sex work academic feminists began to produce work that understood prostitution as the performance of erotic labour by women. These analyses reconceived "commercial sex, not as the social or psychological characteristic of

a class of women, but as an income-generating activity or form of employment" (Rickard, 2001, p. 111).<sup>xiii</sup> The term "sex work" was adopted more widely because it was thought to strip moral overtones from the activity, defining it as a neutral form of labour.

### *Third wave feminism: sex work as subjective experience*

While "pro-sex work" discourses retain a foundation in structuralist analysis (i.e. by prescribing a collective fight against the economic, legal and labour conditions facing sex working women), third wave feminist analyses of prostitution have been characterized by a post-structuralist cultural emphasis, presenting prostitution as a highly subjective phenomenon, and looking to ethnography, texts, discourses and cultural artefacts as favoured resources as sources of information while supplementing these with socio-economic analyses. Third wave feminist approaches echo pro-sex work discourses in their critique of second wave moralism, and have embraced pro-sex work assertions that women's choices to enter sex work should be respected, not villainized. But in third wave feminism, structural (socio-economic) analyses are also critiqued for their over-determinism of certain categories to the exclusion of other nuances of experience.

Within the academy during the 1980s and 90s, second wave approaches were increasingly considered restrictive and elitist. Feminist and other interventionist researchers, concerned about the conditions of prostitution and its implications for women's equality, had dominated research into prostitution, but sex workers, who had been historically marginalized and had not held the privilege of writing their own history, alleged that some academic feminist studies were distorted by a particular conception of prostitution as inherently harmful.

Post-colonial critics also questioned feminism's emphasis on gender as the primary condition of subjectivity, suggesting it had failed to recognize class, race and other categories of experience. Third wave feminists increasingly questioned structural categories in their methodological approaches. Texts, discourses and other cultural artifacts became favoured resources for information about subjectivity and experience. Angela McRobbie attributes this largely to Foucault's influence, noting that after his work, there was,

A shift away from...interest in centralised power blocs, e.g. the state, patriarchy, law, to more dispersed sites, events and instances of power conceptualised as flows and specific convergences and consolidations of talk, discourse and attention" (McRobbie, 2006, p. 60).

Critical theory had demonstrated that research questions, methods and conclusions were driven, and limited by certain discourses.

Third wave feminism attempted to conceptualize women's experience in more dynamic subjective terms, rather than as determined by structures. Examples of British third wave discursive approaches to researching sex work include the analyses of interviews with sex workers by Sharpe (1997), Phoenix (2000) and O'Neill (2001) and Sanders (2005, 2008), and of media discourses of prostitution by Arthurs (2006). These researchers also, to different extents, supplement their discourse analysis with analyses of the socio-economic conditions facing women who enter prostitution. Many investigations have been based in more sociological or criminological models that apply socio-psychological and socio-structural approaches to understand the rationale, risks and strategies faced by sex workers. These studies note the problems of applying discrete

categories or generalizations to understand women's experience. For example, for some sex workers, addiction may not remain constant, and thus constant factor in continuing to work. In other cases, women's (self-stated) reasons for entry into prostitution may not include abuse, even if abuse was present. Third wave research attempts to acknowledge these distinctions.

The third wave also took issue with second wave feminists' presumed authority to designate a correct version of femininity and heterosexual pleasure. Karlyn (2006) suggests that in the second wave, pleasure was subsumed to traditional feminism's strident, serious pursuit of its goals (pp. 59-60). The third wave has argued that the second wave's critical position is one of women's "false consciousness," i.e. that women must be liberated from the subordinate feminine roles they have assumed. The third wave has reconsidered mainstream representations of femininity as sites of empowerment<sup>xiv</sup> and the research of feminists such as Sanders (2005) and O'Neill (2001) acknowledges the sexual pleasure experienced by women in the sex trade. These researchers suggest that close readings of texts and discursive analyses reveal a varied spectrum of women's experience, not all of it negative.

Sanders (1998) extends this more nuanced view of power and pleasure to male clients. The "moral panic" surrounding male clients, she says, "leaves male sexual desire, pleasure and sexuality a target for punitive enforcement strategies, individual blame and social humiliation" (p. 181). Her interviews with male clients and the study of their "punternet" blogs lead her to conclude that there is a variety of men who buy sex and that they should not be generalized as deviants.

While the third wave has respected the choice of women to enter sex work, their investigations of sex work as a matter of subjective experience have also challenged conceptualizations of sex work as a neutral economic transaction. O'Neill (2001) argues that her ethnographic studies present evidence that women's experiences of prostitution are more fraught than neutral sex work discourses suggest. She argues that the exchange of money for sex is taken to be an equivalent in discourses of sex work – and that this should be a problem for feminists. O'Neill notes that society's imposition of "use values" on women's bodies and sexual acts is problematic. She argues that experience, including sexual experience, cannot be reduced to a use-value concept, where money is taken as an equivalency for sexual acts (p. 31). While third wave feminists like O'Neill reject commodity discourses, they are also wary of returning to generalizing and moralizing conceptualizations of "appropriate" sexual relations between men and women.

#### *Post feminism: sex as a commodity*

In popular culture, however, an acceptance of commodity discourses and an even a more extreme rejection of second wave feminism has taken place. So-called "post feminism" has embraced the imposition of "use values" on women's bodies, and a heavily mediated brand of feminine sexuality has been depicted as empowering. Post-feminist discourses dovetailed with some of the pro-sex work rationales and are evident in television, music, and other popular culture.

Post feminism is, in general, an incoherent version of feminism that has largely supplanted traditional feminist ideas in popular music, television, journalism and fiction. By definition, post feminism is also that which heralds the demise of feminism,

suggesting that it is conceptually drained. Much post-feminist phenomena endorsed a neo-liberal logic that individual women could pursue increased status by exploiting sexually defined market niches, such as porn and prostitution. It implied that a certain ambitious, commercial brand of sexual femininity held potential for income, power and fulfillment. Academic feminists have not necessarily endorsed the representations of prostitution in post feminism, but have commented on its prevalence and conceptual power.

Some historians of feminism have traced the political and social reasons for post feminism's emergence. Kantola and Squires (2004) note that, in Britain in the 1980s, the women's movement in the U.K. "was at a stage of decline and increasingly fragmented" (p. 67). Second wave assertions that the most effective strategy to fight structural (i.e. gendered) economic problems was with collective critical approaches, were losing their credibility. The Thatcher-Major regimes resulted in a decrease of welfare policies and what Brooks-Gordon describes as a worsening "feminisation of poverty" (Brooks-Gordon, 2006, p. 14). With women's economic gains slowing, women failed to feel they had benefited from feminism (Karlyn, 2006, p. 57). The sense of critical feminism's obsolescence may have been further entrenched by the economic boom of the New Labour-era (late 1990s), characterized by consumer choice discourses and the apparent triumph of neo-liberal values.<sup>xv</sup>

Some critical feminists have dubbed the post feminist movement Stripper Chic or described it as the pornification of culture.<sup>xvi</sup> As noted, second wave feminism was also seen as censorious of sexuality and heterosexual pleasure. By contrast, post feminism celebrated the commodification of women's sexuality. In some popular culture, a



celebration of porn or “gangsta and ho” aesthetics was promoted as a sexy correction to traditional feminism’s alleged moralistic asexuality. This was exemplified in the new genre of television programming appearing on late-night British television. Programmes such as “Personal Services” (ITV, 2003) portrayed women working in upscale brothels and neighbourhoods. Boyle (2008) notes that even the programmes promoted as critical of the sex industry, like those from Channel 4’s “The Dark Side of Pornography” series (2005-2006) “struggle[d] to sustain a critical tone” while depicting titillating scenes (pp. 35-39). Moreover, these quasi-documentaries rarely depicted the financial profits accumulated by men through their management of women in the sex industry (ibid). Post feminist celebrations of the sex industry were also evident in the mainstream recognition of nude glamour models such as Jodie Marsh or Jordan, both of whom parlayed increasing media attention into reality programs and endorsements. The seeming objectification of women in post feminism was claimed to be a subversive move: women were consenting to, or even colluding in, their objectification and were empowered by rejecting traditional stigma, and garnering fame and income.<sup>xvii</sup>

The image of the entrepreneurial call girl was also seen in British television. A quasi-fictional televised series, “The Secret Diary Of A Call Girl” (premiering in 2007), was based on the popular biography of “Belle de Jour,” portraying her adventures with men who paid her for sex. The series opened with the protagonist explaining that prostitution “was a natural career choice. ‘Why do I do it? I love sex and money. I enjoy the sex. I’m lazy. I’m my own boss.’” In the depiction of the “high-class call girl” in this series, financial self-interest was often cited as a justification, and the empowering nature of the work repeatedly emphasized, underscored by glamorous aesthetics. When the real

Belle de Jour was revealed in 2009 to be Dr. Brooke Magnanti, a cancer researcher, she was widely portrayed as a success story who had funded her PhD from Sheffield University with her £300 per hour rate, and who had found the work enjoyable (G2009/334, G2009/335).

Many critics contend that few of the post feminist ideals of feminine empowerment have adopted enough traditionally feminist principles to be worthy of the term. Ashby (2005) argues that the post feminist movement is an essentially “depoliticized” feminism (p. 129). Hollows and Mosely (2006) have agreed that post feminism is largely a co-opted, limited concept for theorists (p. 10). McRobbie (2006) believes that pop culture’s new “gender regime” has even undone many of feminism’s gains of the 1970s and 80s. She asserts that a supplantation of collective interests with personal choice discourses can be “perceived in the broad cultural field” (p. 59).

Whether post feminism can be considered a coherent movement and constitutes the evolution of feminism is still under debate. Some have argued that Post feminism has a strategy, but that its strategy may be unrecognizable or incomparable to the second wave’s rational, analytic standpoint. Some have observed that post feminism is “mythic,” manifesting itself in and exploiting “the symbols, rhythms and motifs of a media infused age” (Powers, cited in Karlyn, 2006, p. 64). Charlotte Brunsdon argues that feminist generations (or waves) have always differentiated their goals by a process of disidentity from popular culture as well as previous generations of feminists. “Disidentity – not being like that, not being like those other women, not being like those images of women – is constitutive of feminism and constitutive of feminism in all its generations” (Brunsdon, 2006, p. 43). Brunsdon argues that post feminism is no different. Many have

argued that certain post-feminist figures that celebrate individual ambition -- Madonna, for example -- are representative of feminist evolution.<sup>xviii</sup> Post-feminists' non-rationalist, mythic approaches to prostitution may also constitute the evolution of feminism.

### *Unresolved debates and questions*

Feminist conceptualizations of prostitution, sex workers and clients have been presented in this chapter as a chronology, but many of these conceptions continue to co-exist. Sex work discourses emerged as a crisis developed around the question of commercial sex within feminism (Aradau, 2008, p. 16). Some contemporary feminists still continue to view prostitution as the victimization of women. Many feminists have concluded that neither conceptions of victimization, nor neo-liberal commodification discourses are viable options in the face of the varied and complex character of prostitution. However, research into women's experience of prostitution is accompanied by methodological challenges. Feminists have also become aware that an epistemological problem of consent haunts existing approaches to prostitution.

Many feminists writing on prostitution preface their discussion with their own review of the ongoing schism among feminists. Longtime contributor to the field, O'Connell Davidson, prefaces a 2008 article with a summary of the debate:

On the one hand, there are feminist abolitionists who argue that prostitution, like slavery, is a market in which human beings are reduced to objects and traded as such, and that it is impossible for a woman to give meaningful consent to

this kind of objectification...Other feminists, however, hold that the provision of sexual services is no different from other forms of service work, and that it is perfectly possible for adults to freely and willingly consent to work in prostitution (p. 50).

Aradau (2008) also notes that feminism remains “radically split on the issue of prostitution and the question of agency: can prostitution be freely chosen? [. . .] Put in a nutshell, the two positions are prostitution as sexual slavery versus prostitution as labour” (pp. 29-30). (See Rickard [2001] and Boyle [2008] for more reviews of the debate.)

The views of some contemporary feminists still echo second wave assessments of prostitution as the victimization of women. Farley (2003) describes prostitution as causing a kind of indefinable and invisible pain.

The harm of prostitution is socially invisible, and it is also invisible in the law, in public health, and in psychology. ...[W]ords in current usage promote the invisibility of prostitution’s harm, and [] public health perspectives and psychological theory tend to ignore the harm done by men to women in prostitution. Literature [] documents the overwhelming physical and psychological harm to those in prostitution (Farley, 2003, p. 247).

Matthews (2008) has also argued that prostitution in its current form allows for the ongoing victimization of vulnerable women. Matthews argues that street prostitutes are generally socially disenfranchised women and that government intervention is appropriate.

But such feminists who advocate for intervention often find themselves in opposition to pro-sex work feminists who accuse them of harbouring, or at least enabling,

the moralistic motives of the public and government, and of undermining sex-workers' agency. Pro-sex work feminists recognize the data pointing to women's general economic inequity and the high rates of social disenfranchisement among sex workers in particular, but are also critical of the groups who run programmes to help women to exit the trade. They argue that exit programmes cast prostitutes as morally transgressive. Since the late 1980s, after periods of "regulationism, suppression and welfarism" the U.K. has promoted "multi-agency welfarist responses to street sex work...in response to conflicting interests and tensions around the needs of communities, sex workers and statutory and voluntary agencies offering services and support" (Scoular and O'Neill, 2007, p. 765). O'Connell Davidson (2008) makes the case that the exit programs undermine women's self-determination; she argues that the programs "infantilize[] women to suggest that they lack the capacity to consent to prostitution contracts or any others" (p. 50). Scoular and O'Neill (2007) are also suspicious of the state paternalism and moralism that may lurk in the efforts to incorporate community resources into exiting strategies, termed 'progressive governance' (p. 764).

It is for this reason that street sex work, which is more easily identified as harmful and is increasingly conflated with abuse, becomes the almost exclusive focus of review. Castigated as 'not an activity that we can tolerate in our towns and cities' [Home Office 2006 a:1], the stated response is one of eradication, achievable via the increased criminalization of clients combined with the coordination of welfarist policing designed to divert, deter and rehabilitate women from sex work (p. 768).

Scoular and O'Neill argue that current welfarist programs, in combination with laws that criminalize clients, have the abolition of prostitution as their intended, if unstated, goal. They note that exiting programs, which are promoted as more holistic ventures with community groups, are not always voluntary. Sanders (2009) also reports that "Sex workers arrested for street prostitution offences are increasingly subjected to the use of Anti Social Behaviour Orders and compulsory exiting strategies through criminal justice intervention services" (p. 80). With women's civil liberty at stake, as in the age of the Contagious Diseases Acts, there is a necessary awareness of the paternalism lurking in interventionist government policies.

The policy options put forth to deal with prostitution are inadequate in the view of many feminists today. They contend that the latest strategy to penalize clients rather than prostitutes may be a technically more equitable approach than only penalizing prostitutes, but that the criminalization of clients may also lead to prostitutes' further marginalization and to new, more dangerous, underground spaces of exclusion. Clampdowns on trafficking might lead prostitute women to work alone (i.e. without the protection of others) in order to demonstrate they are not being trafficked. Hubbard et al. (2008) are critical of these policies:

While not dismissing the idea that such interventions might prevent some forms of abuse, we argue that contemporary law enforcement is actually enhancing opportunities for exploitation by perpetuating abandonment and exclusion (p. 138).<sup>xix</sup>

Hubbard et al. suggest that many street prostitutes have already been reduced to a "bare life" of utter exclusion (p. 149).

Under these conditions, neither abolition, nor the sanction of prostitution as a neutral profession are viable options in the face of the varied and complex character of prostitution. As Sanders (2005) observes, “neither the abolitionist perspective nor the work model adequately explains the real relationship between a female prostitute and male client” (p. 40). Historical feminist tendencies to support either abolition or legalization have often meant failing to engage with policy debates that have explored options or models of intervention that comprise a combination of different elements (Kilvington et al., 2001, p. 79).<sup>xx</sup>

There is a need for more investigation into the socio-economic factors and limited options that contribute to women’s entry into, and entrapment in, prostitution, but the scale of such research is daunting and accompanied by methodological snags (Brewis & Linstead, 2000). Feminists have suggested that sex workers themselves should set debates about prostitution, however, prostitute groups still face challenges in telling their own stories and influencing public opinion. It remains necessary for feminists to gather information on women’s experiences of prostitution, even if they are also reluctant to assume authority over other women’s self-determination, cast normative judgments or make generalizations about women’s experiences in prostitution.

Feminists continue to struggle with the problem of whether there is a true freedom of choice where there are systemic structures that circumscribe women (O’Neill, 2001, p. 52). O’Neill (2001) argues that feminists need to examine the “interrelationship between the micrology of women’s lives and the meta-conditions of wider society.” But the same time, it is an immense (arguably, impossible,) methodological mission for a researcher to understand the factors contributing to a woman’s choice to enter prostitution. O’Neill

questioned whether her analytic method – a life history analyses based on ethnographic interviews – could yield true insights into the individual sex workers’ personal “truths.” Ultimately, her ethnographic subject’s articulated self-determination, apparent agency and comfort “did not and could not fully resolve the ethical problems surrounding consent” (ibid p. 59).<sup>xxi</sup> O’Connell Davidson argues that, beyond the impossibility of mapping the myriad meanings of individual women’s “choice” to enter prostitution, researchers must accept that people’s notions of consent are always relative. Boyle (2008) similarly observes that the individualization of analyses makes women an impossible “‘problem’ to be solved or investigated” (p. 47). Instead, she advocates focusing on the broader social conditions facing women.

There are also ethical questions about the ethnographic approaches of third wave academic feminists studying sex workers. O’Connell Davidson (2008) reflects on the issues that emerged while conducting an ethnography on prostitution. Desiree, one of her subjects,

did give very active and fully informed consent to participate in the ethnographic study I conducted. However, reflecting on the study with the benefit of hindsight, I can see some uncomfortable parallels between debates about consent in relation to research and debates about consent in relation to prostitution. (O’Connell Davidson, 2008, p. 51)

Some feminists have claimed that a contribution to research, to ongoing moral, political and policy debates that have impacts on people’s lives, even through imperfect research, is the best they can hope for (O’Connell Davidson, 2008, p. 65).



Researchers continue to develop critical ways of addressing the commodity or deterministic victimization discourses that have previously limited research into prostitution, as they work to recognize the variety of experience and problem of consent within prostitution.

### *Conclusion*

In the U.K., feminist conceptualizations of prostitution have never existed in an academic vacuum. They are influenced by, and influence policy, and are also taken up in news media and popular culture, including television and fiction. Some feminists continue to debate whether prostitution is the essential enslavement of marginalized women or whether it is a form of labour and a matter of free choice. However, there has been a recent movement to identify the more specific and individual circumstances of women's experience in prostitution, and a rejection of general, moralistic or extreme policy measures.

In the Victorian era, a feminist movement that is recognizable today was first galvanized over the detainment of women suspected of carrying contagious diseases. Feminist repealers of the time were concerned with the socio-economic conditions facing women but the movement was largely overwhelmed by moralistic abolitionists. Second wave feminist assertions that socio-economic conditions effectively victimized women in prostitution were criticized as excessively normative by "sex work feminists." In an effort not to disempower women involved in prostitution by presuming to understand the variety of their experiences and needs, these feminists conceptualized entry into prostitution as a neutral choice. They rejected its abolition and conceived of it as a form

of work that could be improved with labour rights. Third wave feminists conceptualized prostitution as highly subjective but contingent on socio-economic, gendered and other conditions. In post feminism, prostitution has also been expressed as highly individual and a potentially empowering choice, but with an uncritical acceptance of conventional gender ideals and the commodification of women's sexuality. Critics argue that this broad rationalization of the purchase of sexual services normalizes and hides many of the existing conditions. Feminists have recognized that a paradox still faces their research: the problem of consent. The question of consent remains unresolved, although feminists have continued to grapple with the issue in their research so that they might contribute to improving conditions for women working in the sex industry by advocating for appropriate policy.

There are also notable parallels between debates in contemporary and Victorian times. Doezenia (2004) has argued that, Western, second wave-oriented feminists' "wounded attachment" to internationally trafficked women has re-awakened their view of sex workers as victims and their own domestic campaigns to abolish prostitution. In the Victorian era, concerns about trafficking also galvanized an abolition movement. Then as now, feminist "welfarist" programs that helped sex workers to exit the trade "for their own good" emerged (Wahab 2002).

The next chapter will present a methodology to investigate how these themes may be reflected in the British news media and in contemporary fiction.

## *Chapter Four*

### **Methodology for a Critical Discourse Analysis of**

### **Prostitution in British News Media and Fiction**

Understanding the cultural context of prostitution is crucial as it shapes social perceptions, criminal justice and policy. Many cultural theorists have investigated how cultural artifacts such as the media, film and television, communicate certain images of prostitution, but gaps exist in understanding how news media, as well as contemporary fiction, shape discourses of prostitution.

This project follows Habermas' recommendations that critical research into distortions in public sphere communications, such as news media, be grounded in empirical approaches (Habermas, 1981/1984). A lack of empirical studies of news discourses is a significant problem because it is through the media that many members of the public acquire any knowledge of prostitution at all. Van Dijk (1987) has demonstrated that the mass media is a major source of distorted information about marginalized groups, particularly when people have limited contact with such groups. Sex work remains a marginal and stigmatized activity. The media is both an arbiter of what is known about prostitution, and also frames sex work in certain discursive modes. Previous operationalizations of Habermas' theory of communication suggest that it is an effective approach for revealing the distortions of prostitution in media discourses.

Fiction too, can be analysed for the way in which it conveys certain images of prostitution. Historical fiction has been mined for the information it provides about prostitution in times past, but scholars have not developed a systematic approach to

fiction as research on contemporary prostitution. This approach draws on the work of Eagleton (2003) and others, to lay the foundations for the use of fiction for research and, possibly, action on prostitution. The particular contribution of the neo-Victorian mode is also considered in interpretation.

In summary, there are gaps in the theoretical approaches to understanding how prostitution is constructed by news discourses and in fiction. This research attempts to fill some gaps in the current research and this chapter is an overview of the methods employed.

#### *Prostitution in the British news media: sampling rationale and method*

Many cultural theorists have pointed to the power of the media to frame issues and discourses in the democratic public sphere. News media reflect, but also select and frame, public issues. Two British newspapers, *The Guardian* and *The Daily Mail*, were chosen for this study because they theoretically constitute the popular divergent framings of issues in the U.K.. An appropriately sized sample of articles was selected by identifying search terms germane to the British context of prostitution, by using a relevancy algorithm with the date restriction of the years 2000 to 2009.

A major focus of scholarship in Cultural and Communications Studies has been the news media – its political economies, discursive strategies and audience effects (Hall, 1997). Habermas (2006) has recently written on the media's exertion of influence on public opinions, and its bolstering of certain political and power interests. His appeal for an empirical approach to analyzing the strategic framing of issues in media discourses will be revisited in the next section.

The newspapers in this study were chosen because they attempt to appeal to two major reader demographics, mid-market right-leaning, and “quality”<sup>xxii</sup> left-leaning newsreaders, respectively, and thus theoretically constitute the popular, politically divergent framings of issues in the U.K.. Data analysed in this project was derived from news articles from two national papers: *The Daily Mail* and *The Guardian*, including their Sunday editions, *The Daily Mail’s Mail on Sunday* and *The Guardian Observer*. As of March 2010, *The Daily Mail* had the second-highest circulation of any British newspaper, with 2,082,352 readers<sup>xxiii</sup> (Reynolds, 2010). First published in 1896, the paper was aimed at the newly educated lower classes and women.<sup>xxiv</sup> *The Daily Mail* is considered a middle-market tabloid with a generally conservative editorial stance. *The Guardian*, founded in 1821, is a “quality” newspaper, with a daily print circulation of 283,063 as of March 2010 (Reynolds, 2010), ranking it third among four up-market rivals. *The Guardian* is known for its centre-left editorial orientation and historically, it has been the most left-leaning of the quality newspapers. In short, the papers were selected because they were representations of popular centre-right and influential centre-left news discourses.

The sampling period of 2000 to 2010 is based on the observation that certain polarizing policy developments, as well as conceptual shifts among the public about the issue of prostitution, have occurred during this time. These were outlined in the Introduction. This analysis of news media, particularly right and left-leaning news media, was undertaken to explore how these conceptual and policy shifts have been framed. The other consideration for the sample period was that, over the last decade (approximately), a wave of fiction with prostitute protagonists has emerged in Britain. This explores the

possibility that public interest in prostitution, and a palpable frustration with recurring distorted discourses, is evident in the wave of fiction.<sup>xxv</sup>

Using the date restriction of 2000-2009, articles with representations of sex workers, clients and prostitution were found by searching the body of articles on a year-by-year basis, by using the Lexis Nexis relevance algorithm to define the sample. Ten query terms attempted to cover various British nomenclature used in descriptions of prostitution. The nomenclature was defined based on a long-time informal reading of the British news media, as well as terms found in critical criminological and feminist writing (e.g. Hubbard et al., 2008; Sanders, 2009). The following query terms were used with all their endings: “prostitute” (with all endings, i.e. prostitution, prostituted etc.) or “sex worker” or “call girl” or “whore” or “street walker” or “escort and sex” or “hooker and sex” or “pay (with all endings, i.e. paid, paying) for sex” or “kerb crawler” or “punter and sex.” The intent of combining the three terms with the word sex to narrow down articles with other uses of the word “escort,” articles discussing rugby, (wherein “hooker” is a player position,) or betting contexts (wherein “punter” is a gambler). Separate searches using these terms were not conducted to find articles because many articles use more than one term to refer to prostitution and thus separate searches would have yielded a duplication of sample articles for reduction. An unedited count of all results for both newspapers by year was recorded, for a total of 14, 236 articles (See Table 1 – *Guardian* and *Daily Mail*: comparative raw query results 2000-2009). These counts per year were recorded in case they might demonstrate significant increases or decreases in the coverage of issues of prostitution during certain years, indicating whether the issue has become more or less prominent in the British public sphere, and possibly revealing any

confluences with policy, criminal justice or other cultural developments. Chapter Five will address the possible significance of the increase in coverage during certain years.

Table 4.1. *Guardian* and *Daily Mail*: comparative raw query results, 2000-2009

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Total
<b>Guardian</b>	765	727	761	867	853	796	1138	952	1073	1000	8932
<b>DailyMail</b>	396	423	563	491	517	434	712	663	736	369	5304

Next, the data was downsized, in order to create a manageable-sized and appropriate corpus for qualitative analysis. This was done by sampling two point five percent of the articles presented by the Lexis Nexis “sort by relevance” algorithm.<sup>xxvi</sup> This was also supplemented by the piecemeal rejection of any articles that didn’t fall within the scope of the project, which investigates consensual adult female prostitution; these were articles caught by the Lexis Nexis search that discussed male or child prostitution to the exclusion of adult female prostitution, or those discussing the sex trafficking of women in unequivocally non-consensual terms (i.e. those articles exclusively featuring discourses of “sex slavery”). From this, the top two point five percent of articles sorted by relevance were sampled. During the analysis, seven further articles were discarded as N/A, resulting in a data sample reduced to 342 articles for all years, comprised of 167 *Daily Mail*, and 175 *Guardian* articles.

Images that may have originally accompanied the articles were not included or analyzed.

*Prostitution in the British news media: principles for analysis*

The principal research question of this study is, “How are competing discourses of prostitution conveyed in contemporary British media?” The media uses certain representations, narratives and tropes that define the discursive boundaries of the prostitution debates. Habermas has identified the dangers to democratic society posed by the mass media in the absence of rigorous critique (1962/1999). The approach used to analyze the British media discourses of prostitution is based on a systematic, empirical Habermasian model; Habermas’ principles, and the programme for their application embedded in his theory, were used to structure the analysis of prostitution discourses in the British media. The analysis is also adapted from research that uses a Habermasian approach to another discursive context, one co-authored by the supervisor of this project (Cukier et al., 2009). It also uses insights from researchers who have applied an empirical approach to constructions of prostitution in news media, albeit in the North American context (Hallgrimsdottir et al., Canada, 2006, 2008). Specifically, this analysis assesses the claims of Truth, Sincerity and Legitimacy in the claims, characterizations, nomenclature, framings and sources of the British news media, to unearth the dominant, competing and countervailing discourses of prostitution. Adding to the existing discursive criminological, sociological, policy and feminist studies of prostitution, this project contributes a systematic, empirical analysis of the constructions of prostitution in British news media over the last decade.

News media plays an important role in the formation of public discourses, and prostitution is particularly susceptible to distortions in the news media. Habermas (1981/1984) has emphasized the role of the media in shaping public and political



discourses. In a North American analysis of print news, Hallgrimsdottir et al. (2008) conclude that the clandestine nature of prostitution means that the media depictions of prostitution go unchecked, and remain persistently beset by distortion. They write that, “the fictive characters, stereotypes and morality fables used by the newspaper media are relatively unassailable, especially to the extent that audiences lack experiential knowledge by which to challenge them” (p. 121). They add that sex workers, unlike some other historically marginalized groups, remain virtually absent as contributors to mainstream media. As a result, few alternative narratives of prostitution are disseminated – which would be recognizable because they reflected those elements which are marginalized: the views of the participants of the sex trade, balanced and presented in direct language. News media should be informed by balanced sources and positions to reflect accurate experiences of prostitution for the public and policy makers. The right to participate, the right to speak and being listened to are preconditions to democracy and justice.<sup>xxvii</sup> Habermas’ theory of communicative action allows for an empirical analysis of the violations of free and democratic discourse in media such as newspapers.

Habermas (2006) writes that media discourses have the power to shape public opinion as well as power interests. Likewise, uninformed, unbalanced and distorted narratives about prostitution have an impact on the daily lives of sex workers in their exchanges with the public, and on policy developments that are shaped by public conceptions (Hallgrimsdottir et al., 2008). In general, due to the reproduction of distorted discourses, news media and other communications in the public sphere contribute to continuing misinterpretations of sex work among the public, with an effect on policy.

Various studies have analysed British cultural artifacts to understand discourses of prostitution. They have focused on television and film (Arthurs, 2008; Matthews, 2008; Boyle, 2006; O'Connell Davidson, 1998/2003), as well as the news media (Kinnell, 2006; Hubbard, 1998). Discursive approaches to prostitution are common, however, these have tended to be selective rather than systematic, and based in Foucaultian rather than empirical analytic approaches.

An empirical approach can reveal the strategic distortions in media discourses, which are systematically produced via non-valid speech elements. Habermas' universal pragmatics (1981/1984) argued that communication is based on certain implied claims. "Communicative action" (p. 278) is based on certain validity claims (p. 301). In simple terms, those interacting in communication assume that statements are valid. According to Habermas, deception in the communicative process may occur consciously or unconsciously on the part of the speaker, or in the case of news media, the reporter. Regardless of intention, the process of distortion is a systematic process, based on concealment: illegitimate claims and incomprehensible terms, among other speech elements of distortion (Habermas, 1981/1984, p. 333). Habermas argues that distortions in the media can, and must, be contested to challenge their influence and effects on democracy (Habermas, 2006).

Thus, the definition of "distorted discourse" is not purely subjective but is based on systematically applying Habermas' validity claims to the texts. The importance of the public sphere as a context for public policy is well-understood and this analysis is based on Habermas' "Discourse ethics," which assert that morality is grounded in a pattern inherent in mutual understanding based on language. Habermas has a clear definition of

distortion – it results not just from the gap between claims and reality but also the use of connotative language, which reinforces or obscures some meaning and from excluding key stakeholders from the discussion. Violations result in systematically distorted communication, which in turn leads to misrepresentation, confusion, false assurances and illegitimacy.

A previous study that operationalizes Habermas' recommendations is a useful and relevant model for this analysis of media discourses. Cukier et al. (2009) argue that a strategy for empirically applying Habermas' universal pragmatics is embedded in his theory (p. 5) and have suggested a general analytical framework. They identify the following validity claims: *Truth*, *Legitimacy*, *Comprehensibility* and *Sincerity*. Following their work, this project presupposes that valid discourses of sex work in the news media would consist of representations of actors and events with evidence cited, described in plain terms and supported by balanced sources. Distorted discourses are depictions without grounds, presented in jargonistic or highly emotive terms and lacking balanced sources. Each validity claim can be used to empirically analyze the speech elements in a communicative text.

As theoretical constructs, validity claims can help the researcher to discern whether a communicative act should be considered true, sincere, legitimate and clear by direct reference to empirical observations of the communication. By systematically analysing speech elements in the empirical materials against the validity claims, the researchers can uncover and analyse evidence of communications distortions. (Cukier et al., 2009, p. 5)

The researchers add that these claims may be applied across a variety of diverse discourses.

Thus, the principles presented by Habermas and operationalized by Cukier et al. provide a framework for this analysis of prostitution discourses, empirically assessing the *Truth*, *Sincerity* and *Legitimacy* claims of each article. The Truth claim is concerned with the validity of arguments in the communicative texts. Violations of the Truth claims include biased or unfounded assertions. Non-valid Truths are incomplete claims that do not offer valid evidence, and against which counterarguments are difficult to mount. Comprehensibility, which refers to the technical or linguistic intelligibility of statements, was not considered as relevant to the analysis of prostitution discourses as the other categorical claims. The treatment of prostitution in journalism is not characterized by unintelligible technical jargon. Sincerity, by contrast, was considered central to the distortions of prostitution in media discourses. Sincerity was inferred by assessing the presence of highly connotative language including jargon, hyperbole, emotionally-charged, clichéd or colloquial terms used to describe sex workers and clients. Sincerity assumes congruity between what is said and what is meant, while metaphor or highly connotative language brings associated meanings to statements, affecting textual readings by reinforcing or undermining the more overt claims. It colours readings with indirect associations and complicates the Sincerity of statements. Legitimacy, particularly in journalism, is concerned with balanced selection of sources, as well as the choices in the representation of “experts.” Legitimacy is reflected in the inclusion of balanced information and sources, while illegitimate claims exclude information or marginalize

certain viewpoints by their total omission (Cukier et al., 2009, p. 7). Below is a presentation of the above elements in table form.

Table 4.2. Categories and for an adapted Habermasian discourse analysis, (from Cukier et al., 2009, p. 6).

<b>Validity Claim</b>	<b>Criteria for Ideal Communication</b>	<b>Potential Distortion</b>	<b>Validity Test</b>	<b>Speech Elements for Empirical Analysis</b>
<b>Truth</b>	Content is factual or true	Misrepresentation	Is the evidence sufficient, compared to empirical data?	Claim
<b>Sincerity</b>	The speaker's terms are congruent with events	False assurance	Is what is said consistent with how it is said?	Connotative language Hyperbole Metaphors Jargon
<b>Legitimacy</b>	The speaker's statements conform to norms or values of journalism	Illegitimacy	Are competing 'logics' and stakeholders equally represented?	Choice of experts Use or lack of sources

The analysis was operationalized by identifying the representations of prostitution, sex workers, and clients in each article on a coding sheet, according to the validity claims. (See Appendix 1 – Media Analysis Coding Sheet.) Specifically, in each article, the dominant claims about the phenomenon of prostitution, and the characterizations of sex workers and clients were identified as Truth claims. The

nomenclature and framings of prostitutes and clients were identified as elements that could be assessed for their Sincerity. The sources and experts cited were noted as evidence of Legitimacy or lack thereof.

Table 4.3. Operationalization of the adapted Habermasian analysis

<b>Validity Claim</b>	<b>Speech Elements of Prostitution Articles Identified for Assessment</b>	<b>Assessment Process</b>
<b>Truth</b>	Dominant claim about prostitution Characterizations of sex workers and clients	Is valid data about prostitution presented as evidence in the article?
<b>Sincerity</b>	Nomenclature used to describe sex workers Nomenclature used to describe clients Framing of sex workers Framing of clients	Level of connotative versus “plain” language was assessed Historical and linguistic connotations of terms and framings were considered Cultural and political implications of terms and framings were considered
<b>Legitimacy</b>	Sources cited Experts cited	Assessment of whether marginalized voices (i.e. sex workers, clients) were represented Assessment of whether sources and experts cited provide a balanced view

A limited set of terms was defined for identification in the articles, however, as an attempt to maintain objectivity regarding the representations contained in the articles, the

coding sheet allowed the option of entering new claims, characterizations, nomenclature, framings or source types. The definition of terms was based on the following reconnaissance: empirical research into prostitution; framings of sex workers and clients noted in policy discourses by critical analysts (e.g. Hubbard et al., 2008; Kantola and Squires, 2004); claims and framings in the popular media observed by cultural theorists (e.g. O'Connell Davidson, 1998/2003; Boyle, 2008); stereotypes of prostitution in Western culture identified by Aspevig and Cukier; an informal but consistent reading of *The Guardian* and *Daily Mail* over the last five years by Aspevig; and a preliminary, experimental test sampling of articles.

Halgrimsdottir et al.'s 2008 analysis of North American print media<sup>xxviii</sup> was used to supplement the Habermasian model. In Hallgrimsdottir et al.'s study, a set of narrative categories, or "standardized storylines" were distinguished, with each article assigned to one of these categories if possible (Hallgrimsdottir et al., 2008, p.125). For this analysis, a set of dominant Truth claims was identified, with each article assigned to one of these claims. Although the list of claims are presented at the beginning of the coding sheet, the process of assigning the dominant claim to each article was a final qualitative judgment of the associative meanings of nomenclature, characterizations, framings and sources presented within the articles.

The coding options for the dominant claims of prostitution as a phenomenon are briefly described here. The first claim (A.1.) is that prostitution constitutes *the exploitation or victimization of women*. This claim is communicated in articles that overwhelmingly portray sex workers as victims of violence or murder, or as damaged, desperate or reluctant participants in the sex trade. The second option, (A2.) is the claim

that prostitution is a *business transaction*; this claim could be assigned to articles that predominantly present sex work as having neutral effects on participants, and as being a form of labour with an instrumental purpose (i.e. income). Option A.3. is the claim that prostitution is *empowering to women*. These articles argue that sex work can be emotionally positive and/or generate wealth for women. Option A.4. is that prostitution is *biologically inevitable*. This claim is that men are naturally predisposed to a variety of partners and/or casual sex, and that women will always meet these needs. Option A.5. is the claim that prostitution is *illicit fun*, “kinky,” or “taboo” – decadent but harmless, if not socially sanctioned. Option A.6. is the claim that prostitution is *fundamentally immoral* or spiritually degrading to its participants, resulting in shame and alienation from oneself and/or God. Articles categorized as A.7. posit that prostitution is mainly a *public health risk*, contributing to the spread of disease due to the promiscuity of participants, or the discarding of condoms in public areas. This claim is closely associated with, but distinct from A.8., which argues that prostitution is a *public nuisance*. This claim is that prostitution has attendant ills that it brings to communities – red light districts where non-sex working women are harassed, and high rates of criminal and drug activity, which make it unsupportable. Option A.9. was left open as *Other*, to be specified.

The histories of these claims, their political implications, and the evidence commonly cited in the articles to support their Truth claims, will be described in more detail in the results chapter (Chapter Five). The validity of the claims will be assessed according to whether they drew on known empirical research about prostitution (presented in Chapter Two).



The characterizations of sex workers and clients in each article were also noted as claims to Truth. The validity of their claims was assessed by the evidence presented in the articles. The categories for the characterizations of sex workers and clients were defined by the empirical studies of sex work, (outlined in Chapter Two). For sex workers, characterizations fell under the following categories: *Economic class*; *Age*; *Addictions*; *Mental illness*; *Attractiveness*; *Relationships*; *Emotions*; and/or *Other* (to be specified). For clients, *Occupation* was added to the list of categories. The category of *Attractiveness* is not considered to be an objective Truth that draws on empirical research. Rather, it was noted as a strategic characterization that may contribute to distorted and largely irrelevant claims about sex workers.

Different nomenclature used to describe those who participate in prostitution have certain (historical, linguistic, gendered) connotations that contribute to different discursive biases; these terms contribute or detract from the Sincerity of the communicative texts. Their associations will be described more fully with examples in the results chapter (Chapter Five). For sex workers, the following possible nomenclature were distinguished, again, based on reconnaissance from critical literature and news media: *Prostitute*; *Sex trade worker* or *Sex worker*; *Hooker*; *Call girl*; *Street walker*; *Escort*; *Whore*; and/or *Other*. For clients, the following nomenclature was identified: *Client*; *Kerb-crawler*; *Punter*; *Customer*; *Other* (to be specified). The number of times each term appeared was noted because the repetition of certain terms is considered to have an influential effect on readers, reinforcing the connotations of the term.

The other indication of Sincerity was in the framing of sex workers and clients. For sex workers, the connotative terms that supported the following framings were

identified: *Victim; Pragmatic; Ambitious entrepreneur; Con artist; Seducer; Criminal; Sinner; Public health threat; Public nuisance*; and/or *Other*. For clients, terms that contributed to the following framings were noted: *Aggressor; Client (Business/Neutral); Fool (“Easy mark”); Seducer; Criminal; Sinner; Public health threat; Public nuisance*; and/or *Other* (to be specified). The *Con artist* framing of the sex worker and *Fool* framing of the client were applied when articles framed sex workers as exploiting vulnerable clients. The *Seducer* framing of the sex worker suggested that she had irresistibly seduced her client(s) into an assignation or ongoing relationship. The framing of a male client as a *Seducer* presented him as having seduced a woman into entry in sex work, or presented him as an appealing, “sexy” customer. The *Criminal* framing reinforced the illegal activity of prostitution. More than one framing could be assigned per actor (sex workers, client) discussed in an article.

In analyzing the Sincerity claims made in the news media, an historical analysis of discourses (in a Foucaultian tradition,) was applied, to explore the gendered and political-economic biases conveyed by the terms. Discourses of prostitution are shaped by, (and in turn, shape,) broader discourses of gender, sexuality, class and normative behaviour.

Finally, the Legitimacy of the articles was assessed. This was done by noting the sources cited in the articles and whether they represented a balanced view of the events. A special attempt was made to note whether sex workers and/or members of their community were cited as sources. The following categorical sources were noted for each article: *Sex worker(s); Client(s); Friend/family of sex worker or client; Police; Politician; Government; Advocate; Researcher; Local citizen*; and/or *Other* (to be specified). The

articles were analyzed in terms of their use of balanced sources. Cukier et al. (2008) note that, “In journalism, a well-established norm requires journalists to ensure balance in their reporting. Hence an indicator of legitimacy in public discourse is the degree of representation and silencing of dissenting voices” (citing van Dijk, p. 7). This point is particularly pertinent, considering the continuing exclusion of sex workers as sources in the mainstream media and the effect of this on public perception and policy.

#### *Some flaws and limits in the analysis*

Some flaws, or limits, were observed during the analysis.

A major flaw in the methodology was that ethnicity was not identified as a category in the characterization of sex workers or clients. Over the course of the analysis, it became apparent that ethnicity was cited in the characterization of sex workers in particular, however, characterizations based on ethnicity were not systematically or consistently noted. A flaw in the methodology for distinguishing claims was also identified. For instance, the idea that prostitution was biologically inevitable was often observed as a presupposition, rather than a dominant claim, but the coding sheet did not allow for a record of the presuppositions that contributed to claims. These limitations are considered in the interpretation of results, and it is noted that future studies should include the category of ethnicity and a means for recording significant presuppositions of claims.

#### *The use of fiction in research on prostitution*

The second principal contribution of this thesis is to explore how recent fictional accounts have interpreted and conveyed prostitution to readers. For the public seeking to understand prostitution, the potency of the fictional form is an alternative to the discourses being conveyed in the news media and policy debates. A wave of fiction with prostitute protagonists has emerged in Britain over the last ten years. The popularity of these novels may lie in contemporary readers' unsated interest in the lesser-known aspects of prostitution, particularly sex workers' experiences, which fail to be represented in other media such as print news. In contrast to the news media, novels do not make direct Truth claims and should not be judged for their "validity" per se. Fictional texts are contested hermeneutically by the reader on the level of the micro-textual (sentence), in the context of the overall rhetorical design of the work, as well as in the broader cultural context. In general, literature functions to offer *theoretical* alternatives.

Academic scholarship has traditionally kept literary and political analyses separate, and literature has not been deemed legitimately systematic for social-scientific study. However, some within the academy have turned to fiction as a source of "wisdom" – a respite from postmodern theory's endless deconstructions and susceptibility to individualistic, capitalistic discourses. Bloom (1994, 2004) has made an argument for the enduring wisdom found in canonical works. The former Marxist cultural theorist Terry Eagleton (2003) argues that fiction grapples with abiding literary concepts of love, death, religion and morality, and is, unlike many socialist movements, capable of resisting debilitating relativism or individualistic commodity discourses – some of the problematics that been articulated by feminists, as described in Chapter Three. Eagleton argues that, "the story is [there] to deliver what one might call a moral truth" (p. 89).

Mark Edmundson (2004) also describes how literature is often presented as an outmoded, superfluous, purely aesthetic form, “disconnected from common experience” (p. 2).

Nevertheless, Edmundson, like Eagleton, believes that literature weighs important social questions and assesses the worthiness of different ethics and ideals (p. 3).

One theory of the novel’s potential to offer new insights (i.e. alternatives to distorting discourses,) is that novels can create a sense of others’ experience through a process of individual empathy. Armstrong (2005) argues that the novel helped to create the modern individual subject by “presenting the possibility of thinking otherwise” (p. 10). The novel offers “an interiority in excess of the social position that the individual is supposed to occupy” (Armstrong, 2005, p.8). Poovey (1988) observes that fictional texts expose the contradictions of society (p. 124). A turn to novels may reveal many of the formal and informal restrictions, such as the cultural discourses that hem experience. Llewelyn (2008) describes these restrictions as “the obscured and the unseen” (p. 171). Novels provide a space for unacknowledged or inadequately understood aspects of experience within socio-economic systems.

The novel, an exploration of individual interiority within the collective experience, has also historically been a vehicle for exposing the contradictions between women’s private lives and socially sanctioned feminine experience. Poovey (1998) writes, “Literature cannot exist outside a system of social and institutional relations, and in a society characterized by systemic class and gender inequality, literature exposes the system that makes it what it is” (p. 123). An analysis of the treatment of prostitution in the novels of Waters and Faber demonstrates that many issues surrounding women’s experience of prostitution remain unidentified today and distorted by the limits of popular

discourses. An acknowledgement of diverse experiences is vital to a more complete discussion of prostitution. The selected fictional works explore the “interrelationship between the micrology of women’s lives and the meta-conditions of wider society,” a goal that has been fraught with epistemological pitfalls in traditional research (O’Neill, 2001, pp. 27, 32). Albeit fictional and set in the historically specific milieu of nineteenth-century England, the recent wave of novels offer readers close accounts of women’s lives in prostitution. It should be reiterated that a turn to literature should never replace social research, but might offer new theoretical experiences and discourses for understanding.

Some critics have argued that novels may be sites of action and change. Eagleton (2003) has argued that, after the postmodern turn, fiction is sufficiently malleable to record a variety of theoretical experiences, resist commodity choice discourses, but also lead contemporary readers to renewed critical purpose in combating inequity. Edmundson (2004) also argues that the novel also offers a chance for collective renewals, judging it to be “our best goad towards new beginnings” (p.3). Poovey (1998) argues that literature may not offer immediate and transcendent freedom from systemic constraints, but may produce some “slippage” (p. 124). In her discussion of *David Copperfield*, Poovey contends that “because literary texts mobilize fantasies without legislative action, they provide the site at which shared anxieties and tensions can surface, as well as be symbolically addressed” (ibid). The novels of Charles Dickens, George Eliot, and others that emerged with capitalism, for example, explored class disturbances and anxieties through individual characters’ experience, without didactically advocating fixed political positions. The characters’ experiences are consistent within the rhetorical design of the work and this logic resounds with readers. Effectively fleshed out, the authors’ imagined

scenarios resonate with readers and become possibilities of experience, awareness, and direction. The fictional characters' efforts to transcend their conditions offer a theoretical attempt to transcend the discourses that continue to constrain them and the reader.

Literature functions to offer theoretical alternatives; these alternatives are numerous and not normative. A single work is also part of a larger novelistic dialogue. If anything, new "moral truths" offered by novels elucidate the incompleteness of prevailing, as well as future constructions, of meaning. As Edmundson (2004) puts it, "As literary works are multiple, so too are the potentially usable human visions of experience" (p. 113). Fiction does not impose a didactic hegemonic truth but present alternative conceptions and options. It is yet another facet of discussion wherein authors, in a sympathetic rendering, may be saying something creatively that other discourses cannot.

*The neo-Victorian novel: illuminating the Victorian discourses in operation today*

A recent trend in neo-Victorian fiction featuring prostitute protagonists presents a notable opportunity to rethink the stalemates of prostitution discourses. The works analysed in this study are *Tipping the Velvet* (1998) by Sarah Waters and *The Crimson Petal and the White* (2002) by Michel Faber, both of which are set in the Victorian era.<sup>xxix</sup> The particular "neo-Victorian" mode of the selected works must be taken into account in terms of how readers contest the literature's meaning. Chapters Two ("Empirical Studies") and Three ("Feminist Conceptions") demonstrated that many of the current conditions and discourses of prostitution are rooted in the nineteenth century. Neo-Victorian fiction can contribute to contemporary prostitution debates by bringing

forth implicit, unacknowledged conceptions and exploring the nineteenth century roots of current conditions. Neo-Victorian fiction confronts both our limited conceptions and discourses of prostitution, and the historically based economic conditions of it.

Among novelists, there has been a turn to the Victorian era as a way of expressing women's experience. King (2005) asks: "Why, in the last decades of the twentieth century should so many women novelists have looked back a hundred years for the subjects of their fiction?...What in particular, is the interest of Victorian constructions of gender and sexuality for modern feminists?" (p.1). A credible response is that certain gender constructions, and the limits they still place on experience, were codified during the Victorian era and can be well expressed in the empathetic novel form. The novels featuring prostitute protagonists use the nineteenth-century segregation of the public and private spheres as a trope to underline elements of women's experience that remain largely unarticulated today. The dawn of the liberal democratic public sphere in industrial nineteenth century Europe was a time when many of women's concerns were relegated to the private realm. Fraser (1993) writes that the boundaries of the public sphere remain delimited by:

issues pertaining to intimate domestic or personal life, including sexual life...

T]hese notions, therefore, are vehicles through which gender and class disadvantages may continue to operate subtextually and informally, even after explicit, formal restrictions have been rescinded (p. 23).

While some of the issues surrounding prostitution are now discussed in the public sphere, the neo-Victorian novels broach some of the informal, subtextual issues of prostitution that remain private. Victorian discourses in the West may be hidden, due to their



familiarity; a central argument of this thesis is that many of the prostitution debates are Victorian discourses, and an accounting of these discourses may lead to enhanced clarity.

There is a wider cultural framework for neo-Victorian literature in the popular interest in things Victorian in general. Victorian influences are evident in popular trends in design, children's literature,<sup>xxx</sup> film and broadcasters' content. Some content emphasizes the rural and the quaint, as in the recent reality series "Victorian Farm" (2009), or the more whimsical or uncanny, as in the film designs of Tim Burton, the *Harry Potter* series, or the 2009 Sherlock Holmes movie. These examples suggest that neo-Victorianism may be a "period fetishism" (Flint, 2005, p. 230), or a nostalgic reaction to our high-tech Post modernity. But many popular depictions of the Victorian age also are of a rapidly advancing industrial capitalism and its fallout for the working- and underclass. In television, the BBC consistently presents productions of Dickens (*Bleak House* [2005], *Little Dorrit* [2008]), depicting the degradation of workhouses and debtors' prisons.

The Victorian age is regularly invoked in popular culture; there appears to be an acknowledgement, or at least an ongoing interest in its influence. The term Victorian has become shorthand for excessive repression, class anxiety, urban squalor and pollution. Speaking of culture's consideration of the Victorian era, Kirchknopf (2008) writes that on the one hand, the West acknowledges the influence of the Victorians, on the other, it denies Victorian currents in the present. He writes: "we continue to deny our affinities with them, delimiting ourselves against the Victorians, thus acting as repressively and dully as we accuse them of having done" (pp. 58-59). Kaplan (2007) also argues that "more is at stake in the ongoing popularity of Victoriana than can be registered in the

categories of historical investigation, aesthetic appreciation or entertainment” (p. 5). The Victorian period appears to be haunting the present, manifesting in various aspects of British popular culture.

In Cultural Studies too in the last thirty years, there has been an excavation of the Victorian era: it has been theorized as the time when many of the ideas that continue to define Western discourses were activated. Kucich and Sadoff (2000) argue that many of the major Western discourses were institutionalized during the Victorian age, but also that the era’s discourses continue to inform critical responses in the present:

[T]he nineteenth century has been a particularly fertile area for consideration.

The period has been marked by major critical texts that claim to have found in the nineteenth century the origins of contemporary consumerism [Baudrillard], sexual science [Foucault], gay culture [Sedgwick et al.] and gender identity [Gilbert and Gubar, Showalter, Armstrong] (xiv).

The notion that the present cannot be divorced from the past seems evident, but Britain’s Victorian heritage is not always easily extricable. Llewelyn (2008) argues that postmodern critical debates also remain bounded by many Victorian discourses. “The way we argue now is rooted in the nineteenth century, but one of the reasons for this is that we are still negotiating the subjects of that earlier debate” (Llewelyn, 2008, p. 172). Krueger (2002) also argues that Westerners living in the post modern age are, “in many respects post-Victorians, with a complex relationship to the ethics, politics, psychology, and art of our eminent – and obscure – Victorian precursors” (xi). Building on Krueger’s and Llewelyn’s observations, this thesis explores the Victorian constructions of prostitution that may have anchored postmodern debates about prostitution.

The selected neo-Victorian novels particularly explore the era's industrializing economy and its brutal treatment of individuals, creating parallels for readers in contemporary Western and global socio-economic contexts. Despite their historical context, much of the fiction echoes the current poverty experienced by women both in the West and in so-called developing countries. The popularity of neo-Victorian novels – with their attention to gender inequality, competition, commodity fetishism, status obsession, religious extremism, exploitation, poverty, poor sanitation and disease – may be rooted in a recognition and yearning for discursive alternatives. Though they use the conventional novel form, neo-Victorian texts are postmodern considerations of Victorian literary productions; they use historical fictional modes to contrast and probe historic and contemporary certainties. The novels reflect upon the ways prevailing gender, socio-economic and psychological conditions affect characters' perceptions of experience. The limits on the fictional characters suggest that readers observe the limits of their own time and space, as well as the Victorian discursive limits they have inherited. The fictional settings may be less consistent with the past than reflective of current times, yet, refracted through the Victorian lens, the strangeness of our unacknowledged discourses or “dominant systems of representation” are emphasized (Kucich and Sadoff, 2000, xxvii).

Neo-Victorian novelistic works “revoke and comment on Victorian narratives in various ways, both formally and thematically” (Kirchknopf, 2008, 53). Stylistically, they reflect typical nineteenth-century modes. As Kirchknopf (2008) notes, the novels are generally long (approximately 500 pages) and “the narrative design of these novels tends to be like that of their Victorian predecessors’ and they typically employ narrative voices of the types dominant in nineteenth-century texts, i.e., the first person character narrator

or the third person omniscient one” (p. 54). Thematically, the neo-Victorian novels often reflect confessional Victorian styles or are “written in genres such as the Bildungsroman, or the social, industrial and sensation novels” (ibid). Many are direct engagements with Victorian literature itself.<sup>xxx</sup> However, neo-Victorian novels are not merely mimicking novelistic Victorian voices or reiterating Victorian discourses in post-colonial or other postmodern contexts. Many neo-Victorian novels feature “marginalized voices, new histories of sexuality, post-colonial viewpoints and other generally ‘different’ versions of the Victorian” (Llewelyn, 2008, p. 165). This attention to marginalized voices is exemplified in the trend of creating protagonists who are prostitutes.

As the authors’ reversion to a past era implies, contemporary debates about women’s subjection and freedom of choice, for example, remain enmeshed in nineteenth-century discourses. Neo-Victorianism links the Victorian past with the British post-Victorian present. Llewelyn writes that “the Victorian and the neo-Victorian offer the simultaneous possibilities of proximity and distance” (Llewelyn, 2008, p. 175). Many neo-Victorian novels examine still unresolved problems for feminism today (Kaplan, 2007, p.25), including prostitution, by throwing them into historical relief. As Llewelyn (2008) suggests, by distilling certain taken-for-granted discourses through a contemporary lens, neo-Victorian fiction opens “up aspects of our present to a relationship with the Victorian past in ways that offer new possibilities for simultaneously thinking through where they came from” (p. 171).

Neo-Victorian novels may contribute something new to the discussion of prostitution. While popular media (newspaper, television) depictions and policy debates have been restricted by certain persistent discourses, neo-Victorian fiction offers insight

into both historical and contemporary questions of gendered experience and consent in neo-liberal economies. The characters' efforts to transcend their circumstances offer a theoretical attempt to transcend the discourses that continue to confine modern readers.

*A methodological approach to neo-Victorian fiction as a source of research*

It should be noted that the news articles and fictional works were not considered to be "equivalent" data samples. The intent of combining methods was to empirically show broad patterns of the dominant news discourses coupled with a more in-depth and nuanced analysis of the arguments. The sample of fiction was selected from an already reduced corpus of neo-Victorian fiction) because, it has been argued, Neo-Victorian fiction has a capacity to historicize conceptions of prostitution. Broader popular fiction featuring prostitute protagonists may not present such nuanced explorations.

During the sample period, five books set in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century Britain featuring prostitute protagonists were reviewed. Other works are Shari Holman's *The Dress Lodger* (2000), *The Observations* (2006) by Jane Harris, and Emma Donoghue's *Slammerkin* (2000). All provided nuanced treatments of prostitution. *The Dress Lodger* explored the effects of class on the choices of its prostitute character. *The Observations* was a psychological study of shame and defiance, social factors of religion, poverty, coercion and abuse on underclass women. *Slammerkin* explored the relationship between poverty, lack of choices and individual psychological qualities on the protagonist's becoming a prostitute.

Postmodern criticism has deconstructed the essential meaning or value of texts for contemporary audiences. Trepidation about imposing interpretations on living audiences

has often resulted in a reluctance to draw essential conclusions about the meaning of texts. With the completion of the media analysis and an identification of dominant characterizations, framings, claims, and storylines, corresponding narrative elements were identified in the fiction. The two novels in the dissertation were chosen because they were both popular and critically acclaimed, most directly broached the themes identified in the media sample, but also (perhaps in conflict with some postmodern values) judged to be the most complex in narrative, characterization and style, with the most to offer, interpretively.

Though postmodern criticism has made scholars wary of drawing essential conclusions about the meaning and effect of texts, some scholars have used fiction as a source of evidence about prostitution, assessing the way it both reflects and reifies certain gendered discourses. However, most of these have looked at historical rhetorics of past prostitution. (See Anderson's 1993 reading of rhetorics in Victorian literature, and Rosenthal [2006] and Mudge [2000] on Seventeenth and Eighteenth century literature and gender politics.) A review of novelistic elements has traditionally been a base for literary analyses, but since the postmodern turn, the elements of an analysis have been interrogated and transformed.

Postmodern literature and criticism have deconstructed the meaning of classic categories by destabilizing narrative sincerity, and universal audience identification. Classic novel analysis, like classic art criticism, looks at a work's components. These might include milieu, characters, genre, structure, events, narration, style, symbols and/or ending (Mullan, 2006). A classic analysis might have assumed that such an analysis, if rigorously applied, would yield the text's essential meaning, and that authorial mastery

would ensure that intent was effectively transferred to adept readers. However, such literary analyses have now been critiqued for not investigating subjective interpretations. As Newton (1990) explains, “No distinction would have been made between reading and understanding and interpretation” (p. 1). To argue that literature’s meaning becomes evident to readers via masterful aesthetic expression is to assume that aesthetic taste is universally shared, a precept that has been deconstructed.

Thus, a postmodern analysis must look at a work’s meta-literary references, intertextuality, or story space versus discourse space; the broader media culture was considered in the analysis of fiction. Llewelyn (2008) describes this story space as, “the multiple social contexts of our aesthetic response – historical, textual, analytical, cultural, gendered, raced, classed, economic, political” (p. 175). A postmodern approach looks at a work’s meta-literary references, intertextuality, or “story space” of the work in larger culture, versus the discourse space. The media analysis identified the dominant narratives, representations, and tropes of prostitution. This broader context was applied to the fiction. The ways in which the fictional writers interpreted these narratives of prostitution, in contrast to the media discourses. The fiction was mined for new insights into the conceptual history of prostitution and alternatives to the persistent discourses. A neo-Victorian approach also asks the following questions: which prevailing constructions and discursive modes have been inherited from the Victorians? Which ones have been accepted that should be revisited, as pointed out by the neo-Victorian fiction?<sup>xxxii</sup> The analysis will explore how the fictional writers interpret the discourses identified in the media and policy.

## *Conclusion*

This chapter was an overview of the rationale and methods used to understand the cultural context and discursive constructions of prostitution in the United Kingdom. The two major contributions of this project are an empirical study, of how the media may (re)produce distorted discourses of prostitution, and an attempt to use contemporary fiction to suggest alternative conceptions to these distortions. Many cultural theorists have investigated how artifacts such as the media, film and television, communicate certain images of prostitution, but there are few empirical approaches to news media discourses. Likewise, scholars have analysed historical literature's construction of prostitution, but there is a reluctance to use contemporary literature as a site of research.

There is a need for empirical studies of news discourses because sex work remains shrouded in secrecy and mystery, with a profound effect on related policy. The media constructs sex work for the public's consumption using certain – often distorted – discourses. Following Habermas' recommendations, the discursive strategies of the media have been analysed empirically by this project. The methodology of this analysis was outlined in this chapter and the results will be elaborated in Chapter Five.

Since its emergence in the nineteenth century, the novel form has explored the nuances of individual feeling as confined by liberal capitalist socio-economic systems. This chapter argued the novel remains a useful form to mine certain still-unacknowledged aspects of experience. Inviting speculation on individual perception and emotion, fiction can provide nuanced, if theoretical, records of experience as it is circumscribed by historical, economic, political and cultural factors. As the editors of *The Oxford English*



*Literary History* assert, literary history is “the closest we can get to individually experienced thoughts and feelings and beliefs” (Davis, 2002, p. 9).

After the postmodern turn, Cultural Studies has resisted drawing totalizing conclusions about the meaning and import of texts for audiences. This thesis explores how novels may present theoretical alternatives to the discourses in the media as well as the problematics of feminist debates.

## *Chapter Five*

### **Results of a Critical Discourse Analysis of Prostitution in British News Media**

This chapter presents the results of an empirical analysis of 342 news articles<sup>xxxiii</sup> from two major British newspapers, *The Daily Mail* and *The Guardian*. The analysis attempted to decode the ways that certain distorted discourses may be reproduced in the U.K. news media. It used an adapted Habermasian approach to reveal the claims, characterizations, nomenclature and framings of the articles, and also assessed whether the views of balanced sources were represented. This chapter quantitatively presents the newspapers' Truth and Sincerity claims, and assesses their claims of Legitimacy. It also provides some qualitative analysis of the patterns and content of the articles.

The Truth claim is concerned with the validity of arguments in communicative texts. The Truth claims of the selected articles from *The Daily Mail* and *Guardian* newspapers are the first set of results presented. Fifteen different claims, that is, overarching claims about prostitution as a general phenomenon, were identified. The occurrences of the fifteen claims across both newspapers, spanning the years 2000-2009, are presented with examples. Violations of Truth claims in communicative texts include biased or unfounded statements. Thus, divergences between the papers are noted, with an analysis of the different economic, cultural and educational capitals of the papers and the way that these make different discourses possible. The evidence presented with the claims was also assessed, to evaluate validity. There is also an accounting of timely events that likely informed the claims that dominated in certain years. The Truth claims in the selected articles also include characterizations of sex workers and clients. The prevalence of certain characterizations is reported with examples. Differences between

the papers, are again, noted, and the evidence cited for the characterizations is considered. Differences between the characterizations of sex workers and clients are also discussed.

The second set of results identifies the Sincerity claims of the selected articles. Sincerity assumes that language accurately communicates meaning, while metaphor, emotional or connotative language adds associated meanings to statements. The occurrence of certain terms (nomenclature) used to depict sex workers and clients is reported. There is a discussion of the particular cultural overtones of the different nomenclature; this is intended to illuminate the connotative associations of the language used to refer to sex workers and clients. There is also an analysis of how the use of certain nomenclature reflects the papers' different political and cultural capitals. Sex workers and clients are also framed with affecting phrases, similes and metaphors. The dominant framings are identified and illustrated with examples.

The third set of results assesses the Legitimacy of the sampled articles. Legitimacy is achieved with a balanced selection of sources and "experts." This aspect of the analysis quantitatively assessed whether the articles used representative and balanced sources. The occurrence of different types of sources (i.e. sex workers, clients, researchers etc.,) cited in the articles is reported, with a comment on the preferential uses of certain types of sources by the two newspapers. There is also an assessment of whether the articles used balanced sources.

Finally, other findings that emerged during the study are presented. In particular, it was noted that there are significant quantitative differences between the total references

to the female versus male participants in the sex industry. This section offers a comment on the broader cultural implications of this finding.

#### *Truth claims: results, examples, and analysis*

Truth claims, in communicative texts such as news articles, are arguments that are offered as valid and unprejudiced. The analysis first attempted to identify the claims and characterizations contained in *The Daily Mail* and *Guardian* newspapers about prostitution, sex workers and clients during the years 2000 to 2009. The analysis revealed 15 categories of claim; seven new sub-categories were identified and are described here. The occurrences of the claims are reported for both *The Daily Mail* and *The Guardian*, with examples from the articles provided to illustrate claims occurring at a rate of six percent or more. There is also some analysis of divergences between the two newspapers. Violations of the Truth claims include prejudiced or invalid assertions. The dominant Truth claims of the newspapers are assessed in terms of whether they draw on valid data. Timely events may also have influenced the emergence and prevalence of certain claims during certain years. In this section, the claims are linked to concurrent policy, pop culture and crime events in the U.K.. Another aspect of the analysis of the articles' Truth claims concerned the characterizations of sex workers and clients. The occurrences of certain characterizations are reported for both newspapers, with examples from the articles. Finally, the most frequently occurring characterizations are assessed in terms of whether they drew on valid data. Differences between the characterizations of sex workers and clients are also discussed.

The analysis revealed 15 categories of claim, including seven sub-categories identified under the sub-heading *Other*. Besides the claims that were pre-identified as categories for the analysis (A.1. to A.8.), and which were described in the preceding chapter (“Methodology”), seven further categorical claims were distinguished. The first was identified as (A.9.), *Prostitution is sordid/squalid*. This category of claim diverged subtly from the categorization of prostitution as *immoral* (A.6.) due to its insinuations that prostitution was unsavoury rather than unethical. Likewise, it diverged from category A.5., *illicit fun*, due to its depiction of prostitution as a deviant, versus pleasurable, social transgression. Articles with the *sordid/squalid* claim also depicted prostitution as something threateningly “uncontrolled” rather than strictly unhygienic, as emphasized in the claim of prostitution as *a public health risk* (A.7.). Another claim made about prostitution was that is *a social problem rooted in drugs, poverty and/or abuse* (A.10.); some articles were found to claim that prostitution persisted due to such multiple social factors. Another claim was that prostitution is *difficult to generalize about* (A.11); in articles communicating this claim, the reporter resisted making conclusive statements about prostitution’s causes and effects, and presented a balanced view about whether it might harmful, neutral or beneficial for different people. Another sub-category, A.12., was the claim that prostitution is particularly *humiliating for public authority figures caught using prostitutes*. This category was mainly conferred on articles that reported on priests, social workers or other public figures being arrested for “kerb-crawling.” They described the action of these clients as a fall from social grace, but not morality. Another claim was that prostitution constitutes *the exploitation of men* (A.13.). Articles with this claim depicted sex workers as con artists who had bilked vulnerable men of money or

convinced them to carry out criminal offenses. Yet another category was the claim that prostitution was *primarily a criminal activity* (A.14). This claim conveyed the illegality of prostitution above all. Finally, one article was categorized as describing prostitution as *a positive addition to the community* (A.15).

In some of the articles, more than one claim was observed. In these cases, the most resounding, conclusive claim of the article was identified as the dominant one. The reporter's concluding statements and headline were also considered.

The first table (5.1) reflects the major claims made by the *Daily Mail* newspaper about the issue of prostitution in order of prevalence between the years 2000 and 2009.

The numbers have been rounded up or down.

Table 5.1. Truth claims of news media: prostitution as a phenomenon in the sample of *The Daily Mail*, 2000-2009

Prevalence Ranking	Claim that prostitution is:	Number of Articles	% of Articles
1	A1. The exploitation/victimization of women	39	23%
2	A.6. Immoral	31	19%
3	A.2. A business transaction, neutral	18	11%
4	A.5. Illicit fun, kinky	20	12%
5	A.8. A public nuisance	17	10%
6	A.9. Sordid, squalid	14	8%
7	A.10. A social problem rooted in drugs, poverty and/or abuse	12	7%
8	A.3. Empowering to women	5	3%
9	A.12. Humiliating for public authority figures caught using prostitutes	3	2%
10	A.13. The exploitation of men	3	2%

11	Other (A.4, A.11, A.14)	5	3%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>100%</b>

The most common claim in the *Daily Mail* was that prostitution constitutes *the exploitation or victimization of women*. The total number of articles that presented prostitution in this way was 39, or 23 percent. This claim was observed in articles that viewed prostitution as harmful to women – inherently and/or because of the conditions of prostitution. As one commentator in *The Daily Mail* claimed, “prostitution embodies a view of women which is intrinsically brutalising, dehumanising and predatory...[we must] try to prevent the systematic abuse of human beings” (DM2006/108). The claim was also conveyed in statements suggesting that sex workers lacked free will to enter prostitution, and that once involved, were further damaged. In one article, a reporter claimed that “the majority of Britain’s 80,000 sex workers” are prostitutes without a choice: pimped, “drug addicts who work to pay off their dealers,” or “trafficked women” (DM2008/145). The claim was also found in articles that asserted that prostitutes needed to be rescued. “These girls need help and rehabilitation...money should be spent getting them off the street and giving them better lives,” argued the editorialist (DM2007/131).

The second most common claim found in *The Daily Mail* was that prostitution is *immoral*. In total, the number of articles that presented prostitution as immoral was 31, or 19 percent. The claim that prostitution was *immoral* was often conveyed viz. judgmental statements about sex workers’ choice to participate in prostitution and assertions that they were “morally corrupt” (DM2004/85). One article branded a “suburban housewife’s double life” in prostitution simply, “utterly immoral” (DM2000/17). Another reporter declared of one woman (a contestant on a reality television show who was revealed to be

a “GBP 70 escort”), that, “it is her lack of shame that is perhaps the most disturbing aspect of all” (DM2001/25). Articles conveying this claim asserted that prostitution was spiritually degrading.

The third most common claim, and one that contrasted the first two on an essential level, was that prostitution is *illicit fun*. In total, 20, or 12 percent, of articles presented prostitution as *illicit, kinky fun*. One article, headlined “My fond memories of the oldest profession, by marquess, aged 80; Peer’s shock revelations of his youthful exploits,” profiled the life of an aristocrat who asserted that “sex,” including sex with prostitutes, “is to be enjoyed...without hang-ups” (DM2001/32).

The claim that prostitution is *a neutral business transaction* was the fourth most common claim: 18, or 11 percent of articles presented prostitution this way. Articles conveying this claim resisted making any of the aforementioned judgments that prostitution was harmful, immoral or fun, and instead described prostitution neutrally, as a business. This claim was conveyed in an article, for example, that called for escort agencies to pay their taxes “just like any other industry” (DM2002/50). It was also conveyed by an article that reported on prostitutes going on strike to protest police raids of Soho, and which sourced the English Collective of Prostitutes to comment on the labour conditions facing sex workers (DM2000/11). Finally, this claim was even seen in some articles that profiled serial murderers of sex workers, but which remained neutral about prostitution. Unlike many articles profiling serial killers of prostitutes that conveyed the claim that sex work was dangerous and harmful, some articles portrayed serial killers as targeting women primarily made little mention of the prostitution activities of the victims. For example, one 2008 article profiling Steve Wright, “the



Suffolk strangler” describes him as “revel(ing) in controlling, using and abusing women” but does not emphasize his abuse and murder of sex workers in particular (DM2008/144). Such articles remained neutral about the nature and effects of sex work with their omission of other Truth claims about prostitution.

The fifth most common claim was that prostitution mainly caused a nuisance for the public. In total, the number of articles presenting prostitution as *a public nuisance* was 17, or 10 percent of articles. Such claims were expressed in statements such as, “prostitution blights communities” (G2005/263). These articles equated prostitution with unpleasantness, and claimed that it led to many “protests from local residents” (DM2003/71).

The sixth-most popular claim was that prostitution is *sordid and/or squalid*. There were 14 (8 percent of) articles with this claim. This claim was observed in articles that described prostitution as an “activity that is universally regarded as deviant,” that “coarsens society” (DM2004/73) that is “perverted” (DM2004/79), or constitutes “seedy antics” (DM2008/157).

The seventh-ranked claim was that prostitution is *a problem with socio-economic origins such as drug addiction, poverty or childhood abuse*. Of 167 articles, 12, or 7 percent evinced this claim. This claim was found in an article, for instance, that connected the socio-economic and drug problems rampant in Ipswich to a rise in prostitution and murders of sex workers there. “The gulf between the chaotic lives [of the murdered women] and the well-heeled...is enormous,” observed the reporter, adding that the loss of farming jobs, drugs and sexual abuse contributed to a rise in prostitution (DM2006/118).

The remaining articles were divided across several sub-categories. Five, or three percent, of articles argued that prostitution is *empowering to women*. Many of these articles were profiles of sex workers turned madams or pop culture icons who had parlayed their profession into fame and wealth (e.g. DM2005/100; DM2003/65). Three articles (or two percent) presented prostitution as particularly *humiliating for certain public figures*, such as a priest (DM2000/2) or New York Governor Elliot Spitzer (DM2008/154) who were caught using sex workers. Three articles, or two percent, presented prostitution as a matter of *men's exploitation*. The remaining articles were classified as *Other*, and were spread across several categories. Two, or one percent of articles presented prostitution as primarily *criminal*. One percent also presented it as *biologically inevitable*. One article presented prostitution as something that is *difficult to generalize about*.

No articles in the selected *Daily Mail* articles presented prostitution primarily as *a public health risk* or *a positive addition to the community*. It is noted that many *Daily Mail* articles contained statements to the effect that sex workers and/or clients were public health risks, and also that prostitution was biologically inevitable, but these were not recorded in the analysis as the major claims of the articles. As mentioned, claims by *The Daily Mail* that sex workers and/or clients constituted public health risks are captured in other aspects of the analysis (i.e. assessments of Sincerity in the framings of sex workers and/or clients as *public health risks*).

Table 5.2 reflects the claims made by *The Guardian* newspaper across the years 2000 to 2009. The numbers have been rounded up or down.

Table 5.2. Truth claims of news media: prostitution as a phenomenon in the sample of *The Guardian*, 2000-2009

Prevalence Ranking	Claim that prostitution is:	Number of Articles:	% of Articles:
1	A1. The exploitation/victimization of women	82	47%
2	A.2. A business transaction, neutral	32	18%
3	A.5. Illicit fun, kinky	13	7%
4	A.8. A public nuisance	12	7%
5	A.10. A social problem rooted in drugs, poverty and/or abuse	7	4%
6	A.11. Difficult to generalize about	7	4%
7	A.4. Biologically inevitable	5	3%
8	A.3. Empowering to women	5	3%
9	A.6. Immoral	4	2%
10	A.7. A public health risk	3	2%
11	Other (A.9., A.12., A.14, A.15)	5	3%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>100%</b>

The most common claim found in *The Guardian* was that prostitution constitutes the *exploitation or victimization of women*; 82, or 47 percent of articles presented this as their main claim. As in *The Daily Mail*, articles in *The Guardian* asserted that that prostitution was inherently damaging, that sex workers lacked a choice in entering the sex trade, and that, once embroiled, they were victims of abuse. Many of the articles in *The Guardian* cited social, as well as personal factors in women's turn to prostitution, however they were distinguished from the claim that *prostitution is a social problem* by their assumption that sex workers lacked free will, their emphasis on the violence in the sex industry, and their fatalism. For example, an article from 2003 conveyed the claim

that prostitution constitutes the victimization of women in its headline: “Crack turns vice girls into slaves to sex: Pimps make more profits as prostitutes work around the clock to fund their expensive drug habit” (G2003/240). One article from 2006 described prostitution as “an expression of men’s power over women” (G2006/280). Another headline from 2007, commenting on the legal brothels in Nevada, described prostitution as essentially sexual assault, quoting a sex worker in its headline: “‘It’s like you sign a contract to be raped’” (G2007/297); a testimonial from the same year was similarly entitled, “‘You’re consenting to being raped for money’” (G2007/301). Another 2007 article pronounced that prostitution was abuse and not to be tolerated, with a headline arguing that prostitution was “Not a service like any other” (G2007/298).

While the claim that prostitution constitutes the victimization of women was observed to be the dominant one in *The Guardian*, the second-most common claim appears to contradict it. The competing claim in *The Guardian* was that prostitution is a service like any other: *a neutral business transaction*. The total number of articles that presented prostitution as neutral was 32, or 18 percent of articles. Examples included an article in which a reporter worked undercover as a receptionist in a massage parlour and concluded that life in prostitution was as mundane as other lines of work, and that she confronted “banality more than horror” (G2001/195). Another article with this claim, about Nevada’s legal brothels, was featured in the Business section of *The Guardian Observer* as part of an investigation of how the recession has affected various businesses, including “the world’s oldest profession” (G2009/346). Another debated the financial benefits of economists’ suggestion that the government impose “a tax on prostitution,”

reasoning that “the gross earnings of...sex workers are estimated to be pounds 770m” (G2002/203). This claim conceptualized prostitution in business terms.

Two claims were tied for the third-most common Truth claim evinced in *The Guardian*. Seven percent, or 12 articles, argued that prostitution is *illicit/kinky fun*. For example, this claim was expressed throughout a first-person article by Sebastian Horsley, an artist known for his decadent lifestyle. “The great thing about sex with whores,” wrote Horsley, “is the excitement and variety...there is a charm about the forbidden that makes it desirable” (G2004/247).

There were also 12 articles that presented prostitution as a matter of *public nuisance*. This claim was conveyed, for example, in an investigative report that focused on the crime associated with prostitution in the town of Sheffield. The article presumed that prostitution is a problem to be eradicated, and featured the travails of the police who were clamping down on local prostitution. Prostitution is the “bane of [Superintendent] Hicks’ life,” the article reported (G2000/177). Another example of the *public nuisance* claim can be found a 2005 article allegedly reporting on the “mixed response” to a proposed official red light zone. Although it presents some concerns about sex workers’ safety, it effectively emphasizes the views of dissenters to the red light zone who are opposed to prostitution’s potential disruption to their community. The article ultimately conveyed the message that prostitution is *a public nuisance* by presenting a series of similar perspectives from local residents, such as “Rachel Penny, of the Atowash handcar wash,” who “said, ‘we don’t want prostitutes down here.’” It also offered statistics to support the dissenters’ views, such as a study showing that 91% of respondents said the red light zone “should be away from residential zones” (G2005/266).

The claim that prostitution is *a social problem caused by poverty, drug addiction or childhood abuse* was observed in seven, or four percent of articles in *The Guardian*. Another seven, or four percent of articles, presented prostitution as *difficult to generalize about*. One such article described the difficulty in obtaining accurate statistics about trafficking in the U.K. (G2009/331)

In total, the number of articles presenting prostitution as *biologically inevitable* was five, or three percent, however, as noted, this claim was also widely evident as a presupposition of many articles, and even appeared in headlines (for example, G2000/177) even if it was not often evinced as a main claim. This claim was expressed, for example, in the closing statements of an op-ed written by a Reform Rabbi that advocated an end to moral and criminal judgments of prostitution. The Rabbi argued that prostitution's timeless existence proved that "male urges" and women's prostitution were a fundamental, (if weak) part of human nature. "With so little changing in human nature over the millennia," he wrote, "the government is probably right not to eradicate prostitution, but instead try to ensure it is as safe and crime free as possible" (G2006/293). In another op-ed that also advocated for decriminalization, a political advisor claimed that although "sex workers lead difficult and dangerous lives...the uncomfortable reality is that these pitiful girls and women cater to an eternal consumer demand" (G2006/292).

The remaining claims were found to occur with lower frequencies. The claim that prostitution is *empowering to women* was observed in five, or three percent of articles. The argument that it is *immoral* was found in 2 percent of articles. Three, or two percent of articles featured the main claim that prostitution is *a public health risk*. The remaining

articles were classified as *Other*, and were spread across several claims. The claim that prostitution is *sordid/squalid* was found in one *Guardian* article. One article also presented prostitution primarily as *humiliating for a public figure* caught using sex workers. One, notably, claimed that prostitution is *a positive addition to the community*. None of the selected *Guardian* articles claimed that prostitution was primarily a matter of *men's exploitation*.

Chapter Four outlined the divergent political orientations of *The Daily Mail* (a right-leaning tabloid) and *Guardian* (a left-leaning quality paper). Adding the analyses of the two newspapers together allows for a comparison of claims, as well as a more collective view of the Truth claims about prostitution conveyed in the British news milieu. The claims can, in turn, be assessed for their validity.

Table 5.3 reflects the total numbers and percentages of the claims across both newspapers for the time period of 2000-2009.

Table 5.3. Truth claims of news media: prostitution as a phenomenon in the sample of *The Daily Mail* and *Guardian*, 2000-2009

Rank	Claim that prostitution is:	Daily Mail #	Daily Mail %	Guardian #	Guardian %	Total #	Total %:
1	A1. Exploitation/victimization of women	39	23%	82	47%	121	35%
2	A.2. A business transaction, neutral	18	11%	32	18%	50	15%
3	A.6. Immoral	31	19%	4	2%	35	10%
4	A.5. Illicit fun, kinky	20	12%	13	7%	33	10%
5	A.8. A public nuisance	17	10%	12	7%	29	9%
6	A.10. A social problem rooted in drugs, poverty and/or	12	7%	7	4%	19	6%

	abuse						
7	A.9. Sordid, squalid	14	8%	1	1%	15	4%
8	A.3. Empowering to women	5	3%	5	3%	10	3%
9	A.11. Difficult to generalize about	1	1%	7	4%	8	2%
10	A.4. Biologically inevitable	2	1%	5	3%	7	2%
11	Other	8	5%	7	4%	15	4%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>100%</b>

In total, across both newspapers, the most common claim was that prostitution constituted *the exploitation or victimization of women*; 121 out of 342, or 35 percent of articles expressed this as their major claim. The second most common claim was that prostitution is *a neutral business transaction*. The total number of articles that presented prostitution as neutral was 50, or 15 percent. The third most common claim was that prostitution is *immoral*. In total, 35 articles, or ten percent, presented prostitution as *immoral*. The fourth most common claim was that prostitution is *illicit fun*. In total, the number of articles presenting prostitution as *illicit fun* was 33, or ten percent. Prostitution was presented primarily as *a public nuisance* in 29, or nine percent of articles, and as *a social problem* in 19, or six percent of articles. The remaining claims about the nature of prostitution were ranked in the following order of occurrence: *sordid/squalid* in 15, or four percent of articles; *empowering to women* in ten, or three percent of articles; *difficult to generalize about* in eight, or two percent of articles; and *biologically inevitable* in seven, or two percent of articles. The remaining claims occurred in less than two percent of articles (cumulatively, 15 or 14 percent of articles).



After the statistical limitations of the sample size were taken into consideration, two significant differences in the prevalence of certain discourses in the two newspapers were noted; this disparity may be attributable to the different class positions of the newspapers, and the difference in the cultural, educational and economic capital of their readers.

The first difference was the predominance of the argument that prostitution is a matter of *women's exploitation or victimization* in *The Guardian*, seen in 24 percent more articles than in *The Daily Mail*. It was observed that *The Guardian* had a feminist commentator, Julie Bindel, who has contributed to research projects on prostitution (i.e. Eaves), has supported abolitionist policy action on prostitution, and dedicated several editorials specifically to the issue. Bindel and other columnists' allegiance to abolitionist Labour policies on prostitution likely reflects the traditionally leftist editorial stance and readership of *The Guardian*.

The second most common claim at *The Guardian* was that prostitution can be approached as *a neutral business transaction*. This claim was also seen in seven percent more articles in *The Guardian* than in *The Daily Mail*. This claim is made by pro-sex work and third wave feminists that challenges traditional feminist claims, as outlined in Chapter Three, by strategically attempting to reduce the stigma still associated with prostitution. Its relatively frequent appearance in *The Guardian* may point to a diversity of feminist views presented in *The Guardian*, in keeping with the preferences of its educated, critical readership. The sampled articles included editorial guest spots by members of The English Collective of Prostitutes, as well as pro-sex work researchers such as Jo Doezema and Hillary Kinnell (G2000/181). Moreover, in 2004, before its

recent turn to policies that criminalize prostitution, the Labour Home Secretary introduced plans for “tolerance zones” and regulated brothels (Casciani, par. 14), with some test sites in Manchester, Bolton, Glasgow and Edinburgh (G2004/74). While these options were later rejected, the framing by the Labour party of prostitution as an industry that could be regulated may have been reflected in the left-leaning media such as *The Guardian* newspaper.

While *The Daily Mail* also had a relatively large number of articles with the claim that prostitution was the victimization of women, its articles were spread across other categories, namely that prostitution was *immoral*, *kinky* and *sordid*.

The second major difference between the two newspapers was the predominance of the argument that prostitution is *immoral* in *The Daily Mail*, observed in 19, or 17 percent more articles than in *The Guardian*, which only presented this as a major claim in two articles. The moralizing emphasis of *The Daily Mail* is in keeping with its genre of tabloid-style journalism, which allows for more sensational claims than the stance of neutrality or criticism typically attempted by “quality” papers like *The Guardian*, which appeals to a more educated readership.

The moral discourses evident in *The Daily Mail* may reflect the paper’s more traditional and less critical readership, but some competing claims in the newspaper undermine its moral discourses and evince (middle) class-based imperatives of public and behavioural propriety. The claims of immorality in *The Daily Mail* may fit the British sociologist/criminologist Jock Young’s (1971) description of the media’s creation of “moral panics” as way to amplify deviance in the service of right wing values, i.e. police or public standards concerns. *The Daily Mail* had a greater distribution of articles with

the claims that prostitution is *kinky fun* (five percent more than in *The Guardian*) a *public nuisance* (three percent more) and *sordid/squalid* (seen in seven percent more articles). These claims undermine its assertions that prostitution is immoral. The claim that prostitution is fun, rather than wrong, undermines morality claims in a straightforward way, while the claim that prostitution is a matter of public nuisance, reveals other public standards concerns and perhaps, imperatives of policing, as identified by Young. The claim that prostitution is seedy applied judgments of disgust to discussions of prostitution, but also often conveyed class-based prejudices against prostitution. The “squalidness” of lower class prostitution was often a focus of such articles. Interestingly, articles evincing this claim in *The Daily Mail* also commonly lambasted high-class men involved in scandalous associations with prostitutes, such as Lord Lambdon, a Tory Cabinet Minister Lord Lambdon whose relationship with a sex worker in the 1970s ended his career, or Lord Archer, another Tory Peer who was found to have obstructed justice after his use of prostitutes was revealed. In short, *The Daily Mail*’s moral outrage also conveyed certain middle-class positions of public and sexual propriety.

In general, the economic, cultural, political and class-based capital of the papers made certain forms of discourse possible in the news articles.

Objectivity and validity are communicative ideals in journalism; unfounded statements violate Truth claims. While many of the claims observed in the articles were subjective and incomparable with empirical data, some of the dominant claims drew on empirical research.

Articles drew on valid research findings to different extents. Articles with the claim that prostitution constitutes *the victimization of women* drew, to different extents,

on the findings of many empirical studies. Chapter Two (“Empirical Studies”) summarizes the various studies on the conditions of prostitution. It notes the disproportionate levels of rape, and murder in sex work, but particularly facing street-based sex workers (Brooks Gordon, p. 185). However, Chapter Two also notes that research on sex work is beset by methodological challenges, and that there is a variety of experiences among sex workers, depending on whether they work in indoor or outdoor markets.<sup>xxxiv</sup> TAMPEP (2008) has estimated that only 28% of sex workers in Northern European countries work on the streets (“Sex Work in Europe,” 2009, p. 32), and Sanders (2005) has observed that the risk of violence is higher for street-working women than women working in indoor markets (p. 42). But overall, research suggests that women who work in the sex trade face higher rates of violence and murder, compared to women who do not. Articles with the claim that prostitution is *a neutral business transaction* also (to different extents) drew on some ethnographic research and subjective evidence from sources.

The prevalence of certain claims about prostitution during certain years may also be linked to concurrent events, however their disproportionately high occurrence may have the result of suggesting that the truths are more generally applicable than is warranted. In his selective study of British cultural notions of prostitution, Matthews (2008) critiques what he terms the “myths” surrounding the sex industry, but qualifies this, citing Roland Barthes’ point that cultural myths, rather than being complete fabrications of reality, are exaggerations or partial accounts. Though they usually have a “rational core,” myths reduce “the richness of reality” by “substituting half-truths, platitudes and slogans for explanations” (p. 21). Certain timely events also shaped the

Truth claims of the articles; in particular, the claims that prostitution constitutes the victimization of women or is, conversely, a neutral phenomenon drew on these events. An analysis of the above results, (that is, the frequency of claims,) on a year-by-year basis reveals some of the timely issues, crime events, and public and policy debates that informed, and were in turn informed by, media coverage of prostitution.

Between the years 2000 and 2005, the prevalence of certain claims is fairly consistent, with the claims that prostitution is *neutral*, *exploitive*, *a public nuisance*, *immoral* or *illicit fun* showing minor statistical changes.<sup>xxxv</sup> Significant statistical changes begin in the year 2006. The most frequent claim of 2006 was that prostitution *is the exploitation of victimization of women*, but this claim was now the predominant one in 41 percent of articles, followed by the claim (seen little before this point,) that it is *a social problem rooted in poverty, drug addiction or abuse*; this emergent claim was seen in 15 percent of articles. In 2007, the claim that prostitution victimized women was even more pronounced, observed in 51 percent of articles, followed by the claim that it was *a neutral business transaction*, seen in 17 percent of the sampled articles. In the year 2008, the prevalence of the claim that prostitution victimized women reached its peak, when it was evident in 67 percent of articles, followed by the argument that it was neutral, seen in 18 percent of articles. In 2009, the claim that prostitution victimized women declined in prevalence, seen in 33 percent of articles, followed by the claim that it was a neutral phenomenon, seen in 18 percent of articles.

The claims observed in the analysis during these years drew on concurrent events. After 2006, the increase in media claims of prostitution as a matter of *exploitation and victimization* was likely informed by the 2006 murders in Ipswich, as well as the public's

growing awareness of trafficking (discussed in the introductory chapter of this thesis). In 2006, the ongoing danger facing street prostitutes was made particularly vivid to the general public when the bodies of five women, all sex workers, were discovered near Ipswich, in Suffolk. This event was observed in much coverage in the selected articles during the years 2006 to 2008.<sup>xxxvi</sup> Examples of Ipswich-influenced claims are evident in many articles in *The Guardian*. For example, one 2008 article bears the headline, “Why do so many men still think the sex trade is fine?: The trial of Steve Wright confirms how dangerous prostitution is but legalising it would do nothing to aid the plight of women involved” (G2008/330). The drug addictions and poverty of the women were also emphasized in articles, accounting for the emergence of the little-before-seen claim that prostitution was *a social problem rooted in addiction, poverty and/or abuse*. In the years following Ipswich, several Home Office documents (also described in the Introduction,) proposing a renewed strategy to crack down on clients and trafficking were also published, garnering further media commentary.

Interestingly, the competing claim that prostitution is *a neutral business transaction* also maintained a significant stronghold during the years following Ipswich. There are several factors that might have caused a turn to the claim that prostitution is *a neutral business transaction*, though they remain speculative. The first may be a backlash against the widespread *victimization* claims that followed Ipswich. Another factor might be the general rise of third wave and post feminist outlooks and pop culture (outlined in Chapter Three). For example, the success of blogger Belle de Jour, whose memoirs were published in a lucrative literary deal and eventually broadcast as the popular British

television series, “Secret Diary of a Call Girl,” starring Billie Piper, inspired several reporters to consider prostitution as a legitimate option for women.

But more commonly in the years 2006-2009, as indicated by the statistics, articles were vitriolic in critiquing the idea of prostitution as neutral, harmless and a means to a better life. For example, the Belle de Jour phenomenon inspired both *The Daily Mail* and *The Guardian* to respond with several critical articles. Headlines included: “For the sad truth about whores, don’t ogle Billie, go to Peterborough,” (DM2007/127); “The squalid truth about call girl lit” (DM2007/133); and “Sorry Billie, but prostitution is not about champagne and silk negligees: The screen adaptation of *The Secret Diary of a Call Girl* legitimizes a trade that in reality is utterly brutal and misogynistic” (G2007/296). One 2007 *Daily Mail* article, headlined, “We fought for decades to end sexual oppression. So why do so many modern women think being a sex object is cool?” offered a barrage of grim statistics. The article described sex workers’ “enslavement,” and “sad, degrading and depressing” existence. Further, it reported that

[o]f 115 prostitutes questioned in one study, 81 per cent had experienced some sort of violence, half had been slapped, punched or kicked, 37 per cent had been robbed, 28 per cent had suffered attempted rape and 22 per cent had actually been raped. In London, prostitutes are 12 times more likely to be killed than ordinary women (DM2007/126).

Finally, the article reported that female sex workers in the U.K. have mortality rates six times higher than the general population, the highest for any group of women.

The articles depicting prostitution as resulting in women’s victimization may have drawn on valid evidence, but the prevalence of this claim may be a distortion of the

violence that exists in the sex trade in general, because it focuses on the conditions of street prostitution over more common forms. The figures cited in the above article are consistent with much academic and policy research into prostitution, with one Home Office funded Crime Reduction Programme study, for example, finding even higher rates of rape (50%) among a sample of U.K. prostitutes in 2004 (Matthews, 2008, p. 46).

However, some researchers have noted that sampling is a problem in studies of prostitution (Wellings et al., 1994, p. 120), and that street prostitution may be overrepresented (Matthews, 1997).

The next part of the analysis of Truth claims made by the newspapers is a documentation of the particular characterizations of sex workers. The following table (5.4) presents the frequency (mentions) of certain characterizations of sex workers in the *Daily Mail* and *Guardian* newspapers.

Table 5.4. Truth claims of news media: characterizations of sex workers in the sample of *The Daily Mail* and *Guardian*, 2000-2009

Rank	Characterization	Daily Mail #	Daily Mail %	Guardian #	Guardian %	Total #	Total %
1	By emotional state	184	22%	147	20%	331	21%
2	As impoverished/homeless	79	9%	63	9%	142	9%
3	As attractive	102	12%	30	4%	132	8%
4	As 20-29 years old	45	5.5%	39	5.5%	84	5%
5	As low class	45	5.5%	29	4%	74	5%
6	As drug addicts (no specifics)	25	3%	40	6%	65	4%
7	As heroin addicts	20	2%	43	6%	63	4%
8	As middle class	37	5%	24	3%	61	4%
9	As 30-39 years old	29	4%	27	4%	56	3%
10	As having children	24	3%	22	3%	46	3%
11	As working class	18	2%	26	3.5%	44	3%
12	As 17-19 years old	18	2%	24	3%	42	3%
13	As crack addicts	11	1%	30	4%	41	3%



14	As having mental illness	10	1%	31	4%	41	3%
15	As being in a relationship	22	3%	18	2.5%	40	3%
16	As unattractive	20	2.5%	19	2.5%	39	2.5%
17	As a beloved daughter	20	2.5%	19	3%	39	2.5%
18	As 10-16 years old	18	2%	16	2%	34	2%
19	As “young”	20	2.5%	14	2%	34	2%
20	As high class	20	2.5%	12	2%	32	2%
21	Other	64	8%	52	7%	116	7%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>831</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>725</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,556</b>	<b>100%</b>

In the selected articles from the *Daily Mail* and *Guardian newspapers*, 1,556 characterizations were recorded that conformed to the predicted categories.

The most common characterizations of sex workers were based on their emotional state, though the emotion described varied, and no discernable patterns were noted. In total, there were 331 references to emotions – 21 percent of all characterizations. Some sex workers were characterized as being ashamed or regretful of their work. Other articles characterized a sex worker as pragmatic, “resilient” or “determined” (G2005/276). Still others depicted sex workers as cold-hearted about their choice of work. An article that described the sex worker-turned international madam Margaret MacDonald characterized her as “ambitious” and “a hard woman” (DM2005/95).

The second most common characterization of sex workers was that they were impoverished or homeless. There were 142 characterizations of sex workers belonging to the impoverished or homeless class (nine percent of all characterizations). An example of a sex worker’s characterization as a member of the impoverished classes is a phrase such as, “desperate street prostitute” (DM2009/164).

The attractiveness of sex workers was the third most common characterization. Eight percent of characterizations depicted sex workers as attractive (132 mentions). *The*

*Daily Mail* reprinted the aforementioned debauched Marquess' descriptions of prostitutes. Among other phrases, the article describes prostitutes as "girls...of the highest quality," a "brunette beauty" and a "Juno-esque blonde" (DM2001/32).

The fourth and fifth most common characterizations were by age and again, by class. Five percent of characterizations, (84 mentions,) were of sex workers being in their twenties. Five percent (74 mentions) were also of sex workers as being members of the lower classes.

Four percent of characterizations were of sex workers being drug addicts (65 mentions) with no specifics provided, and four percent were of them being heroin addicts (63 mentions). If considered more generally however, the characterization of addiction was very common, with 205 mentions – or 13 percent of all characterizations – referring to some form of substance abuse. Three percent (41) mentions were of crack cocaine abuse, two percent (26) mentions were of sex workers being alcoholic. There were also ten (less than one percent) characterizations of other addictions, e.g. to money, or "the buzz of the prostitution lifestyle" (DM2004/79). An example of a characterization of addiction leading to prostitution (in this case, heroin abuse) can be observed in a reporter's statement that, "Bettles [a sex worker] had a long-established heroin habit," followed by the observation of a local person that, "the girls who really need the smack will do anything for a fiver," identified in the same article (G2002/226).

The remaining characterizations occurred in four percent or less of characterizations. Four percent of all characterizations described sex workers as members of the middle class (61 mentions). The following characterizations each occurred in three percent of characterizations: that sex workers were in their thirties (56 mentions); that

they were mothers (46 characterizations); that they were from the working class (44 mentions); that they were between 17 and 19 years old (42 mentions); that they suffered from mental illness (41 mentions); that they were in a relationship (40 mentions). These characterizations were closely followed, in two point five percent of all cases, by 39 characterizations each of sex workers as unattractive or as someone's "beloved daughter."<sup>xxxvii</sup> Finally, two percent of all characterizations were of sex workers' youth (34 references); of being members of the higher-class strata (32 mentions); and of being between the ages of 10-16 (32 mentions). The rest of the characterizations, appearing less than two percent of the time, were characterized as *Other*.

Two differences were observed between the two newspapers, which may correspond to their editorial styles and political orientations. In *The Daily Mail* there was a greater emphasis on sex workers' attractiveness. Characterizations of attractiveness constituted 12 percent of all *Daily Mail* characterizations, compared to four percent in *The Guardian*. The frequency of this characterization may be related to *The Mail's* tabloid style of journalism. While sometimes validated by subjective (source) evidence, characterizations of attractiveness are highly questionable in terms of their relevance to *The Daily Mail's* discourses of prostitution. (Among *The Daily Mail's* main claims about prostitution are that it is immoral or harmful, begging the question of how women's attractiveness can be legitimately linked to her immorality or harm.) *The Guardian* characterized sex workers more frequently as addicts of some kind, in 17.5<sup>xxxviii</sup> percent of characterizations compared to *The Daily Mail's* nine percent. This characterization may be connected to *The Guardian's* predominant, conventionally feminist claim that sex workers are victims (of addiction, among other things).

The more objective characterizations can be assessed for whether they drew on valid evidence. The most common characterizations in the newspapers (that were comparable to empirical research) were that sex workers belonged to the impoverished or low classes, were between the ages of 20 and 29, and were addicts. The most common characterizations of sex workers in *The Daily Mail* and *Guardian* are relatively consistent with demographic realities revealed by empirical research.

The characterization of sex workers as impoverished draws on empirical research. Although information about the class status of sex workers is difficult for researchers to collect and quantify, most researchers believe that women involved in sex work are at higher risk of poverty than average. The high characterization of sex workers as impoverished may also be associated with the high number of articles about the victims of Ipswich, many of whom were homeless, as well as articles that debated the question of red light tolerance zones in the mid-2000s and thus placed an emphasis on street prostitution.

The common representation of sex workers as being mostly in their twenties (and otherwise, mainly in their thirties) draws on empirical data. As noted in Chapter Two, Ward et al. (2004) found that, of 552 women working in indoor and outdoor markets, the median age was 26, with 5 percent having started at 16 or younger, 12 percent having started between the ages of 17 and 19, 64 percent between 20 and 29, and 19 percent at 30 or older. O'Neill, Sanders and Pitcher (2009) found a slightly older mean age (of 33.5) among women working in indoor markets.

Finally, the widespread depiction of addiction in the media characterizations is consistent with much research. As noted in Chapter Two, much of the research collected

over the last twenty years cites drug dependence as a major factor in entry into sex work, particularly street-based sex work (Phoenix 1999; McKegany and Barnard 1996; May and Hunter 2006; O'Neill et al., 2009).

The analysis of Truth claims made by the newspapers also considered the characterizations of clients. The following table (5.5) presents the frequency (mentions) of different characterizations of clients in the *Daily Mail* and *Guardian* newspapers.

Table 5.5. Truth claims of news media: characterizations of clients in the sample of *The Daily Mail* and *Guardian*, 2000-2009

Rank	Characterization	Daily Mail #	Daily Mail %	Guardian #	Guardian %	Total #	Total %
1	By emotional state	146	22%	55	17%	201	20%
2	By occupation	120	18%	64	19%	184	18%
3	As high class	55	8%	26	8%	81	8%
4	As having mental illness	43	6.5%	22	7%	65	6.5%
5	As being married	38	6%	22	7%	60	6%
6	As middle class	36	5%	22	7%	58	6%
7	As unattractive	29	4.5%	17	5%	46	5%
8	As working class	29	4.5%	16	5%	45	5%
9	As 40-50 years old	23	3.5%	12	4%	35	3.5%
10	As 30-40 years old	21	3%	11	3%	32	3%
11	As low class	20	3%	11	3%	31	3%
12	As 50+ years old	22	3%	8	2%	30	3%
13	As attractive	18	3%	10	3%	28	3%
14	As 20-29 years old	15	2%	8	2%	23	2%
15	As having children	16	2%	3	1%	19	2%
16	Other	39	6%	24	7%	63	6%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>670</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>331</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,001</b>	<b>100%</b>

In the selected articles from the *Daily Mail* and *Guardian* newspapers, clients, like sex workers, were characterized by their emotions, with varying portrayals of those emotions; in total, the emotional state of clients comprised 20 percent (or 201) of all characterizations. Some clients were characterized as sadistic towards sex workers,

particularly in profiles of serial killers of sex workers. A profile of accused murderer George Johnstone quotes his wife's opinion of him as an "angry bully" who thought "he had a right to do anything to women in the sex industry" (G2005/276). Other articles characterized clients' emotions as needy or in love with a sex worker, as in the article profiling the blogger "Belle de Jour." Quoting Belle de Jour, this article describes clients as "lonely" and "wanting to cuddle," wanting a "girlfriend experience," "timid" and guilty-feeling (DM2005/94).

The second most common characterization of clients was according to their occupation (184 mentions). A wide variety of occupations were cited, from plumbers (DM2009/162) to Lords and Members of Parliament (DM2004/75).

The third most common characterization was of a client being a member of a high class (81 mentions, or 8 percent of mentioned characterizations). An example of a characterization of a client as belonging to the upper classes is exemplified by an article in *The Daily Mail*, profiling a sex worker whose clients included a "Kuwaiti prince," a "millionaire publicist," and a "powerful businessman" (DM2004/82).

Six point five percent of characterizations (65 in total) were claims that a client had a mental illness, often with violent tendencies. For example, a profile of the "Suffolk strangler" contains several mentions of his mentally unbalanced state, describing him as a "psychopath" (DM2008/148).

Six percent of characterizations portrayed clients as middle class (58 mentions), often via statements alluding to their occupation as civil servants, for example (G2002/214). Six percent of characterizations (60) mentioned clients being married.

Other characterizations occurred at a rate of five percent or less. Clients were described as unattractive in five percent (46) of characterizations. Five percent of characterizations (45) also depicted them as being from the working class. Three point five percent of characterizations were of clients being in their forties (35 mentions). Three percent of characterizations were that clients were: in their thirties (32 mentions); from the low class (31 mentions); over 50 years old (30 mentions); or attractive (28 mentions). Other characterizations occurred at a rate of three percent or less. They were characterizations of clients as being in their twenties (23 mentions) or as fathers (19 mentions). There were 36 total mentions of clients being addicts, but these were subdivided by 13 characterizations of alcoholism, five of cannabis addiction, four of heroin, 11 of crack, three of general, unspecified drug addiction, and two of sex addiction. The remaining characterizations were grouped under *Other*.

No major statistical differences were noted between characterizations of clients in *The Daily Mail* and *Guardian* newspapers, other than clients' slightly more frequent (five percent) characterization by emotion in *The Daily Mail*. More notable was the much higher general degree of characterizations in *The Daily Mail* compared to *The Guardian* – approximately double the number. The reasons for this are speculative. Possibly, *The Guardian's* political support of Labour laws that penalize clients has resulted in fewer sympathetic or humanizing portrayals of them.

In summary, the most common characterizations of clients were that they belonged mainly to the high class, and secondarily, that they were mentally ill with aggressive tendencies. Many articles also depicted clients as married, or as members of

the middle and working classes. These characterizations of clients draw on empirical data with varying degrees of validity.

Characterizations of clients as being high-class status are not consistent with empirical research. Sanders' (2008) study of the clients of indoor sex markets found that 86 percent were middle class by U.K. standards (determined by their current employment and/or university-level education); Sanders notes that these percentages are congruent with other studies of indoor sex market customers. Brooks Gordon's 2006 study of 500 men stopped for street sex offenses showed that 23 percent were men in skilled manual labour jobs. The second occupational class/socio-economic group was professional, including men in financial and traditional professions (teachers, dentists etc.). The remaining were mainly clerical workers or unskilled labourers. It is possible to speculate that certain factors related to the class capital of *The Daily Mail* influenced its inordinate portrayal of high-class clients. *The Daily Mail*'s history as a paper that represents the working class may inform its depiction of prostitution as a phenomenon of other classes, particularly the reviled gentry class.<sup>xxxix</sup> As noted, many of its claims that prostitution is *immoral* or *seedy* featured examples of male members of the upper class as the most perverse purveyors of vice.

The depiction of clients as mentally ill with aggressive tendencies may draw on some valid research. As noted in Chapter Two, there is a lack of systematic data on the nature and frequency of violence committed by clients; studies have variously revealed that clients are commonly the perpetrators of violence, and likewise, that there are few violent clients. A 1999 Scottish study concluded that 81 percent of street-based sex workers had experienced violence from clients, while 48 percent of indoor market sex



workers had experienced violence (Thomas, 2009, p. 141). May et al. (2000) have argued that perpetrators of violence against sex workers include clients, but also boyfriend-pimps. Kinnell (2006) suggests that only a minority of the violence experienced by sex workers is committed by clients. Thomas reports that “violence is perpetrated by a small percentage of clients, however that some “men appear to seek sex workers out as targets” (Thomas, 2009, p. 141). In other words, it is possible that a small number of dangerous clients can have a terrible impact on a vulnerable group of women. Ultimately, the characterization of clients may reflect some of this data.

The characterizations of clients as being married are consistent with empirical data. As noted in Chapter Two, various studies have found that between 66 and 48 percent of clients were married or living with a partner (McKeganey et al., 1994; Groom and Nandwani, 2006; Sanders, 2008; Eaves, 2010).

The characterizations of sex workers and clients are clearly different. Compared to the large number of sex workers characterized as impoverished, there were only eight mentions of clients belonging to the impoverished or homeless class. Addiction was also a much less common characterization of clients than of sex workers. The most common characterizations of sex workers were that they belonged to the impoverished or low classes, while the most common class characterization of clients was as members of the high class. The other most common characterizations of sex workers were that they were in their twenties and were addicts, while clients were characterized as mentally ill with aggressive tendencies, and married. Clients were also characterized by their attractiveness to a lesser degree than sex workers, and were more commonly characterized as unattractive. In total, there were 171 claims about sex workers’ general attractiveness

compared to 74 characterizations about clients'. Moreover, only 38 percent of the characterizations broaching attractiveness depicted a client as attractive, whereas sex workers' were characterized as attractive in 77 percent of appraisals of attractiveness. In short, sex workers were often depicted as poor, young, vulnerable due to addiction and attractive, while clients were often depicted as wealthy, mentally ill, in established relationships and, when their attractiveness was mentioned, as unattractive. These characterizations are congruent with the dominant claim in the newspapers that prostitution constitutes the exploitation of vulnerable women by powerful, established violent (and generally unappealing) men.

#### *Sincerity claims: results, examples and analysis*

Sincerity assumes congruence between what is said and what is meant, while metaphor or highly connotative language bring associated meanings to statements. Connotative terms bring indirect associations and undermine the Sincerity of statements. Thus, the analysis looked at the use of certain associative terms, (or "nomenclature,") in the depiction of sex workers and clients. Quantitative counts of the terms for both newspapers are presented here, along with some examples from the articles. There is some interpretation about the associative meanings of the terms, to reveal their emotionally charged social connotations. The prevalence of different terms in the two newspapers is also considered, and the socio-political histories of the papers cited as a reason for the divergences. The framing of sex workers and clients is also analysed in order to discern the news media's Sincerity. Two tables show the degrees to which the particular framings of sex workers and clients occurred, by frequency of mentions. The

connotative associations of many phrases in the articles create these framings; this is demonstrated with examples.

A closer look at the Sincerity of the articles, i.e. the levels of metaphor and associative terms used is necessary to judge whether they truly attempt to communicate facts about prostitution, or whether they are designed to elicit emotional responses.

In order to assess the Sincerity claims and strategies of the media, the analysis looked at the use of nomenclature in the depiction of sex workers; the following table (5.6) presents the result of the count.

Table 5.6. Sincerity of news media: nomenclature used for sex workers in the sample of *The Daily Mail* and *Guardian*, 2000-2009

Rank	Term	Daily Mail # of Mentions	Daily Mail %	Guard. # of Mentions	Guard. %	Total Mentions	Total % Use of Term
1	Prostitute(s)	859	60%	1,035	65%	1,894	62%
2	Sex (trade) worker(s)	23	2%	222	14%	245	8%
3	Girl(s)	153	11%	83	5%	236	8%
4	Call girl(s)	112	8%	75	5%	187	6%
5	Whore(s)	36	3%	37	2%	73	2.5%
6	Hooker(s)	39	2%	18	1%	57	2%
7	Escort(s)	34	2%	19	1%	53	2%
8	Vice girl(s)	42	3%	5	1%	47	2%
11	Other	130	9%	93	6%	223	7.5%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,428</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,587</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>3,015</b>	<b>100%</b>

In both *The Daily Mail* and *The Guardian*, the most common term used to describe women involved in prostitution was *prostitutes*. The use of the term *prostitute* constituted 62 percent of all references, with 1,894 mentions in total. *The Guardian* used this term to a slightly higher degree than *The Daily Mail*: the analysis identified 1,035 uses of the term *prostitute* in *The Guardian* (65 percent of its total references), while *The Daily Mail*, used the term 859 times (60 percent of its total references). The second most

commonly used term was *sex worker* (considered, in this analysis to be interchangeable with *sex trade worker*,) with 245 mentions noted, (eight percent of all references). There was a large difference between the two newspapers' rate of use of the terms *sex worker/sex trade worker*. While only 23 uses were noted for *The Daily Mail* (two percent of all references), 222 uses (14 percent) were counted in *The Guardian*. The third most common term used to reference sex workers was *girl* (noted in articles only when it referred to women of legal age), which was used 236 times, or in eight percent of references to women in the sex trade. Again, there was a fairly substantial differential in the use of the term *girl* between the two newspapers, with 153 occurrences of the term *girl* (11 percent) noted in *The Daily Mail* versus 83 (five percent) in *The Guardian*. The fourth most common term used to refer to women in the sex trade was *call girl*; 187 uses of this term were observed, (six percent of all references to women in the sex trade).

*The Daily Mail* used this term slightly more than *The Guardian*, with 112 (8 percent) versus 75 uses (5 percent) of the term *call girl* used by the papers, respectively. The other terms used to refer to women in the sex trade occurred with much lower frequency. They were, in order of occurrence: *whore*, with 73 uses, (two point five percent of all references); *hooker*, with 57 uses (two percent of all references); *escort*, 53 uses (two percent of all references); and *vice girl*, with 47 uses (two percent of all references). Seven point five percent of references to women in the sex trade were comprised of other terms. This nomenclature included familiar British pejoratives such as *sex girl* (DM2005/91), *working girl* (DM2009/161), *tart* (DM2005/99, DM2005/104) or *auld slapper* (DM2005/101). Foreign terms were also used in reference to global sex workers, such as the Portuguese term *meninas* (G2003/238). These also included

traditional terms in articles reporting on England's historical sex trade, such as *courtesan*, *consort* (DM2008/143), *Winchester geese* (DM2003/56), *strumpet*, *tupenny upright* (DM2009/169), *grandes horizontales* (DM2003/65), *harlot* or *mistress* (DM2009/165).

The term streetwalker was not found to appear with any statistical significance.

Different nomenclature used to describe women in the sex industry have certain cultural associations and emotive effects.

The term *prostitute* remains the most common reference for women who work in the sex industry; while it is not as pejorative as other terms, it may retain more historical stigma than *sex workers*. *The Daily Mail*, which often expressed the claim that prostitution is morally unacceptable, rarely used the term *sex worker*, which implies that sex work is legitimate choice. One particular writer in *The Daily Mail* even addressed this strategy to resist the legitimating of sex work through nomenclature. "Prostitutes are sanitised as 'sex workers' by a society which thinks there is more shame in stigmatizing prostitutes than in paying for sex" (DM2006/108). *The Daily Mail*, arguably, continues to use the term *prostitute* to preserve the moral stigma attached to prostitution. In the previous section, the moral, versus political, cultural and class interests of *The Daily Mail* were questioned. Thus it might be more accurate to say that, *The Daily Mail*, arguably uses the term prostitute to preserve the social deviance attached to prostitution.

Nevertheless, compared to other terms, *prostitute* and *sex worker* are the least pejorative, and some pro-sex workers groups, such as The English Collective of Prostitutes accept the term *prostitute*. Both terms are most commonly used to describe street-based sex workers, as well as victims of violence or murder. Articles sampled from both papers that expressed the claim that prostitution is a matter of women's

victimization used the term *prostitute* 72 percent of the time and *sex worker* 12 percent of the time, compared to the total average use of these terms 62 and 8 percent of the time, respectively. *The Guardian* often used the terms interchangeably, in headlines such as, “The word on the streets: Official statistics show that 60 prostitutes have been murdered in the last 10 years. A controversial new self-help guide offers advice to sex workers on surviving life in red light districts” (G2005/267). *The Guardian*’s critical, feminist and left-leaning affective organization may allow for both terms to be used.

Generally, the use of diminutive or pejorative terms by the media has the effect of diminishing the adult status of women and representing them as sexual objects. The term *girl*, used by journalists to refer to a woman of legal age, diminishes women’s full self-determination. One *Daily Mail* article that reported on the madam Margaret MacDonald, (impishly describing her as “the most successful madam in the modern history of sin,”) repeatedly depicted MacDonald’s employees as “girls.” In this article, the women who were employed by MacDonald were effectively diminished and fetishized by the reporter as the sexual servants of MacDonald, as well as the high-class male clientele. Specifically, the reporter writes, “MacDonald forbade her girls from looking ‘trashy’ and instructed them to look elegant enough to be able to glide through the foyer of a five-star hotel...” (DM2003/61). The term *whore* is mainly pejorative, with some historical associations with the brothels of earlier centuries and a genre of decadent deviance, as seen in the Horsley article in *The Guardian* (G2004/247).

The term *call girl* has connotations of glamorous, high-class prostitution, and women who work out of agencies (i.e. women who are called over to clients’ homes). Many articles depicting so-called high class, professionally run prostitution made

references to “call-girl rings” or “top-end call girl(s)” (G2001/208). *Call girl*, like *escort girl* also has connotations to wealthy business clients. One article, in *The Guardian*, for example quoted novelist J.J. Connolly’s view that going to see “a high-class call girl” with co-workers after completing a “ pounds 3m deal is a “corporate hospitality thing” (G2001/192).

Other, less frequently used terms are also pejorative, diminutive or infused with moral associations. *Vice girl*, for example, has associations with social, legal and moral transgression. *The Daily Mail*, which, as noted, often depicted prostitution as *immoral*, used the term *vice girl* in 42 cases, compared to five in *The Guardian*, which rarely presented prostitution as immoral.

The analysis also looked at the use of nomenclature in the depiction of clients; the following table (5.7) presents the result of the count.

Table 5.7. Sincerity of news media: nomenclature used for clients in the sample of *The Daily Mail* and *Guardian*, 2000-2009

Rank	Term	Daily Mail # of Mentions	Daily Mail %	Guardian # of Mentions	Guardian %	Total Mentions	% Use of Term
1	Client(s)	134	61%	159	43%	293	50%
2	Kerb-crawler(s)	40	18%	73	20%	113	19%
3	Punter(s)	13	6%	94	26%	107	18%
4	Customer(s)	33	15%	40	11%	73	13%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>366</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>586</b>	<b>100%</b>

The most common references to men were as *clients*. In total, there were 293 mentions with a fairly even distribution across newspapers. The use of the term client accounted for 50 percent of all references. *The Daily Mail* used this term substantially more than *The Guardian*, with 61 percent versus 43 percent use respectively. The second

most common term used was *kerb-crawler*, with 113 mentions, accounting for 19 percent of references. *The Guardian*'s use of this term equaled that of *The Daily Mail*'s statistically. The term *punter* was used in 18 percent of cases, or 107 times; this term was used to a much greater degree by *The Guardian* (94 times, or 26 percent of the time) than by *The Daily Mail* (13 times or six percent of the time). Finally, the term *customer* was used as a reference 73 times, or in 13 percent of cases (in 15 percent of references in *The Daily Mail*, and 11 percent of references in *The Guardian*).

The terms used to represent men who bought sexual services also have associative connotations.

Like *prostitute* and *sex worker*, the terms *client* and *customer* have the most neutral, that is, instrumental, or business connotations, however, these terms were also used in non-neutral articles about prostitution. For example, in one article condemning prostitution as intolerable, *The Guardian* referred to men who go to trafficked women as "clients" and spoke hopefully of the "ambitious talk of bringing in the criminalization of the client" (G2007/296).

*The Guardian*, more often than *The Daily Mail*, used more evocative terms to describe clients, both of which are associated with government policy discourses advocating a crackdown on buyers of sex. The term *kerb-crawler*, used widely by the Home Office (The National Archives), is a term with linguistic nuances of deviance (creepy crawlers, or trawlers of sex), social transgression, and public nuisance (loitering at curbs). It was used in an article detailing a Minister's proposed reforms to re-educate convicted kerb-crawlers, entitled, "Men who pay for sex are 'as bad as child abusers.'" (G2006/281). *The Guardian* also used the term *punter* 20 percent more than *The Daily*



*Mail*. Punter, also used by the Home Office (The National Archives) has cultural associations with transgression, aggression and sport. In the U.K., a punter is a football position as well as a better (in gambling), and the term is often used in articles depicting clients as aggressive and lacking concern about the effects of prostitution on sex workers, particularly trafficked women. An example of the use of this term to amplify a reckless sense of entitlement among clients is, “Penalising the punters,” an article about the global trend towards targeting men who buy sex in order to clamp down on violence and trafficking (G2008/315). The uses of these terms may reflect *The Guardian’s* traditionally feminist stance and readership, and advocacy of recent Labour policies.

In general, it was noted that the most common term used to refer to women in the sex industry, *prostitute*, carries more stigma than the most common term used to describe men, *client*.

Besides nomenclature, more general framings of sex workers and clients by the news media were analysed. The use of language in depictions of sex workers and clients was noted, to assess the articles’ Sincerity.

Table 5.8 shows the proportions of particular framings of sex workers, by frequency of mentions.

Table 5.8. Sincerity of news media: framing of sex workers in the sample of *The Daily Mail* and *Guardian*, 2000-2009

Rank	Framing	Daily Mail #	Daily Mail %	Guardian #	Guardian %	Total #	Total %
1	Victim	227	27%	474	47.5%	701	38%
2	Pragmatist	109	13%	155	15.5%	264	14.5%
3	Public Nuisance	59	7%	103	10%	162	9%
4	Criminal	68	8%	67	7%	135	7%
5	Sinner	91	11%	38	4%	129	7%
6	Ambitious entrepreneur	71	9%	55	5.5%	126	7%

7	Seductress	99	12%	25	2.5%	124	7%
8	Public Health Threat	37	4%	47	5%	84	5%
9	Con Artist	51	6%	8	1%	59	3%
10	Other	22	3%	24	2%	46	2.5%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>834</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>996</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,830</b>	<b>100%</b>

The framings of sex workers echo the main claims of the articles, but also demonstrate some countervailing depictions. In the selected articles, the most common framing of sex workers was that they were *victims*. In total, 38 percent of all framings, or 701 out of 1,830 framings, presented sex workers as victims. This framing appeared 20 percent more in *The Guardian* than in *The Daily Mail*. The framing of sex workers as victims echo *The Guardian*'s more frequent assertion that prostitution constitutes the victimization of women. This framing of sex workers as victims was evinced in articles via dramatic terms such as the "plight" of prostitutes (G2004/256, G2008/317, G2008/330), or fatalistic phrases such as "pitifully poverty-stricken and powerless female" (DM2009/161). This framing was supported by descriptions of women being "degraded and violated while selling sex" (G2008/317). It was conveyed in dark pronouncements by editorialists evoking the foul and hopeless lives of sex workers, such as, "The truth [about prostitutes] is that they are usually squalid, demoralised slaves, toiling for violent pimps and kept in line with rations of drugs" (DM2007/133). It was particularly observed in articles that profiled serial killers of sex workers, that emphasized the viciousness of their murders with repeated use of affecting terms such as "mutilated and brutally murdered" (G2005/279), "preying on women" (G2008/314)), "vanished," "dumped in ditches," "unfortunate women" (DM2000/5), and "macabre trophies" (DM2006/121), among many examples. Arguably, the terms may be fitting descriptions of the brutality committed by the murderers, but their repeated use, often

within the same news article, evokes prurient associations of horror that detracts from the communication of direct facts.

The second most common framing was that sex workers were *pragmatists*, observed 264 times, or in 14.5 percent of all framings, and conveyed to approximately the same degree in the newspapers (13 versus 15.5 percent of the time in *The Daily Mail* and *Guardian*, respectively). The pragmatist framing is linked to the second-most popular claim, that prostitution is a neutral business transaction. This framing was also evinced with the consistent use of business-oriented terms such as “sell sex” and “sexual services” (DM2005/92).

The third most common was the framing of sex workers as *public nuisances*. There were 162 framings of sex workers as *public nuisances* noted, accounting for nine percent of all framings, with slightly more public nuisance framings observed in *The Guardian* than in *The Daily Mail* (ten and seven percent of all framings, respectively). This framing described (the public visibility of) sex workers as “intolerable” and “a blight on communities” (DM2005/90).

Four framings emerged in seven percent of cases. One framing was that sex workers were *criminals*; 135, or seven percent of all framings of sex workers were that they were criminals, with even distribution across newspapers (eight and seven percent). Such framings were noted when there was a reference to a sex worker’s “criminal record,” for example, for drugs or immigration offenses (DM2004/79). Criminality was also sometimes associated with the activities surrounding prostitution, such as the calling cards being left by sex workers in phone boxes in central London, described as constitution a “criminal offense” (G2002/222).

Another framing that appeared in seven percent of cases (129 mentions,) was that sex workers were *sinner*s. In total, 129 such framings were observed, noted at a rate of 11 percent in *The Daily Mail* versus in four percent in *The Guardian*. This framing is connected to the claim that prostitution as a phenomenon is immoral; morality claims have been observed as being more pronounced in *The Daily Mail*. Given the high frequency of the claim that prostitution is immoral, this framing suggests that *The Mail* discursively presents women as responsible for the immorality of prostitution. This is a historically conventional view that may be in keeping with *The Daily Mail*'s cultural organization. This framing was evident in profiles of women portrayed as being "ravaged by the wages of sin" (DM2004/79). It was evinced in articles that featured former sex workers confessing that they felt "shame" and "guilt" about prostitution (DM2009/170). It was expressed in descriptions of sex workers as willfully engaging in "harmful behaviour" that brought them "shame and stigma" (DM2006/108), and in assertions that they "suffer from a hollowness" (DM205/100). This common framing often contrasted respectability with immorality, featuring rhetorical questions such as, "why did an intelligent young woman...supposedly with high self-esteem, decide to make a career out of selling her body instead?" The articles then detailed such women's "slide from respectability into a shadowy world of prostitution" (DM2002/46). Many articles followed this line, using terms such as the "sad path" and "downward spiral" (DM2002/37) or "whole sorry saga," to trace the fall of women whose turn to prostitution was a "blight" on their lives that would "have nuns reaching for their rosaries" (DM2001/27).

This framing was closely followed by the framing of sex workers as *ambitious entrepreneurs* (126 mentions). Again, this framing was more pronounced in articles from *The Daily Mail*, where it was seen in nine percent of framings, than *The Guardian*, where it was seen in five point five percent. In another *Daily Mail* article discussing the madam Margaret MacDonald, this characterization was evinced with a headline describing Macdonald as a magnate of the sex industry and equating her with the founder of Microsoft: “The Bill Gates of escort girls” (DM2005/100).

Also found in seven percent of articles was the framing of sex workers as *seductresses* (124 mentions). This framing was more evident in *The Daily Mail*, seen in 12 percent of articles, versus two point five percent of *Guardian* articles. This claim was conveyed with terms associated with sexiness and playfulness. One article, profiling a Labour candidate ejected from the party over her prostitute past in Paris during the 1970s, quoted her mischievous views of her life as a sex worker: “It was very gay...I was a delightful young woman...smiling and fluttering my eyelashes at passing French men...” (DM2005/104). Several articles profiling the “high class call girl” Belle de Jour suggest that she was glamorous by using terms such as “illicit assignations,” “sexual exploits” and “dazzling array of lingerie” to evince her seductive powers (DM2004/1). Another article, about prostitution in Portugal, speculates more mysteriously that the prostitutes in Portugal “lure” other women’s husbands with sexual “witchcraft...making the men squander their money” (G2003/238).

The remaining framings appeared with the following frequency: *public health threat* (89 instances) seen in five percent of cases; *con artist* (59 instances) seen in three percent of cases; and *other*, seen in two point five percent of cases (46 instances).

Sincerity was also assessed in the framings of clients. Table 6.9 shows the proportions of particular framings of clients, by frequency of mentions.

Table 5.9. Sincerity of news media: framing of clients in the sample of *The Daily Mail* and *Guardian*, 2000-2009

Rank	Framing	Daily Mail #	Daily Mail %	Guardian #	Guardian %	Total #	Total %
1	Aggressor	136	27%	356	46%	492	39%
2	Client (in a neutral business exchange)	99	20%	118	15%	217	17%
3	Criminal	53	10%	105	14%	158	12.5%
4	Sinner	52	10%	47	6%	99	8%
5	Public Health Threat	45	9%	37	5%	82	6.5%
6	Public Nuisance	15	3%	66	9%	81	6%
7	Fool/"Easy Mark"	44	9%	23	3%	67	5%
8	Seducer	33	7%	2	0%	35	3%
9	Other	24	5%	12	2%	36	3%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>501</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>766</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,267</b>	<b>100%</b>

The framings of clients were also parallel with the main claims of the articles.

The most common framing of clients was that they were *aggressors*, with 492 such framings observed, comprising 39 percent of framings. This framing occurred substantially more – 356 times, or in 46 percent of cases –in the selected *Guardian* articles, compared to 136 times (27 percent) in *The Daily Mail*. This may be connected to *The Guardian*'s common claim that prostitution constitutes the victimization of women. This framing was expressed in descriptions of clients' aggressive actions. For instance, one article concluded with a dramatic anecdote about one sex worker's run-in with a "punter" who "produced a foot-long knife, stabbed her 43 times, and left her for dead" (G2003/240). In *The Daily Mail*, killers of sex workers were described in terms

associated with evil or notorious brutality, as “odious” and “unrepentant monsters” (DM2002/49) or “Rippers” (DM2002/68, DM2006/125, DM2007/132).

The second most common framing was that clients were *neutral customers* of sex workers; this framing was observed 217 times, in 17 percent of framings. This framing follows the common claim that prostitution is a neutral business transaction, and was evinced in non-judgmental descriptions of the purchase of sexual services. This framing was evident to a higher degree in *The Daily Mail* (20 percent of framings) than *The Guardian* (15 percent). One article portrayed one of Germany’s legal brothels as a well-managed “luxurious...sex facility,” where clients mingled with employees. “A handful of early evening male customers stroll around in fluffy pink bathrobes” while “the women, naked apart from a micro-beach towel, chat and joke,” it reported (G2005/269).

The third most common framing of clients was as *criminals*, noted in 158 cases, or 12 point five percent of framings. There were slightly more such framings in *The Guardian* (14 percent) versus *The Daily Mail* (ten percent), often evoked in articles that debated the criminalization of clients, as in one reporting that soon, “kerbcrawlers...could be jailed” (DM2004/74) In an article from 2007, the claim was expressed with a quote from a judge commenting on the Scottish executive’s legitimate imposition of criminal charges on exploitative “kerb-crawlers”: “Now those who leave their comfortable homes to exploit the vulnerable women on our streets, without a thought or care for the damage they do will rightly face the full force of the law” (DM2007/128).

The fourth most common framing of clients was as *sinners*, noted 99 times, or as eight percent of framings. This framing was found in slightly higher measure in *The Daily Mail* (at a ten percent versus six percent rate in *The Guardian*). The framing of a

client as *a sinner* was effected with terms such as “shame” (DM2004/73). For instance, many of these articles described men, such as Aberdeen football boss Gordon Bennett, as being caught participating in “red light shame” (DM2000/13).

The framing of clients as constituting a *public health threat* was observed in 82 instances or six point five percent of cases. *The Daily Mail* evinced this framing in nine percent of its total framings, while *The Guardian* did so in five percent of cases. It was usually associated with mentions of discarded condoms or sexually transmitted disease. For example, an op-ed by chef Gordon Ramsay in *The Daily Mail* claimed that “venereal disease has gained resistance to the usual antibiotics and is now spreading like wildfire through the prostitution industry,” as well as into the general population, as “men indulging in paid-for unprotected sex then carry home a little souvenir to wife or partner” (DM2001/29).

The framing of clients as constituting a *public nuisance* was observed in 81 instances, or six percent of framings. As in the framings of sex workers, there were significantly more framings of clients as *public nuisances* in *The Guardian* (nine percent of all framings) than in *The Daily Mail* (three percent). Many such articles uncritically described government “crackdowns” and “zero tolerance campaigns” for kerb-crawlers (G2005/263). Others depicted the clients of street sex workers as harassing bystanders. These claimed that “communities are blighted by the anti-social behaviour that kerb crawlers create...accosting members of the public” (DM2007/128).

Finally, there were 67 framings (five percent) of clients as *fools*, (that is, easy marks for predatory sex workers). Nine percent of *Daily Mail* articles expressed this framing, while three percent of *Guardian* articles did. These articles described “naïve,”



“infatuated” and “easily exploited” men who gave money or committed crimes for sex workers (DM2001/30).

Three percent (35) of framings presented clients as *seducers*, (that is, of sex workers); this last framings was only statistically evident in *The Daily Mail*, in seven percent of cases. The remaining framings were grouped as *other*, in three percent of cases.

### *Legitimacy: results, examples and analysis*

Legitimacy is achieved with a balanced selection of sources and “experts.” This aspect of the analysis assessed who was cited as an authoritative source within the article, and whether the articles used balanced sources to represent the issues under discussion. This section explains how authority and balance were defined in the analysis, and the results of a quantitative study of the papers’ Legitimacy.

This project did not identify sources as “experts” by conventional standards. The main object of the study was to measure the broad representation of sex workers and clients, and a very low number of sex workers or clients were explicitly cited as authorities. Exceptions were articles featuring interviews with prostitute union leaders, such as Niki Adams of the English Collective of Prostitutes (G2000/176; G2005/273) or Jenn Clamen of the International Union of Sex Workers (G2002/222); or celebrity sex workers, such as Belle de Jour (G2009/335); or well-known male clients, such as the memoir-penning marquess (DM2001/32), or the artist Sebastian Horsley (G2004/247). More commonly, sex workers were implicitly cited as experts, for example, in investigative reports into the conditions of sex work (e.g. G2001/195), or the Ipswich

murders (DM2006/121). Assuming that, by their very inclusion, all sources are implied to be authoritative voices, all sources appearing in the articles were counted.

Sources were not counted on an individual basis but by type. Sources were counted as “1” when one or more representative from the categorical group was cited as a source, that is, even if more than one individual from that group was cited within an article. This approach was taken so that the use of different types of sources could be directly compared to the number of articles.

The following table (6.10.) presents the different types of sources cited in the articles.

Table 5.10. Legitimacy of news media: source types in sample of *The Daily Mail* and *Guardian*, 2000-2009

<b>Source Type</b>	<b><i>Daily Mail</i> # (167 Articles)</b>	<b><i>Daily Mail</i> %</b>	<b><i>Guardian</i> # (175 Articles)</b>	<b><i>Guardian</i> %</b>	<b>Total # (342 Articles)</b>	<b>% Articles with Source Type Cited</b>
Sex Worker(s)	49	16%	79	15%	128	15%
Government	37	12%	81	15%	118	14%
Advocate	19	6%	94	18%	113	13%
Police	44	14%	53	10%	97	11.5%
Researcher	22	7%	70	13%	92	11%
Politician	13	4%	40	8%	53	6%
Local Citizen	13	4%	39	7%	52	6%
Client(s)	25	8%	19	4%	44	5%
Other	54	17%	28	5%	82	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>524</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>838</b>	<b>N/A</b>

While sex workers are generally marginalized members of society, compared to other groups they were relatively well represented in the news articles. Sex workers were cited in 128 articles, of a total of 342 – the highest appearance of any group by type. In total, sex workers were cited in 15 percent of articles. Government representatives and advocates (for and against prostitution) were cited almost as frequently, in 14 and 13

percent of articles, or 118 and 113 articles respectively. Police were cited in 11 point five percent of, or 97 articles, while researchers were cited in 11 percent of (or 92) articles. Friends or family members of sex workers or clients were sources in seven percent of articles, while politicians and local citizens were cited in six percent of articles. The least cited group in the articles were clients, who were sources in only five percent of articles. Ten percent of articles sourced other groups and individuals, such as church representatives, pimps and brothel owners.

The major differences between the newspapers were that *The Guardian* more commonly sourced professional advocates (in 18 percent of articles, compared to 6 percent of *Daily Mail* articles), and that *The Daily Mail* more commonly used friends or family of sex workers as sources (in 12 percent of articles, compared to four percent of *Guardian* articles). This preference for personal sources is likely linked to *The Daily Mail*'s cultural capital as a "people's" paper, representing the working and middle class, versus educated establishment elite. The higher sourcing of advocates and researchers by *The Guardian* is likely a function of the character of the paper, which appeals to a more highly educated and politically critical readership.

It is acknowledged that sex workers, and particularly clients, are marginal, criminalized citizens in the United Kingdom who may not be willing to identify themselves in the media, and that this may present a challenge to reporters seeking their input. Nevertheless, the project assumed that an ideal communicative text, and responsible news outlet attempting to convey democratic views, would find and include the views of marginalized voices. The voices of clients are poorly represented in the articles. While sex workers were well represented compared to other groups, all types

show a low statistical appearance in articles; ideally, all types of sources would show higher representation. This would enable more representative and balanced perspectives in the articles.

This problem is illuminated further in the second part of the analysis into the articles' Legitimacy, which considered balance. A balanced article consults sources expressing different (or ideally diverse,) views. Balance also considers the representation of sources from different socio-economic groups. The inclusion of the views of sex workers and/or clients, or their friends and families, was usually considered fundamental to balance, unless impossible (i.e. if the subjects of the article were incarcerated, or if reporting was limited to court transcripts). As noted in the preceding chapter, the representation of marginal and dissenting voices is crucial to a democratic public sphere.

Table 5.11 presents the percentage of articles that used balanced sources.

Table 5.11. Legitimacy of news media: balanced sources in sample of *The Daily Mail* and *Guardian*, 2000-2009

	<i>The Daily Mail</i>	<i>The Guardian</i>
Total Articles	167	175
N/A Articles	5	5
Total Applicable Articles	162	170
Balanced Sources	41	73
<b>Percent balanced</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>42%</b>

Among *The Daily Mail* articles, 41 out of 162 articles (25 percent) used a balanced set of sources. Eleven articles were considered to be outside the purview of judgment. Among *The Guardian* articles, 73 out of 170 articles (42 percent) used balanced sources. Both newspapers, but particularly *The Daily Mail*, are considered to show a fairly low use of balanced sources.

While broader generalizations from this study are somewhat limited by the sample size, it seems feasible to speculate that the distorted discourses of prostitution are enabled by a lack of balanced sources in the British news media.

*Other Observations: Sex workers as locus of discussion*

In general, it was noted that sex workers are generally referenced much more than clients. The large disparity between the total number of direct references to the female and male participants in prostitution (i.e. references expressed by different nomenclature) is notable. Table 5.12 presents the differentials.

Table 5.12. Total references to sex workers and clients in sampled articles from *The Daily Mail* and *Guardian* Newspapers, 2000-2009

<b>References</b>	<b>Sex Workers</b>	<b>Clients</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Sex Workers %</b>	<b>Client %</b>
<i>The Daily Mail</i>	1,428	220	1,648	86%	14%
<i>The Guardian</i>	1,587	366	1,953	81%	19%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,015</b>	<b>586</b>	<b>3,601</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>16%</b>

There were a total of 3, 015 references to sex workers, compared to 586 references to clients. That is, in articles discussing prostitution, sex workers were referenced at a rate of 84 percent, while clients were referenced at a rate of 16 percent.

These numbers imply that the women involved in prostitution are referenced more, that is, treated as the central subjects, or implicitly, the “problem,” in discussions of prostitution. Arguably, this is because sex workers, rather than clients, are, popularly conceptualized as the primary “locus” of prostitution, even though the participation of both sex workers and clients is central to the phenomenon. The dearth of empirical research into clients (Ward et al., 2001, p. 267; Sanders, 2008, p. 7) suggests that even

among academics and social researchers, sex workers, rather than clients, have been seen as “the problem” to be eradicated or helped. Boyle (2008) has also identified this tendency in feminist approaches.

This finding may also have been distorted by the Lexis Nexis relevance algorithm, which may have identified articles with the most search terms for sex workers as the most relevant.

If there is a popular conception that sex workers are “the root” or problem of prostitution, this may be changing. Increased policy discussions surrounding the role of clients in exploitive prostitution, particularly trafficking and pimped cases, may be shifting some of the focus to customers. A better picture of whether clients are becoming the focus of attention might be discerned by identifying the frequency of gendered references by year. In the meantime, the apparent focus on sex workers suggests that they remain implicitly responsible for prostitution.

### *Conclusion*

This chapter identified certain Truth, Sincerity and Legitimacy claims in the British news media between the years 2000 and 2009 based on a sample of 342 articles from *The Daily Mail* and *The Guardian*.

First, the Truth claims of the newspapers were identified. Fifteen major claims in media discourses of prostitution were recognized in the sampled articles. To summarize, across both newspapers, the most common claims were observed to be, in order of frequency: that prostitution is *the exploitation or victimization of women*; that it is *a neutral business transaction*; that it is *immoral*; and that it is *illicit fun*. With

qualifications, the claim that prostitution results in women's victimization was shown to be drawn from empirical research. The most common Truth claim characterizations of sex workers were that they belonged to the impoverished or homeless class, were in their twenties and their thirties, and were abusers of alcohol or drugs. The most common characterizations of clients were that they belonged to the higher class, were mentally ill, and were married. This chapter discussed the accuracies and distortions of these characterizations. It was noted that both sex workers and clients were often characterized according to their emotions, and sex workers by their attractiveness, and also that sex workers were characterized in greater detail than clients.

The Sincerity claims of the media were also evaluated. The terms *prostitute* and *client* remain the most common media references for the female and male participants of the sex trade. Both terms are considered to have relatively neutral cultural associations, but this chapter submits that the term *prostitute* retains more stigma than *client*. The framings of sex workers echo the main claims of the articles, but also demonstrate some countervailing depictions. The most common framing of sex workers was that they were *victims*, which is consistent with the most frequently occurring claim that prostitution constitutes the victimization of women. The second most common framing was that sex workers were *pragmatists*, which is consistent with the second-most popular claim, that prostitution is a neutral business transaction. The third most common framing was that sex workers are *public nuisances* – a framing that undermines concerns about prostitutes' well-being expressed in many articles, but that is in keeping with criticisms that public nuisance discourses infuse many discussions about sex workers' welfare. The framings of clients were also in keeping with the main claims of the articles. The most common

framing of clients was that they were *aggressors*. The second most common framing was that clients were *neutral customers* of sex workers, echoing the common claim that prostitution is a neutral business transaction. The third most common framing of clients was as *sinner*s, which follows the common claim that prostitution is immoral.

The Legitimacy of the media claims was assessed in quantitative terms. Both newspapers, but particularly *The Daily Mail*, are considered to show a fairly low use of balanced sources. Low rates of Legitimacy are a likely reason for the reproduction of distorted discourses by the news media.

Finally, it was noted that the female participants in the sex trade are much more frequently referenced than the male, likely because sex workers remain the focus, and de facto “problem” in discussions of prostitution.

Previous chapters have argued that certain discourses of prostitution may have resulted in polemic debates among policy makers and some feminists. This chapter revealed the modes by which the media reproduces these distorted – that is, unfounded or disproportionately represented – discourses. The next chapter will explore some of the historical discourses that seem to inform the most prevalent claims that prostitution is either harmful or neutral work.



## *Chapter Six*

### **A Historical Perspective on Prostitution Discourses**

This chapter offers a longer cultural view of the discourses that have consistently characterized discussions of prostitution in the U.K..

Earlier chapters have described how policy has vacillated between treating prostitution as a matter of women's victimization that should be criminalized, or as a legal industry to be regulated, with the former option gaining a legislative stronghold in recent years. The same polemical discourses of prostitution evident in policy have also characterized some feminist discussions of prostitution. Some feminists argue that prostitution constitutes women's exploitation, while others see it on a spectrum of women's labour. Women's structural poverty and lesser social status are real and must be confronted, and most feminists today do not draw on polemical discourses; the extreme polemics are more evident in news discourses. Valid feminist analyses of women's relative lack of power are distinguished by grounded truths, representative sources of data and direct, defined use of language, while the media discourses demonstrated distortion. However, the media analysis showed empirically that the dominant themes evident in policy and some feminist circles are being reproduced in British newspapers; the most prevalent Truth claims presented in *The Daily Mail* and *Guardian* newspapers were identified as, first, that prostitution is the exploitation or victimization of women, and, second, that it is a neutral business transaction.

This chapter will suggest that nineteenth century discourses influence these modern discussions. Specifically, it will suggest that the discourses of prostitution as

exploitative and damaging to women echo nineteenth-century notions of gender that were codified by Darwinism. Discourses of prostitution as a (sex) industry also reflect discourses that emerged with industrial capitalism: that a combination of government regulation and the rational self-interest of the market can lead to the increased solvency of underclass workers. These nineteenth century discourses and their policies will be explored in relation to modern policy and discourse in order to illuminate the patterns observed in the previous chapter.

### *Dominant discourses*

The most prevalent discourses observed in news media, policy and feminist discussions were that prostitution is the exploitation/victimization of women or that it is a neutral business transaction. Arguments for the first claim generally draw on evidence that sex work, particularly street-based work, has cites high rates of violence (Matthews 2008) and are linked to efforts to control or eradicate prostitution. The second discourse is often supported by evidence that the ongoing problems of violence, poverty and stigma experienced by sex workers are rooted in the criminalization and marginalization of the sex industry (Mitchell par. 2). This claim is linked to efforts to improve the conditions of prostitution via the removal of stigma and the conceptualization of prostitution as a legitimate form of work. But both of these approaches are based on claims about subjective experience. Both approaches may also have historical roots.

Sub-claims of the framing of prostitution as harmful were that prostitutes are desperate or reluctant participants in the sex trade, are frequently victims of violence or murder, and/or are emotionally damaged by prostitution.

These views of prostitution are embedded in British culture in a number of ways. Recent government policy (i.e., the Policing and Crime Act, 2009, Part 2: 14, 15) has focused on non-consensual prostitution (i.e. women's coercion by pimps and trafficking,) and laws that penalize pimp and clients have been strengthened (Home Office, 2008, p.15). Some researchers (Matthews, 2008; Boyle 2008) have critiqued popular depictions of prostitution as glamorous, in contrast to the socio-economic reality. The claim that women's participation in prostitution is often based on coercion or inequitable socio-economics is also often supported with empirical research focusing on factors such as child abuse and abandonment, youth, unemployment, lack of education, addiction, discrimination, mental health problems, disease and social stigma and most of all, gendered poverty, as reasons for women's participation in the sex trade.

The second most common framing of prostitution in British newspapers and in policy and feminist discussions was that prostitution is a neutral business transaction. Sex workers are portrayed as pragmatists working to make money like any other labourer.

Again, this approach is also reflected in the wider cultural context: during the first decade of the 2000s, the British government considered implementing the regulatory approach of the Netherlands; associated policy documents were released and the option was discussed in the news media. While full decriminalization and regulation was ultimately rejected, it remains legal for private one-person brothels and escort services to be run as businesses in the U.K. Pro-sex work feminists have also popularized the argument that sex work can be an enterprise chosen by women with full agency, and that victimization discourses stigmatize sex workers and deny women's autonomy. Policy critics in academia have also pointed out that many welfarist policies designed to

“rescue” prostitutes mark them simultaneously as victims and deviants, and that clampdowns on clients are an attempt to control non-standard public behaviour (Kantola and Squires, 2004; Sanders, 2009). They argue that this stigma contributes to women’s ongoing marginalization and exposure to violence, due to prostitution’s social invisibility, and maintain that decriminalization and regulation are better options.

Claims that depict prostitution as a matter of coercion or as emotionally harmful generalize about women’s essential, subjective experience. As pointed out by the pro-sex work feminists, victimization discourses assume that prostitution is determined by systemic and personal factors that overwhelm individual self-determination and choice. This view was evident in some of the news framings of sex workers as “demoralised slaves” (DM2007/133). Victimization discourses also present the sex trade as being harmful to individuals on a fundamental level. This generalization could be seen in descriptions of women being “degraded and violated while selling sex” (G2008/317).

The discourse that prostitution is a form of labour also makes claims about women’s subjective experience. It assumes that the choice to enter prostitution is rational, that the effects of sex work are neutral. This claim that prostitution is “just like any other industry” (DM2002/50) and its common portrayal as “the world’s oldest profession” (G2009/346) also conveys its ultimately harmless, timeless nature.

While researchers agree that systemic structures generally continue to circumscribe women’s choices, people’s notions of harm or consent are relative (O’Neill, 2001, p. 52). In short, there is little agreement among researchers about what constitutes consent in prostitution, and research is beset by epistemological and methodological questions. Policy researchers are also questioning whether legalization would enable sex

workers' empowerment as a labour force and women's financial solvency, considering the socio-economic conditions that have long characterized sex work in Britain. In 2008, the Home Office Review concluded that the Dutch model had failed to reduce the exploitation long "embedded within the political economy of the sex industry" (p. 12). The results of fully legal, regulated prostitution in the British context are, as yet, unknown. This project contends that a longer historical view of the common claims may reveal the "beginnings, atavisms and heredities" (Foucault, 1977, p. 19) that underlie discourses of prostitution as essentially degrading to women or a neutral form of work.

While scholars on both sides support their arguments with data and evidence, the intent is not to assess their veracity but rather to explore the historical antecedents of contemporary cultural expressions of prostitution in the U.K., beginning with the gender norms that underlie discourses of prostitution as fundamentally coercive and harmful.

### *Nineteenth century discourses of gender and women's victimization*

This section will explore the historical roots of the discourse that prostitution is essentially harmful to women. Nineteenth century ideas of gender influenced historical discourses of men as naturally inclined to promiscuity and women as harmed by it. In the second chapter, the view of men's uncontrollable venal desire compared to women's was shown to characterize nineteenth century sociological investigations of prostitution; this view of gendered sexuality was culturally pervasive, even among Victorian feminists. This section will explore historical ideas of gender more closely, to reveal their relationship to modern claims that prostitution is exploitative of women. The view of gender was prevalent in Britain during the nineteenth century, and further codified by the

discourses of Darwinism. Post-Darwinian notions appear to underpin modern conceptions of gender, and may influence the claim that prostitution is harmful to women in policy, feminism and the media discourses of *The Daily Mail* and *Guardian*.

In the first half of the nineteenth-century in Britain, women's natures were understood in opposition to men's. Women's nature was characterized as intrinsically gentle while men were energetic, suited for domestic work while men belonged to the public sphere, intellectually inferior to men, and happiest when subordinate to a steward-like husband. Women's passivity and secondary status was implicit in the dyadic conceptualization of gender. Women were idealized and even revered<sup>xi</sup> as complimentary figures to men, but their mission was, ultimately, to abide by their husbands and tend to their children, as befit their "procreative natures" (Davis, 2002, p. 93). Cultural artifacts demonstrate this. Sarah Ellis' manual, *The Wives of England, Their Relative Values, Domestic Influence, and Social Obligations* (1832), for example, identified woman's duty to serve her husband. Woman, she wrote, should be "a companion who will raise the tone of [her husband's] mind from low anxieties and vulgar cares" (p. 100). While ideas about femininity and women's roles during the first half of the nineteenth century depended on class to an extent, the conception of women as passive and secondary is evident in that fact that most laws, such as those governing marriage, buttressed men's authority and ownership of property.

Moreover, women were considered to be untroubled by sexual desire.<sup>xli</sup> There was a prevailing view of female sexual desire as weaker than the "irrepressible physical passions of men" (Dawson, 2007, p. 50-51). The maintenance of this sexual norm was evident in much Victorian culture which depicted women as purely maternal, virtuous

and asexual. Altick describes the popular ideal for gentry-class women as sanctified by her “domestic sainthood and the mystical, non-fleshly institution of marriage,” expressed, for example, in the poetry of Tennyson (Altick, 1973, p. 53). Poovey (1988) writes that such views of female (a)sexuality “permeated mid-Victorian culture in sermons, conduct material, and popular literature in such a way as to produce a norm [] and to define whatever did not conform to that paradigm as an ‘anomaly’ and therefore a ‘problem’” (p.6).

As noted in Chapter Two, the idea that men and women have oppositional sexual natures informed Victorian research into prostitution.<sup>xiii</sup> Acton (1857) bluntly wrote: “I should say that the majority of women (happily for them) are not very much troubled with sexual feeling of any kind” (Marcus, 1985, p.31). The widely held view during the nineteenth century that men had powerful, physiological, venal desires led researchers such as Acton, Greg (1850) and Hemyng (1861) to conceptualize prostitution as a natural outcome of male lust. Greg’s article, *Prostitution*, which appeared in the Westminster Review (Vol. 53) in 1850, describes women’s sexuality as quiescent unless, in rare circumstances, awakened, and men’s desire as preternaturally and incorrigibly strong.

In men, in general, the sexual desire is inherent and spontaneous, and belongs to the condition of puberty. In the other sex, the desire is dormant, if not non-existent, till excited; always till excited by undue familiarities...Women...could pass through life without ever being cognizant of the promptings of the senses.

Happy for them that it is so! (Nield, 1973, p. 457)

In the discourses of these researchers, women “fell” into prostitution, often because they became social outcasts after a seduction, to their detriment (Acton, 1850, p.162). Gender

norms that positioned women as the natural helpmates of men, complimentary yet subordinate, and less sexually driven, were prevalent in nineteenth-century England, and informed researchers' conceptualizations of the causes of prostitution.

Gender norms also informed sociologists' discourses about the effects of prostitution on women. If man's desire for prostitutes was natural, women's fall into prostitution was an unnatural state for her. The effects, according to the Victorian researchers, were dramatic. Tait (1842) suggested that women's natures were suddenly changed by a turn to prostitution (p. 155-56). He described the effect of prostitution as evident in women's manner: "Prostitution depraves the minds and affections of its votaries." He continued,

Very soon after a woman abandons herself to a life of prostitution, she loses every feature in her character which formerly rendered her amiable and attractive. Her unaffected modesty gives place to a bold, prying impertinence; and every air which she affects bespeaks her fallen condition... (Tait, 1842, p. 155-156)

In Tait's writing, a woman's natural gentility was ruined by her descent into lasciviousness. The idea that women's outward appearance was maimed by prostitution was also expressed in the proceedings from the Committee on Contagious Diseases Act, (1866/1889). Dr. Mr. J. C. Barr describes the quick and deleterious effects of "seduction" into a "sorrowful life" of "vice" and disease on young women.

One striking and prevailing effect...was an aspect of premature old age, so that young women of 24 or 26, had all the appearance of wrinkled old women. And in truth I have learned that many of this class had, after leading this sorrowful life



for a few years, found their vigour fail them...Thus, less than two years ago in a terribly morbid condition, [they had] the habits of beasts... (p. 29)

Barr's dramatic description demonstrates the Victorian notion that women's fall into prostitution from their normally pure state was radical enough (particularly with the addition of disease,) to transform their appearance into something monstrous, even inhuman.

Women, who were, by nature, supposed to be devoid of sexual desire, were framed by Victorian policy discourses to be unsalvageable with a fall into prostitution. The Contagious Disease Acts (1864-1886) were also based on concepts of the natural gender order. Only prostitute women and not male clients (in particular soldiers, who were suffering in high numbers from syphilis and cholera,) were detained and tested for Contagious Diseases. While there was a fear on the part of military officers that the testing of men would lead to their demoralization, prostitute women were considered to have fallen too far from normal female nature for it to matter. Writes Walkowitz (1980): "It was contended that such objections could not apply to prostitutes who were presumably bereft of 'self-respect'" (p. 3). McHugh (1980) also suggests that the reason for this is that "while men would be degraded if subjected to physical examination, the women who satisfied male sexual urges were already so degraded that further indignities scarcely mattered" (p. 17). In other words, a prostitute's fall from woman's natural state of sexual purity and integrity rendered further humane treatment of her person unnecessary.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, an emergent British feminist movement successfully fought the Contagious Diseases Acts; Victorian feminists,

likewise, framed prostitution as women's victimization because of the conditions of poverty and disease facing women, but also because prostitution was an affront to their basic nature. The movement, led by Josephine Butler, recognized prostitutes as social scapegoats and victims of poverty, however, it was also a product of its time: these feminists also framed prostitution as a libertine allowance of male sexual desire and inherently harmful to women.

Thus, these reformers fought to "reform" the women who had fallen, as well as reform the laws.<sup>xliii</sup> Picard (2006) notes that, "Inevitably, Victorian reformers set about reforming prostitutes" (p. 261). Rescue centres included the Reformatory and Refuge Union and the Guardian Society, as well as "ninety homes in various parts of the country for receiving young women who have fallen from virtue, and are anxious to make an earnest endeavour to enter on an honourable and useful life" (Archer, 1870, p. 481). The Victorian commentator Archer claimed that "2,700 forlorn creatures, have voluntarily entered the institutions" but specified that the girls and women were actually rounded up by the reformers. The "Female Mission to the Fallen go about in the haunts of prostitutes, in order to endeavour to reclaim them" (Archer, pp. 465-6). The feminist reformers also framed women's nature as essentially pure and thus corrupted by the promiscuity of prostitution, albeit, at least, capable of "reform."

Arguably, these same ideas of gender inform the more extreme depictions of prostitution as harmful in the contemporary news media. Framings of sex workers as victims in the news media echo Victorian discourses of prostitutes as "fallen women," with descriptions of their "downward spiral" (DM2002/37). The loss of a sex worker's looks is also often emphasized in the contemporary newspapers. In several instances,

women's "descent" into prostitution was dramatically expressed through tragic physical manifestations comparable to Tait's or Barr's descriptions from the nineteenth century. Articles in *The Guardian*, for instance, featured Dickensian phrases such as "translucent veined hands," "her hair, her long tired hair," (G2002/209), "thinning hair that hangs in lank threads around her once pretty face, her rotten teeth framed by lips covered by sores," (G2004/245), and "hollow faces and shivering limbs" (G2007/309). These discourses were commonly seen in descriptions of the effects of drug use accompanying prostitution, while in Victorian discourses, they were seen in descriptions of disease. In both cases, their highly emotive language (with associations of both tragedy and disgust) is striking. Likewise, the discourses are limited only to descriptions of sex workers; no male clients were characterized as being physically degraded by drugs, poverty, or by excessive contact with prostitutes.

Victorian gender norms may inform contemporary welfarist policies. Pro-sex work feminists and researchers accuse policy makers of maintaining the view of prostitution as deviant and harmful, and of revisiting Victorian moralism in the rescue and rehabilitation programs currently being run throughout the U.K. (Sanders 2009).

The dyadic views of gender already pervasive in Victorian culture likely attained further authority with Darwin's theory of sexual selection. Darwin's work does not directly claim that prostitution is unnatural to women. However, his conception of women as naturally less motivated by sexual desire and as "morally superior" to men is similar to prevailing Victorian gender norms. Moreover, the influence of his theory may have further entrenched notions of women as naturally unpromiscuous and thus unsuited for prostitution.

Nineteenth-century discourses that men had a higher sex drive than women were confirmed by Darwin's conception of the human male as an aggressive competitor for the possession of the more passive female. Darwin conceived of men as propelled by a will to create multiple progeny, and females as less motivated by sexual desire. While Darwin described the process of sexual selection in *Origin*, he elaborated his ideas of what constituted gendered traits in his two-volume work, *The Descent of Man*, in 1871. The process of sexual selection explained how beneficial traits were, in turn, instinctively preferred by individuals, selected in sexual partnerships – in humans, “the contest of rival males” for preferred females and thus, passed down to successive generations (Darwin, 1886/1972, p.565). The process of selection, according to Darwin, had acted on the sexes in ways that had increasingly differentiated them from one another (Darwin, 1886/1972 p. 617). While he did not elaborate on these traits in *Origin*, it is possible to see that Darwin had already conceived male members of the species as competitors for the possession of females, to create as many progeny as possible.

[Sexual] selection depends... on a struggle between the individuals of one sex, generally the males, for possession of the other sex. The result is not death to the unsuccessful competitor, but few or no offspring...Generally, the most vigorous males, those which are best fitted for their places in nature, will leave most progeny. (Darwin, 1872/1979, p.79)

Likewise, in the Darwinian scheme, women were not naturally venal or promiscuous. Darwin reported on some active sexual selection by females among the lower species, such as spiders, but denied that it was related to actual erotic desire. “Their apparently coy assertiveness was carefully detached from any hints of erotic desire”

(Dawson, 2007, p. 50). In the 1874 (second edition) of *Descent*, Dawson adds, Darwin even offered a scientific rationale for why “diffident coyness” had evolved, “and subsequently become innate, in women” (Dawson, 2007, p. 77). This brand of female assertiveness, according to Darwin, was a strategic, rather than erotic, impulse. In *Descent*, Darwin provides a few examples of human promiscuity. He describes some women in “barbarous tribes” that are promiscuous and have some “power in choosing, rejecting and tempting their lovers, or of afterwards changing their husbands, than might have been expected” (Darwin, 1886/1972, p. 597, pp. 598-599). But in modern groups of humans, according to Darwin, the erotic desire or sexual assertiveness of women was naturally less than men’s.<sup>xliv</sup>

Furthermore, Darwin’s work echoed prevailing discourses that women’s natures were “morally” purer than men’s. Some passages in *Descent*, as well as some correspondence (cited in Richards, 1987, p.189), suggest that Darwin believed that women lacked some intellectual capabilities but made up for them in moral superiority. Darwin believed that males were more vulnerable to jealousy and violence. In general, he suggested that men were more wont than women to fall prey to their more selfish inclinations. “Man is the rival of other men; he delights in competition, and this leads to ambition which passes too easily into selfishness. These latter qualities seem to be his natural and unfortunate birthright” (Darwin, 1886/1972, p. 563).

It is difficult to determine the extents to which Darwin’s concepts of the female and sexuality were the result of observation or the influence of his contemporaries, but in general, his ideas are consistent with common notions of women in the first half of the nineteenth century. Darwin’s theories were generally reflective of the established gender

norms. Showalter (1985) also suggests that Darwin's ideas supported, rather than originated, "politically useful" social ideas. She writes that, "theories of biological sexual difference generated by Darwin and his disciples gave the full weight of scientific confirmation to narrow Victorian ideals of femininity" (p.122). Dawson also notes that, in his publications, presentations and other writings, Darwin displayed,

an anxiety to expunge even the possibility of [] dangerously desirous and carnal women from the pages of his respectable and overtly patriarchal monograph. To accept their existence would be to challenge the long-established double standard of sexual morality that acknowledged and tacitly condoned the allegedly irrepressible physical passions of men, while associating women only with maternal and asexual moral virtue. (Dawson, 2007, pp. 50-51)

Darwin's theories are consistent with notions of women's and men's natures before the publication of *Origin*, maintaining the prevailing discourses of women's purer and less sexual natures.

Revolutionary, but also reflective of prevailing gender and economic (i.e. Malthusian) ideas, Darwin's unifying theory of evolution had a phenomenal impact. His particular categorizations of male and female natures were widely elaborated by other scientists, anthropologists, physicians and social scientists working in evolutionary theory in a Victorian age "increasingly preoccupied by scientific explanations" (Kohlstedt and Jorgensen, 1999, p. 267). Edinburgh biologist Geddes, for example, wrote *The Evolution of Sex* (1889) in which he proposed a theory of the "anabolic" nature of females (a tendency to conserve energy) and the "ketabolic" nature of men (a tendency to activity and the aggressive expression of energy). He proposed that the sexes had corresponding

qualities. In his scheme, women were constant and altruistic, while men were independent and passionate; such broad conceptions are apparent in popular culture to this day.

While connections to women's harm in prostitution may not be direct, these influential social scientists helped to disseminate general ideas about men's aggression and women's purity, notions that may underscore more specific claims about the negative effect of prostitution on women. For example, in the news media, they have likely influenced the news framings of women as fundamentally harmed by prostitution, and of men as aggressors, particularly in *The Guardian*.

It should be added that the historical gender theory manifests slightly differently in *The Daily Mail* and *Guardian*, based on their different cultural, political, economic and educational capitals.

In *The Daily Mail*, the claim that women are fundamentally harmed by prostitution is super ceded by morality claims, suggesting that the paper is most concerned with conveying a moral order that *includes* a conventional gender order. In the previous chapter, the discursive strategy of "moral panic" by newspapers (Young, 1971) was described as concealing right wing interests of public propriety; it was argued that this was the case in *The Daily Mail*. Thus, arguably, *The Daily Mail's* claims about the harm of prostitution are also attempts to convey traditional values and uphold "non-deviant" sexual relations. McRobbie (2004) has written of *The Daily Mail's* increasing "denunciation of feminism" (p. 262) and celebration of conventional gender norms.<sup>xiv</sup> In short, *The Daily Mail's* claims that prostitution constitutes the victimization of women support a conventional scheme of gender, reflective of the preferences of the middle

class, right wing, “middle brow” (Anders, 2000) readership of the paper. *The Daily Mail*’s gender discourses have their roots in general post-Darwinian (and pre-Darwinian) British discourses of gender.

By contrast, in *The Guardian*, discourses of prostitution as harmful may reflect a critical feminist editorial stance and readership, and general congruity with leftist (i.e. Labour) policies of abolition and increased persecution of clients. However, this feminist discourse may also have origins in the nineteenth century feminist movement, which accepted a conception of women as fundamentally harmed by promiscuity and prostitution.

Thus, it is possible to see how the nineteenth century ideas of prostitution as fundamentally detrimental to women’s nature may continue to shape contemporary discourses. The gender discourses of the nineteenth century likely influenced nascent feminism in the U.K., and eventually, contemporary discourses. While a scientific assessment of Darwin’s or his successors’ theories of biological sexual difference is outside the scope of this thesis, it is possible to trace the gender norms that preceded and probably influenced Darwin’s work, which in turn likely codified the existing theories.<sup>xlvi</sup> This exploration of gender stereotypes does not deny the real inequity and violent conditions facing women in prostitution. Rather, it explores some of the historical influences on the argumentation that prostitution constitutes women’s fundamental degradation.

*Discourses of prostitution as commodity exchange in nineteenth century liberal capitalism*



The media analysis revealed that the second most prevalent claim made in the selected British newspapers during the first decade of the twenty-first century is that prostitution is a neutral business transaction. This part of the chapter will explore the historical roots of the discourse that prostitution is an essentially neutral experience, on a spectrum of labour in the capitalist marketplace, which, if decriminalized and regulated by market principles, could bring increased empowerment and financial solvency to sex workers. This section will submit that this discourse seems to have been influenced by the economic philosophies that took hold during the early nineteenth century. During the industrial revolution, laissez faire proposed that wealth and progress were best created with free, open markets, directed by rational, individual self-interest. Human relations were increasingly conceived as an exchange of resources. Other socio-economic theories in Britain in the nineteenth century, such as Marxism and utilitarianism, also influenced policy, and helped to install regulations to protect workers and other groups in the industrial capitalist milieu. Although laissez faire was never thoroughly implemented, it still had a significant influence over policies, including policies on prostitution. The philosophies of laissez faire and regulation that emerged with capitalism during the nineteenth century may also underlie some prostitution policy and sex work discourses.

Capitalism during the industrial revolution was initially run by the mechanism of laissez faire, the theory that market forces should be left to determine conditions of trade, commerce or consumption. Laissez faire was the primary mechanism of a liberal economy, according to Adam Smith, who developed the theory in his 1776 work, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. Smith claimed that mechanisms of individual, rational self-interest, rather than legislative interference,

regulated progress for general social betterment. In Smith's view, a society's efficiency and success rested on the division of labour and the fluidity of goods and movements: the "invisible hand" of competition would ensure progress.

A moral philosophy underpinned laissez faire: a principle of humanity's innate self-interest and the right action that followed from this. There was a Smithian precept that members of society were only likely to provide essential services for one another if compelled by self-interest:

Man has almost constant occasion of the help of his brethren. [However] it is in vain for him to expect this from their benevolence only. He will be more likely to prevail if he can interest their self-love...it is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their self-interest. (Smith, 1904, p. 43)

There was an implicit assumption that individuals would self-regulate, but that this would result in progress and general increased wealth. The individual's best interests were intuitively linked to society's. Smith proposed a model of society that was an aggregation of its individual members, whose individual free pursuit of self-interest would, naturally, benefit greater society. Thus, interference by government was interference not only in individuals' natural self-interest, but also the improvement of society.

Smith's notions that people are motivated by rational, economic self-interest gained credence during the first half of the nineteenth century. At first, the wealth created by the gentry entrepreneurs of industry during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century appeared to bear out Smith's theory that positive benefits came from self-directed self-interest. As the industrial revolution gained steam, laissez faire was extended to what

had been formerly considered non-economic aspects of social life. In the first half of the Victorian age, writes Altick (1973), “Laissez faire became as much a social as an economic doctrine” (p. 129).

But the dawn of industrial capitalism also produced an entire underclass that was, initially, left to fend for itself. This lowest social strata was composed of the labouring poor, unemployed, residents of poorhouses, prostitutes and those living on the avails of thievery and other crime. Possibly, the rapid march of industrialization resulted in an initial ignorance of human suffering, or an incapacity of government infrastructure to help. Davis (2002) summarizes how rapid industrialization made victims of many:

The new steam powered industrial organization created social problems which there was as yet no corresponding civic organization designed to remedy: problems of housing... problems of public health... problems concerning working conditions, the regulation of commerce and education...People themselves could become, almost literally, the waste products of the system” (p. 13, p. 18).

In 1835, Alexis de Tocqueville also observed that industrial capitalism, progress, and the attempt to elevate society carried an ironic unintentional result. “Humanity attains its most complete development and its most brutish; here civilization works its miracles, and civilized man is turned back almost into a savage” (Lawrence, 1835/1958, pp. 107-08).

The liberal economic response suggested that this suffering was incidental and temporary, and that progress and increased wealth could be achieved with unadulterated free markets (i.e. laissez faire); only the deliberate activism of critics effected social and labour improvements. The unadulterated propagation of laissez faire was restrained by

strong criticism from communist, utilitarian and other activist voices. These Victorian critics proposed models of society to compete with the laissez faire discourses.

An intense critique of the unequal gains of capitalism came from the emergent communist movement. In *The Condition of the Working Class*, Engels wrote of the workers' hovels that seemed to deny real progress: "Everything which here arouses horror and indignation is of recent origin, belongs to the *industrial epoch*[...] In the industrial epoch alone has it become possible that the worker scarcely freed from feudal servitude could be used as mere material, a mere chattel" (in Tucker, 1978, p. 584). While Marxist criticisms have had profound influence on Western politics and criticism, communist policy prescriptions were, (obviously) never fully adopted in Britain.

Another movement that had an impact on British political economic thought was the utilitarian movement of John Stuart Mill. Contrary to Smith's claim that rational self-interest, if left unhindered, would result in broad progress and wealth, Mill argued that the economic ambitions of the elite often hurt the interests of others. Self-interest was a false foundation for improving the collective good, according to Mill, and could never be a guiding principle (Mill, 1869/2006, p. 86).

The effects of industrial development for factory, textile and other labourers and for the under classes went unnoticed until they were exposed by these Victorian political economic theorists, as well as journalists and photographers. Reforms for the under- and working- classes of the Victorian age were achieved with deliberate interventions by social activists. Gradually, reform bills gave the vote to the majority of males over the age of twenty-one. Child labour persisted until bills targeted individual industries. For example, in May 1842, a Report of the Commissioners on the Employment of Women

and Children in Mines exposed the cruel exploitation in the mining industry and resulted in outlawing the use of women, girls and boys under ten in mines (Evans, 1954, pp. 94-95). A Report on Child Labour in Factories appeared in 1843, demonstrating similar abuses in factory industries; Graham's Factory Act of 1844 legislated a six-and-a-half hour day for children and a twelve-hour one for women and young people, while the "Ten-Hour Movement" limited shifts to ten hours, with a weekly limit of fifty-eight hours. Other Factory Acts presented until 1878 also increased the minimum age of children allowed to work (Evans, 1954, p. 95; Wilson, 2007, p. 73).

Reform was gradual for many reasons, but mainly cultural ones: the extent of human suffering may not have been initially known or recorded in the emergent Victorian social census system, but once it was, it was often taken for granted – or even deemed necessary for progress – under the rubrics of *laissez faire*. To a great extent, suffering was conceived as an unfortunate byproduct of progress. In the longer term, improvements would follow as industry expanded (Smith, 1907, p. 48). Free market economic theory offered the promise of social mobility but in fact, *laissez faire* did little to advance the status or security of the majority of British citizens. And yet, *laissez faire*'s promises and celebration of rational self-interest were widely accepted, if not strictly implemented in actual policy.

In Victorian England, the very poor included prostitutes, whose services, Bartley (1999) has claimed, were also, increasingly being conceptualized as another form of exchange in the burgeoning commodity culture. Early nineteenth century policies on prostitution could also be characterized as *laissez faire*: they included toleration (of what would now be known as "red light districts"), and random dispersals of prostitutes.<sup>xlvi</sup>

Until 1849, the official response to prostitution was disorganized; there was no thorough outlawing of prostitution per se, with the constabulary (police) mainly scattering prostitutes when complaints were presented by local members of the public (Fisher 1997 x). These policies often worsened conditions for prostitute women. Fisher describes how the Acts of Parliament in 1839, designed for “Improving the Police in and near the Metropolis,” also tolerated prostitution unless there were public complaints. They stated that the “common prostitute or night walker” loitering “to the annoyance of the inhabitants or passengers” would be fined (Clause 54), as would those exhibiting disorderly conduct (Clause 58). As today, prostitution wasn’t actually illegal, and in practice, Fisher (1997) argues, wasn’t stopped. “The rights of prostitutes to ply their trade – and their customers to purchase their wares – remained unchallenged” due to “the strength of laissez faire, and the reluctance of magistrates to challenge it” (p. 29).

As the police’s inability to control prostitution came under public criticism during the mid-nineteenth century, officials sought an alternative, and looked to the continental system of regulation in France and Belgium for models, with the idea of “facilitating the concentration of prostitutes in a narrowly circumscribed area under close police surveillance” (Walkowitz, 1980, p. 42). By 1850, the pragmatic movement, articulated by Acton and Greg, among others, promoted discourses of prostitution’s inevitability, and by 1864, state regulation was successfully implemented through the Contagious Disease Acts, which allowed prostitution – even if women were, effectively, imprisoned (in the lock hospitals) for being sex workers.

Some of the contemporary policy approaches to prostitution still fulfill a definition of laissez faire; others demonstrate a liberal model of regulation. Law

enforcement's unwillingness to prosecute illegal forms of indoor prostitution, for example, appears to be based on the notion that some aspect of the sex industry will self-regulate (Sanders, 2008, p. 5). Pro-sex groups such as the English Collective of Prostitutes argue that full decriminalization with some regulatory protections will enable market forces to ensure better socio-economic conditions for sex workers. Discourses of prostitution as "sex work" by groups such as the ECP also seem to be underpinned by a conceptualization of human sexual relations as an exchange of commodities, a phenomenon that emerged with industrial capitalism.

In news discourses, this claim is also evident, manifesting differently in *The Daily Mail* and *Guardian*, based on their cultural and political positions. *The Daily Mail's* presentation of this claim, viewed in conjunction with its more titillating terms and its claims that prostitution is kinky fun, suggests a sometime acceptance of prostitution as essentially neutral (or even positive) for women, despite its other competing claims of moral outrage. In the previous chapter and section it was argued that the "immoral" claims in *The Daily Mail* articles, rather than being essentially morally judgmental, may be a strategy of "moral panic" designed to amplify deviance for the purposes of increased policing and public propriety. Following this, it is possible that, with the advent of liberal regulations and less public visibility of prostitution, *The Daily Mail* might abandon its strategic claims that prostitution is immoral, based as they may be on larger concerns about public nuisance and visible gender disorder. Thus, *The Daily Mail's* right wing political economic position provides an explanation for both of its top, seemingly competing, claims of prostitution's immorality and its claims that prostitution has the potential to be a regulated, privately managed and discreet industry.<sup>xlvi</sup> By contrast, *The*

*Guardian*'s claims that prostitution can be a neutral experience appear to be in keeping with its editorial commitment to critical feminist perspectives, even ones that contradict its other claim that prostitution constitutes women's victimization. *The Guardian*'s discourses of prostitution as sex work may appeal to a neutral economic model as an attempt to reduce stigma.

As discussed in Chapter Three, prostitution researchers and feminists have critiqued the imposition of "use values" on women's bodies, and argue that sexual experience cannot be reduced to a use-value concept, where money is taken as an equivalency for women's sexual acts or bodies (O'Neill, 2001, p. 31). And, once again, the epistemological and methodological problems of knowing whether women's experience of prostitution are neutral, emerges. But while these critics reject commodity models of prostitution, they are also wary of returning to moralizing conceptualizations of "appropriate" sexual relations between men and women.

Today's discourses of prostitution as sex work in a commodity culture, and the laissez faire police tolerance of indoor operations may have Victorian liberal economics at their root. A turn to history – the industrial revolution and the rise of liberal economics – may reveal some of the influences of liberalism on discourses and policy, and the past effects of laissez faire policy on disadvantaged social groups.

### *Conclusion*

This chapter offered an historical perspective on some of the discourses that have characterized media, policy and feminist discussions of prostitution in the U.K. – namely, that prostitution constitutes women's victimization, or that it is a neutral business



endeavour. Gender discourses of the nineteenth century informed nascent sociology and feminism in the U.K., as well as cultural Darwinist notions of male and female natures. It is possible to see that nineteenth century ideas of prostitution as fundamentally detrimental to women's nature continue to shape contemporary discourses of prostitution as degrading. This chapter also attempted to demonstrate that liberal capitalist ideas that emerged with industrial capitalism in Britain continue to characterize commodity ("sex work") discourses of prostitution and laissez faire approaches.

The next chapter will argue that two neo-Victorian authors, Sarah Waters and Michel Faber, confront the limiting notions of gender and liberal economic solutions to contemporary prostitution in their novels, which are set in the nineteenth century.

## *Chapter Seven*

### **Prostitution in Contemporary British Fiction**

Recent neo-Victorian novels featuring prostitute protagonists presents an opportunity, in the form of popular fiction, to rethink the dominant discourses of prostitution. This project argues that neo-Victorian fiction is particularly effective in negotiating the competing frames and reflecting the complexity of prostitution. The fictional works of Sarah Waters and Michel Faber reflect and challenge the framings of the news discourses, but also explore the problematics of some policy and feminist discussions. Sarah Waters' work, *Tipping the Velvet*, confronts and upends the neo-Victorian gender norms that may be influencing contemporary discourses of prostitution as harmful. Michel Faber's *Crimson Petal and the White* considers the problem of free will under socio-economic constraints, the same problem of consent considered by researchers of prostitution. His work does not propose a solution but he, like many researchers, implies that a lack of options and economic security for women constrains choice.

#### *Tipping the Velvet as a response to discourses of prostitution as harmful*

This section will turn to Sarah Waters' novel, *Tipping the Velvet* (1999), to see how it confronts the historically influenced discourses of prostitution as fundamentally harmful to women. *Tipping* is a neo-Victorian portrayal of late-nineteenth century British society and the social conventions that impacted women. It explores gender and sexuality, reframing nineteenth-century socio-biological discourses such as the ones codified by Darwin. Waters' work challenges narrow discourses of prostitution as

women's fundamental victimization in several ways. First, Waters dispels the notion of women's passivity by featuring a wilful female protagonist/narrator who questions her fate as a working-class wife and actively chooses prostitution as an imperfect strategy for greater economic freedom. Second, the plot of *Tipping* establishes that women are sexually motivated and can enjoy sex work. Third, *Tipping* reframes reductive discourses of gendered nature by emphasizing the dynamism, performative features, and socio-economic factors impacting Nan's life and relationships, including her relationships with clients. In an imagined Victorian London and in a picaresque style, Waters illustrates how gender, including non-normative sexualities such as lesbianism, transsexualism, and prostitution, is individual and performative, shaped by social conditions and not easily reduced to universalities. Waters' dialogue, characterizations and plot convey the inadequacy of the discourse that women are fundamentally harmed by prostitution. Her imagined scenarios offer a theoretical alternative to prevailing discourses.

Waters destabilizes discourses of women's passivity or lack of self-determination by creating a willful and proactive female protagonist who questions her working class life and actively chooses a life in show business and then prostitution. *Tipping* chronicles Nan's sexual awakening and vocational experimentations. Set after the repeal of the CD Acts, *Tipping* tells the story of Nan, who, at various points during her life in the 1880s and 90s is a working-class oyster shucker, music hall performer, prostitute and finally, socialist activist. Nan's actions contradict Victorian notions of female passivity in several ways. She is a study in ambition, fulfilling the role of helpmate in her family as an oyster shucker in Kent until brighter urban lights and romance with another woman beckon. She does not long for conventional heterosexual marriage, recognizing the limits it would

place on her freedom. Instead, she chooses to be a transsexual prostitute. At first, her choice occurs to her out of desperation, but soon she begins to re-conceptualize it as “a daring plan” (Waters, 1999, p. 192).

There were one or two obstacles to be overcome, of course, before I could begin to put my daring plan into practice. Firstly, I must properly reacquaint myself with the city...I changed very quickly, growing all the time, with every grunt and twitter, less certain and less brave. But... when I gazed at myself at last, I smiled, and knew my plan was a good one (pp. 192-194).

Eventually, Nan considers prostitution to be an effective way to defray the costs of living as a free single woman.

Nan’s voice, as the narrator of the novel, also contributes to a sense of her integrity and self-direction, even when the events of her life are beyond her control. Events are presented from Nan’s first person perspective. She is a highly overt narrator: she reports events reliably, in an earnest tone and provides much exegesis (Chatman, 1978, p. 225-229).

A second way that Waters’ characters challenges Victorian discourses of passive female sexuality is to suggest that women are sexually driven. Nan’s departure from her rural life is initially spurred on by her desire for Kitty Butler, a music hall performer and male impersonator with whom she becomes enamored. She later loses her employment and home with a wealthy mistress when she succumbs to her desire for a maid and is caught in flagrante.

Waters’ depiction of relationships, including the relationship between Nan, a prostitute, and a wealthy female client, also transcends reductive socio-biological

interpretations – or indeed, any general theory of prostitution as a purely degrading experience for women. *Tipping*'s characterizations of Nan's contact with clients demonstrates a more diverse view of sex worker and client relations than the victimization discourses. Nan becomes a kept woman of an aristocratic woman; their relationship is characterized by class-tinged and Freudian power struggles, not the male-female aggression and victimization of the news discourses. By contrast, a male client is sentimentally attached to Nan's male persona: "He stepped to me and kissed my cheek. The gesture made me flinch; and when he felt the shudder, he misunderstood, and looked wistful...I saw his eyes were gleaming" (Waters, 1999, p. 199). Waters' work ultimately discounts reductive discourses about natural behaviour according to gender.

The female sexual desire depicted in *Tipping* is lesbian, a form of sexuality that was not recognized by the Victorian establishment. Waters presents lesbianism in ways most would recognize as contemporary. Within nineteenth century heteronormative society, lesbianism was not conceptualized as a reality. As Bristow (1997) notes, despite "a rich and varied canon of literary writings that focus on woman-to-woman desire in the nineteenth century...There are hazards in applying modern conceptions of female homosexuality" to that period (p. 50). Likewise, Darwin failed to account for variations in the sexual instinct other than positing that they were aberrations. Marcus (2007) observes that after Darwin, many anthropologists theorized homosexuality as deviant and in keeping with primal behaviour, associating it with "fantasies of primitive disorder – incest, promiscuity, polygamy" (p. 219). However, *The Origin of Species* did "theorize development as flux...Even monstrosities 'a considerable deviation of structure in one part' – were on a continuum with the variations essential for natural selection [101]"

(Marcus, 2007, p. 218). Still, such theories maintain the model of homosexuality as a monstrous deviation.

Waters' reversion to a Victorian context provides a starker contrast for her character's sexuality than a contemporary setting might; this contrast helps to evince the point that sexuality is still inadequately conceptualized in popular discourses. Waters' narratives of burgeoning desires and sexual acts are not interested in re-creating the shape of same-sex female desire before the institutionalization of lesbian identity.<sup>xlix</sup> Rather, she acknowledges a contemporary awareness of the diverse potential of sexual pleasures while also noting the masochistic frisson that remains in current conceptions of non-heteronormative sex. *Tipping the Velvet* explores the nuances of unconventional relationships, showing that they transcend narrow conceptions. Waters' fictional depiction of female clients of female prostitutes is a radical re-imagining of the Victorian era and typical nineteenth century prostitution; indeed, its reversals of conventionally gendered prostitution are rarely represented even in contemporary times. The nineteenth century's more clearly assigned sex roles suggest that biological theories of gender were pervasive, yet, the last section of this chapter attempted to show that these same theories still underpin many contemporary discussions of prostitution. As in the Victorian era, when there was a lack of acknowledgement for homosexuality, so today there are a lack of nuanced conceptions of other sexual relationships, such as the dynamics of sex workers and clients.

*Tipping* also resists any essentialist discourses of prostitution by exploring its diverse performative aspects. Performance is the main theme and topos of *Tipping the Velvet*. The work is largely set in the world of the theatre where Nan joins Kitty as a

music hall performer. Nan, a cross-dresser and transvestite rent boy, achieves full transcendence of her biologically female sex. Prostitution is depicted as a calculated and chosen performance by Nan, whether she is servicing men or women. Few liaisons experienced by Nan are reducible as a matter of gendered aggression and victimization. Nan experiences some violence at the hands of both male and female clients, but most of her relationships with clients are more complex.

Instead, Waters turns her readers' attention to the social and material conditions that negatively affect sexual relationships, including sex worker and client dynamics. Waters does not discount the negative effect of financial and social inequality within the relationships. When the power dynamics in Nan's relationship with her aristocratic mistress become too uneven, she has an affair with a maid, someone of similar class standing. Later, she pairs up with a socialist activist fighting for class issues. This somewhat didactic end of *Tipping* underlines Waters' point that social and economic factors, rather than essential gender norms, have an impact on relationships.

*Tipping the Velvet* accounts for the socio-economic, cultural and psychological factors that contribute to sexual attraction, orientation, behaviour and experience, including experiences and relationships within prostitution. *Tipping* suggests that gender and sexuality are a performance, more complex and fluid than victimization models imply. Waters has imagined a protagonist liberated from conventional norms, who sometimes suffers the fallout of that liberation. She imagines a female character who suffers violence, but is not fundamentally degraded or always victimized by prostitution.

The popularity of *Tipping* suggests that the public may be seeking alternative discourses. As a creative commentator, Waters may be drawing on public dissatisfaction

with uncritical claims about gendered behaviour, and discourses that prostitution is the unqualified victimization of women. Her imagined scenarios resonate with readers and offer a theoretical transcendence of prevailing discourses.

Waters' discursive position that prostitution is performative is evident in other cultural realms. As described in Chapter Three, the post feminist movement has depicted a stylized brand of feminine sexuality as empowering to women, and has suggested that sexuality can be commodified without harm. However, unlike Waters' work, this movement fails to account for the socio-economic factors that constrain and negatively affect sexual relations. This post feminist movement has been criticized for its uncritical imposition of "use values" on women's bodies.

The next section, a discussion of Michel Faber's work, will explore the discourse of prostitution as an exchange of commodities within a liberal capitalist economy.

#### *The Crimson Petal and the White as a response to neo-liberal discourses of prostitution*

This section will turn to the work of Michel Faber, *The Crimson Petal and the White* (2002), as a response to the discourse of sex as business. Michel Faber's novel, *The Crimson Petal and the White* is a neo-Victorian exploration of commodity capitalism and prostitution. Faber's characters, prostitutes in 1870s London, offer their bodies as a commodity in an industrial Victorian society. Sugar, Faber's protagonist, is highly cognizant of her limited status and is impressively manipulative in her strategies for attaining what she believes will be her liberation from her circumstances, but despite her persuasive intelligence and negotiations, she cannot advance. Her self-commodification and rise through society's class ranks are depicted as ventures that are alienating and



unsustainable, due to Victorian culture's in-built socio-economic inequities. The central themes of Faber's work are the effect of socio-economics and commodity capitalism on individuals' material and psychological security. With the *Crimson Petal*'s culmination, the protagonist's future is obscure, but a final act provides the reader with a clue to Faber's moral vision: that intervention is necessary in to protect the vulnerable members of society and prevent them falling prey to models of human relations based on self-interest (i.e. laissez faire capitalism). Sugar's desperate Victorian circumstances serve to magnify certain threats within capitalist milieus for contemporary readers, and highlight the implications of applying pure commodity rationales to women's choices and destinies.

The extremes of wealth and poverty in the burgeoning, unregulated commodity capitalism of nineteenth century London provide a context from which Faber launches his critique of economic discourses. At the outset of his novel, Faber establishes the milieu in which Victorian prostitutes made their living. Soho St., where Faber introduces his main characters, is a microcosmic representation of the commodity marketplace, stocked with items produced by the industrial revolution.

Civilization begins at Greek Street. Welcome to the real world...

You may point out that the clouds of smoke from the factory chimneys of Hammersmith and Lambeth blacken all the city alike, a humbling reminder of where the cornucopia really comes from. But humility is not a trait for the modern man, and filthy air is quite good enough for breathing; its only disadvantage is the film of muck that accumulates on shop windows. But what use is there, the shopkeepers sigh, in nostalgia for past times? The machine age is come, the world will

never be clean again, but oh: what compensation! An embarrassment of produce becomes available...(pp. 22-23)

The cost of industry may be pollution and labour abuse, but the result is a wealth of commodities.

Throughout Faber's novel, the disinterested and rational tone of the narrator underscores the broader cultural attitudes of industrial capitalism. The narrator also qualifies the self-interest of Greek Street merchants as part and parcel of industry. "It's not that they are cruel, these industrious men...It's just that the shop-keepers of Greek Street care nothing about the shadowy creatures who actually manufacture the goods they sell" (p. 23). The narrator's disinterested tone conveys the indifference of prevailing *laissez faire* ambition and attitudes.

Faber's narrator depicts the sale of women's bodies as another form of exchange in the burgeoning commodity culture. The bustling market is the backdrop of an early scene in his novel, where Caroline, a prostitute, is introduced. Faber's narrator compares Caroline to the commodities. "Indeed, there is one essential similarity between Caroline and the shop-keepers of Greek Street who woo her: much of what they hope to sell is far from virgin" (p. 24). To the denizens of Faber's Greek Street, prostitution is just another feature of the market – neutral, and not a question of immorality. Faber's emphasis on the commodity, rather than moral, dimensions of prostitution is a postmodern recreation of Victorian sensibilities. Prostitution was primarily conceived as a moral issue in the Victorian age, however, the postmodern reader may recognize the origins of a post-normative, neo-liberal commodity culture in the liberal capitalist milieu Faber presents.

In various ways, Faber conveys prostitution in economic terms. It is described in terms of supply and demand. Caroline sums up her role in society as “intercepting the odd squirt of sperm that would otherwise have troubled a respectable wife” (p. 27). Prostitutes supplied sex to males whose demand had exceeded their marriages. Faber’s wry tone evinces the apparent neutrality of this experience for Caroline. Prostitute women are depicted, and have internalized themselves, as resources to be bought, or commodities.

But the narrator’s wry tone soon gives way to the anxious inner narratives of the women who jockey for survival in this culture. Faber’s characters feel the pressure of market competition for their survival. Capitalist economics affect even their personal relationships. Caroline’s appraisal of her friend, another prostitute, (Faber’s protagonist, Sugar,) is competitive. Caroline assesses Sugar’s looks as a business competitor: Sugar’s “lips, the older woman notes, are pale and dry and flaky, but weren’t they always?...Why men should tolerate such defects in Sugar was, and still is, mysterious to Caroline; indeed there’s not a single physical attribute of which she could honestly say that Sugar’s is better than hers” (p. 29). Faber implies that Caroline’s standard of beauty (her own and others’) is based on client tastes. The women’s sexuality, is, thus, commodified. He also proposes that the commodification of women is more widespread. In the prostitutes’ appraisal of one another, Sugar observes that Caroline’s classic looks are used to sell commonplace commodities: “Any print shop is stocked to the rafters with ‘Carolines’ and her face is everywhere, from soap-wrappers to the stone carvings on public buildings – isn’t that the proof that Caroline is close to the ideal? Sugar thinks so” (p. 42). Faber

establishes the capitalist culture of Victorian England, the conception of prostitution as another form of exchange, and the commodification of women's bodies more generally.

But gradually, Faber reveals the limits of these economic models and discourses. He suggests that Sugar's and other prostitutes' options are constrained by their low socio-economic status, a Victorian society that lacked social supports, the limited work opportunities for women, and personal hardships. Caroline rationalizes that she makes more money in prostitution, while working in less backbreaking conditions, than she did as a seamstress, but her history hints at the complexity of her choice. Faber gradually gives the reader Caroline's back story, letting slip the various terrible factors that contributed to her decision to become a prostitute, including poverty, but also the utter loss of a rational ontology after the death of her husband and son due to a lack of health care: "All sense of purpose, of responsibility, indeed of any imaginable future, were removed from her by the deaths of her husband or child" (p. 27). Faber suggests that Caroline's choice, while made rationally, was constrained by economic desperation and psychological difficulties.

Faber also conveys the dangers of prostitution, suggesting that economic and commodity discourses mask dangerous conditions. He suggests that the dangers of prostitution in the Victorian age were acute, ranging from poverty and illness to deadly violence. Caroline and Sugar consider how the other has fared in their dangerous trade:

Out in the sun, Caroline and Sugar appraise each other while pretending not to.

Its months since they last met. A woman's looks can crumble irreparably in that time, her skin eaten away by smallpox, her hair fallen out with rheumatic fever,

her eyes blood-red, her lips healing crookedly from a knife wound. Life has been kind, or at least has been sparing with its cruelty. (p. 29)

Although they rationalize their actions as active choices, Faber's Victorian prostitute characters are limited by their low socio-economic status, few options, and hazardous conditions.

In the face of few options, Sugar attempts to embrace her own commodification as a prostitute and rise through society's class ranks. *The Crimson Petal* traces Sugar's methodical attempts to attain security. Rejecting options such as maid service or factory work because of their slavish tediousness, she dedicates her life to climbing out of her underclass position by latching on to a wealthy client, William Rackham. She evolves from soliciting Rackham as a weekly client, to becoming his informal assistant, (reenergizing the family business he abhors), to being installed in her own apartment as his exclusive mistress, to, finally, being hired as his child's governess.

The central theme of Faber's work is the effect of laissez faire self-interest on individuals' security. In Faber's work, despite the potential for advancement promised by liberal society, his protagonist is constrained by socio-economic disparities. Sugar fails to attain material security through her self-commodification. Struggling to thrive in a society with no safety nets, her position remains insecure because of her employer's knowledge of her former life and her status as a commodity that can easily be discarded or replaced. "My papa bought you for me, Miss," says Sugar's young ward with a childish naiveté that contains a callous claim (p.767). Even as a governess (a poorly paid option among few for women at the time,) she remains dependent. Sugar is fired and

evicted by Rackham when it is discovered that she is pregnant. Though impressively manipulative in her strategies, Sugar remains dependant and cannot advance.

Individual self-interest also fails to ensure Sugar's psychological security. Faber's novel is highly sensitive to women's "felt existence" – their quotidian perceptions, self-awareness and ontology. He describes the way capitalist socio-economic rationales impact his characters' sense of being – their moment-to-moment reasoning, their self-presentation, and their psychological security.

*The Crimson Petal* is the story of Sugar's status ambition – and her status anxiety, frustration and alienation as she grapples for security. Sugar's approach is highly rational and pragmatic. She monitors her behaviour closely, playing appropriate roles to conform to her client's needs, be they sex, companionship, business advice or flattery. She mimics the qualities of the upper class she hopes to infiltrate. Faber portrays Sugar's status anxiety with singular detail. It infuses even her most mundane, basic experience. It determines what she is willing to find funny, for example, because in her mind a failure to seek out sophisticated forms of humour reflects complacency and thus submission to the low position into which she was born: "Sugar is not so easy to please; to her, all familiar responses smell of entrapment. Sharing an old joke, singing an old song – these are admissions of defeat, of being satisfied with one's lot" (p. 34). Sugar's most subtle mannerisms have been manufactured to please her clients, and this contrived persona has come to define her every act. Even seeing Caroline, (a lower-class prostitute to whom Sugar feels superior), she turns on the charm. Sugar's "expression, in recognizing her old friend, glows with what so many men have found irresistible: an apparent ecstasy of gratitude to have lived to experience such an encounter" (p. 28). Sugar's adept self-

monitoring helps her to charm the self-indulgent heir, Rackham. Her seduction of Rackham in her local pub is flawless:

Sugar, for her part, has not a fault; she is scrupulously respectful, gently good humoured, thoughtful and flattering. It's even possible, thinks William, that she likes him. Surely her laughter is not the sort that can be faked, and surely the sparkle in her eyes...cannot be counterfeited.

And, to William's surprise and deep satisfaction, he and Sugar do converse about books after all...Why, the girl's a prodigy! (p. 111)

While in Waters' novel performance was presented as an inherent and potentially liberating aspect of life, Faber's work explores the limiting burden of performance caused by the anxiety of capitalist culture.

Sugar suffers a sense of severe malaise and agitation; her despair is rooted in her attempt to identify with laissez faire principles of self-interest. She resists identification with others of her class, preferring to focus on her own advancement. At one point, she sees a homeless child on the street and rationally weighs her self-interest versus the benefits of helping.

She turns and finds the child alive and awake, gesturing from its swaddle of dirty wool...Sugar hesitates...She cannot bear going backwards when she's made up her mind to go forwards; she's crossed the street now and there's no crossing back. Besides, it's hopeless; she could fuck a hundred men a day and give all the proceeds to destitute children, and still make no lasting difference (p. 45).

Sugar has internalized the values of laissez faire and holds out little hope in humanity's will to improve the lot of the disenfranchised. She has embraced individual self-interest.

But when she is not scheming, she is beset by a painful despair engendered by her cosmology; a hateful God has abandoned his wretched creatures. “God damn God,” she often utters, “and all His horrible, filthy creation” (pp. 29,134).<sup>1</sup>

However, Sugar’s response to the final affront to her personal security, her firing, is a final act of intervention. At the culmination of *The Crimson Petal*, Sugar, who has until this point tried to surmount her society’s class structure by adopting its attitudes, suddenly absconds with the young daughter of her client. Sugar’s act is a stand against Rackham, a selfish scion of industry – of his instrumental treatment of herself, and his self-interested treatment of his children. With the *Crimson Petal*’s culmination, the protagonist’s future is obscure. Sugar disappears with Rackham’s child and their future is unknown. Rackham is left bewildered that his status and wealth could not prevent this emotional loss. But Sugar’s final act provides the reader with a clue to Faber’s moral vision: that intervention may be necessary to protect the vulnerable members of society.

Using a neo-Victorian fictional context, Faber’s work explores the implications of laissez faire discourses. Faber’s work fulfills some postmodern definitions, most ostensibly in his narrator’s immediate breaking of the third wall (a direct address to the reader and an allusion to the reader’s contemporary context). But Faber’s work is not merely a pastiche of Victorian themes strung together to titillate the contemporary reader. In conflict with postmodern preferences, his work conveys a quest for moral meaning. Faber’s vision explores individualism and social responsibility, choice, the limits to advancement created by capitalist socio-economics, and the question of intervention. *The Crimson Petal* explores the effects of capitalism on historical subjects using a postmodern voice for contemporary readers.



Faber suggests that self-interested competitive discourses, rather than, as Smith would suggest, improving conditions for the greater good, alienate people from themselves and fail others. Victorian society's laissez faire attitudes to prostitution and the underclass generally, endanger Sugar's physical and psychological well-being. Faber also suggests that alienation and material insecurity is, for most of the underclass, the logical result of the liberal capitalist economy. As a novelist writing over 150 years after Marx and Engels, Faber is less interested in reiterating a discourse of how industrial systems result in the abstraction of labour, than with exploring more personal experience in a handful of characters. He is interested in describing his characters' self-interest, their appraisal of their fellow Londoners in terms of competition or instrumental uses, and their own receding psychological well-being as a result. Faber's work addresses the discourse of prostitution as a neutral economic exchange, and explores the historical effects of liberal capitalism on sex workers.

Although it is possible to identify the socio-economic structures that hem in Faber's characters, his plot turns make it impossible to see them as utter *victims* of economic determinism. While his characters are not presented as fully individuated exceptions to their society's system of logic, they also commit acts of obvious free will. In short, Faber's work suggests that purely economic rationales will not enable unconstrained choice and advancement, but that individuals are not completely determined by social conditions either.

Faber's work is a study of free will under socio-economic constraints; it considers the problem of consent that has also been articulated by some researchers of prostitution. While his work does not propose a solution to the problem of consent, it implies that a

lack of options and economic security for women constrains choice, and intervention is necessary for those at risk. Sugar's desperate Victorian circumstances also serve to magnify certain threats within capitalist milieus for contemporary readers, and highlight the implications of applying laissez faire rationales to vulnerable women's choices and destinies: these threats include material, physical and psychological degradation for those who are vulnerable.

The commodity discourses conveyed in Faber's work are recognizable to contemporary readers. Faber uses the image of the era's industrialized economy and its brutal treatment of people to critique contemporary liberal economies. As one critic wrote, "the inequities of the social class system are pointed up throughout...One after another Faber points out the hypocrisies and double standards inherent in Victorian (and unhappily in many ways modern) society" (McGuigan, 2003, p. 133). Faber's work addresses popular discourses that suggest that society should be ruled by economic market principles and individual self-direction. The application of rational economic principles and self-interested laissez faire to social life during the nineteenth century still resonates today in the neo-liberal discourses of prostitution as a neutral business endeavour. The end result of Sugar's stand is inconclusive. The inconclusiveness may also speak to the postmodern reader's sense that an obscurity haunts the issue of prostitution, possibly due to the prevailing, limiting media discourses used to understand it.

### *Conclusion*

This chapter argued that recent neo-Victorian fiction by Sarah Waters and Michel Faber featuring prostitute protagonists confronts the common claims and offers new insights into the stalemates of the prostitution debates. The innovatory, gender-bending relationships in Sarah Waters' work, *Tipping the Velvet*, suggest that sexual relationships are highly nuanced and performative. They indicate that fundamentalist contemporary discourses about sexual relationships, such as claims that the relationships between female sex workers and male clients are generally harmful, are as limited as they were in Victorian times. Waters' protagonist is also presented as making active, if imperfect choices, to participate in prostitution. While Waters stresses that relationships between people are nuanced and that prostitution can be a matter of choice, she also acknowledges the power relations that affect relationships between sex workers and clients.

Michel Faber's *Crimson Petal and the White* considers the problem of choice as it is limited by socio-economic structural conditions, a problematic that is discussed in some feminist circles. His work implies that a lack of options and economic security for women constrains choice and that intervention, not individually directed laissez faire, is necessary to protect the more vulnerable members of society. His work is also a Jeremiad, (in the form of a subtly crafted character study of anxiety,) warning against the imposition of an instrumental, capitalistic frame on human relations (sexual relationships, friendship or child rearing). Faber's work explores the lack of psychological and material security that ensues from such an approach.

This thesis suggests that novels and other creative works may be alternative sources of insight into prevailing discourses of prostitution.

## *Conclusion*

### **Summary and New Directions**

Prostitution has been a controversial issue in the U.K. during the last decade, with a range of disparate solutions, from laissez-faire to abolition, being debated by policy makers, intense discussions among feminists, and much coverage in the news media. The issue of prostitution raises questions of individual, public and women's rights, definitions of choice in the neo-liberal economy, the ethics of state interventionism and the problem of moralistic state paternalism. This thesis has explored the competing discourses of prostitution that shape the debates in feminist thought, public policy, and the news media. It exposed the ways in which these discourses are communicated in the public sphere and reproduced in British newspapers. These discourses have deep cultural and historical roots and parallel debates in the nineteenth century. Finally, it explored the ways in which neo-Victorian British fiction with prostitution as a main theme confronts the conceptual roots of the common discourses, offering new framings for the prostitution debates.

This chapter will weave together the findings of the previous chapters and offer some potential directions for approaches to prostitution.

#### *A summary of the project*

First, this thesis explored the description of the policy debates surrounding prostitution in the United Kingdom during the last decade. While prostitution remains legal, many of the activities surrounding it, and particularly surrounding street prostitution, are prohibited. Critics allege that current laws stigmatize sex workers and

push them into physically unsafe and socially marginal zones. Furthermore, abolitionist policies are being debated, and a shift to criminalizing clients has occurred, in an effort to curb trafficking. Again, critics charge that these policies will further endanger and disenfranchise sex workers. Some prostitute rights groups advocate for full decriminalization and a regulation model as in the Netherlands, to improve the labour conditions of sex workers. They contend that abolitionist and welfarist policies have moral and paternalistic imperatives, casting sex working women simultaneously as deviants and as helpless victims. Amid the politicking and polemics, feminists, researchers, social workers and policy makers apprehend the complexity of the issue of prostitution, the deficiency of categorical debates, and urgency of well-informed policy. Progressive contributions and developments were presented as counterpoints to the distorted discourses that inform many discussions of prostitution.

The next chapter reviewed the existing research about the state of prostitution in the U.K., to use as a general basis of comparison for the claims of policy makers, the media and the fiction writers. It provided an overview of historical and contemporary sex work. Since the development of empirical approaches in the nineteenth century, researchers have attempted to collect information about women's participation in sex work, a complicated problem with variable economic, social and individual factors (Sanders 2005) and many methodological pitfalls. In historical and contemporary studies, hard numbers and facts are difficult to obtain about prostitution because it is a highly stigmatized phenomenon. Nevertheless, since Victorian times, researchers have cited gendered poverty as a major factor in women's participation in the sex trade in Britain.

The next chapter described how feminists continue to grapple with whether prostitution is the essential enslavement of marginalized women or whether it is a form of labour and a matter of free choice. It charted the movement's views of prostitution since the Victorian era, (when the issue galvanized budding feminist groups). In the nineteenth century, some feminists were concerned with the socio-economic conditions facing prostitutes, but were ultimately overtaken by an abolitionist bloc with a view of prostitutes as victims to be rescued. Second wave feminists also asserted that prostitutes were victims of socio-economic conditions and patriarchal culture; these feminists were criticized as taking a sexually normative position by a movement of sex work feminists. Building on the activism of sex workers, these feminists conceptualized entry into prostitution as a choice. They conceived of it as a form of work like any other that could be improved with labour protections. Later third wave feminists conceptualized prostitution in a more subjective frame. Finally, in post feminism, prostitution was depicted as an individually self-directed and even potentially empowering option in a neo-liberal commodity culture, but critics claim that this view normalizes and hides inequitable conditions. Today, some feminists have recognized that a question of consent lies at the centre of these debates. They aspire to improve conditions for women working in the sex industry by advocating for appropriate policy, without discounting women's self-determination or the constraints imposed by socio-economic (gendered, racial, class) conditions.

The next chapter reflected on the debates occurring in policy and among feminists, and presented a methodology for two new approaches to prostitution studies. Having observed that certain discourses of prostitution seemed to repeatedly arise in

public debates, this chapter set out an approach to explore how they might be reflected and reproduced in the news media. Thus, it presented a methodology to sample and analyzed articles from the last decade that discussed the issue of prostitution. To get a broad and balanced sample of British cultural discourses of prostitution, it used newspapers representative of politically right and left views, *The Daily Mail* and *The Guardian*, (respectively). Because the media both shapes and reflects political and cultural debates, it proposed using a Habermasian critical discourse approach to the news media, to understand how the discourses are shaped and to explore communications distortions. Next, it suggested that fiction might offer more nuanced framings of prostitution. Having noted that many of the policies, conditions, and feminist approaches to prostitution in the U.K. were established in the nineteenth century, and theorizing that the persistent discourses in the media might also be influenced by nineteenth century ideas, it outlined a methodological approach for looking at neo-Victorian fiction. By acknowledging some of the nineteenth century roots of contemporary discourses of prostitution, it was suggested that these cultural products might provide alternative (if theoretical) framings.

The next chapter presented the results of the critical discourse analysis of the media. It examined the Truth, Sincerity and Legitimacy claims in the British news media between the years 2000 and 2009 based on a sample of 342 articles from *The Daily Mail* and *The Guardian*.

The most prevalent Truth claims presented in *The Daily Mail* and *Guardian* newspapers were identified as, first, that prostitution is the exploitation or victimization of women, and, second, that it is a neutral business transaction. The most common

characterizations of sex workers were that they were impoverished or homeless, were in their twenties and their thirties, and were addicts. The most common characterizations of clients were that they were wealthy, mentally ill, and married. The chapter evaluated the validity of these Truth claims.

The Sincerity claims of the media were also appraised. The terms “prostitute” and “client” were observed to be the most common media references for the female and male participants of the sex trade; the chapter assessed the cultural associations with those terms and submitted that the term prostitute carried more stigma than client. The framings of sex workers echoed the main claims of the articles, but also demonstrated some countervailing values. The most common framing of sex workers was as victims, and the second most-common framing was that sex workers were pragmatists, echoing the first- and second-most popular Truth claims that prostitution is a matter of women’s victimization or a neutral business transaction. The framings of clients were also in keeping with the main claims of the articles, with the most common framing of clients being that they were aggressors. The second most common framing was that clients were neutral customers of sex workers, which followed the claim that prostitution is a neutral business transaction.

The Legitimacy of the media claims was also assessed quantitatively. Both newspapers, but particularly *The Daily Mail*, showed little balance in the use of sources, perhaps contributing to the reproduction of distorted discourses. The differences between the newspapers, as well as the number of references to the female and male participants in the sex industry, were also analysed. These differences, in part, reflect the differences in the positioning and audiences of these papers – *The Daily Mail* is a right-leaning



tabloid aimed at the middle and working class while the Guardian is a “quality” paper aimed at the educated and middle/upper class left-wing. The chapter was able to demonstrate that the same competing discourses observed in feminist and policy debates are reproduced in the news media, likely reflecting, as well as reinforcing, these discourses.

The following chapter examined the historical and cultural roots of the dominant, competing discourses. It offered an historical analysis of the discourses of the media, namely, that prostitution constitutes women’s victimization, or that it is a neutral business endeavour. It argued that gender discourses of the nineteenth century have influenced feminism in the U.K., and that Darwinist views of male and female natures continue to shape contemporary discourses of prostitution as degrading. Next, this chapter argued that liberal capitalist discourses that emerged with industrial capitalism in Britain continue to characterize certain commodity (“sex work”) discourses of prostitution and laissez faire policies. The intent of this chapter was not to validate or contradict the evidence that prostitution is linked to conditions of poverty and violence, nor to discount the strategic benefits of the “sex work” discourses or of liberal regulation. The chapter simply explored the ways in which the contemporary discourses have historical and cultural roots.

The final chapter argued that two neo-Victorian authors consider the prevailing discourses of prostitution in their novels. By presenting unconventional relationships in *Tipping the Velvet*, Sarah Waters demonstrates that relationships – including relationships between sex workers and clients – are highly nuanced and performative rather than reducible to claims of women’s universal and fundamental harm. Waters’ protagonist is

also presented as making a fully self-determined choice to participate in prostitution. Nevertheless, Waters also acknowledges the socio-economic-based power relations that may affect relationships between sex workers and clients. Michel Faber's *The Crimson Petal and the White* considers socio-economic structural conditions and their effects on self-determination – the same problem of free-will/consent that faces feminist researchers of prostitution. He suggests that a lack of options and economic security for women means that choice is highly constrained and that social interventions may be necessary. His work also explores the effects of instrumental commodity discourses on human relations and psychological health. He appears to deny that neo-liberal approaches have real potential to ensure psychological or material security for those facing systemic discrimination. The thesis did not argue that fiction could replace social research but that other cultural products, such as novels, might bring other discourses brewing among the public to light, and provide criticism of other media such as news articles.

By analysing a range of contemporary and historical texts, this thesis has made a contribution to the understanding of the competing discourses on prostitution and the ways in which they are shaped. In addition to providing a systematic critical analysis of the competing discourses in the media, along with the distortions that occur through use of language and experts, it has made an empirical contribution to understandings of the issue. By exploring the historical and cultural roots of these discourses it has also shed light on the ways in which they have been (re)produced. Finally by including an examination of the depictions of prostitution in neo-Victorian novels it has explored an alternative, more nuanced perspective in fiction that perhaps allows a superior

understanding to the complexity of the phenomenon than much of the non-fiction or “factual” accounts.

#### *Limits of the analysis and new directions*

During the course of the project, potential directions emerged that could not be pursued, given the limitations of time and scope. The first, as mentioned in Chapter Four, would be a systematic analysis of the characterization of sex workers’ ethnicity in the media. Another would be a systematic analysis of whether certain discourses observed in the news articles corresponded to arguments for particular policies, i.e. whether articles with victimization discourses more often supported calls for abolition, or whether sex work discourses accompanied calls for full legalization. It is suspected that the discourses would accompany support for policy along these lines, but not confirmed. In a future project, a more direct link between media discourses and policies might be established. Likewise, a critical discourse analysis of Home Office documents during the sample period might reveal some continuities or divergences between media and policy discourses. An expanded sample of literary sources might also provide a broader view of the cultural context of the prostitution discourses. Future research might also include an ethnographic element, with a discourse analysis of sex worker, journalist and/or policy maker interviews.

A central claim of this project was that discussions about prostitution in popular media and policy in the U.K. are often extreme and oppositional. There are many explanations for the tenacity of these discourses about prostitution. One is that there is a collective psychological conflict surrounding the issue, and that the relentless, prurient

depictions are inspired by prostitution's enduring appeal as a taboo subject. It is noted that many of the discourses observed in the media and literature may be rooted in more fundamental discourses of sexuality and morality. The more essential underpinnings or presuppositions of other discourses might be further explored.

The possible influence of Darwin's gender philosophy was explored in some discourses of prostitution; it is suggested here that a better acquaintance with evolutionary philosophy might aid feminists in assessing other pervasive gender discourses within feminism and in broader culture. A greater understanding of the history of socio-biological science, for example, might aid feminists in their attempts to counter victimization arguments and address the rifts within the feminist movement. Possibly, feminists' eschewing of biological theories of women's nature and roles has left them bereft of evidence to counter essentialist claims that women are fundamentally harmed by prostitution. In twentieth and twenty-first century feminism, gender has been theorized as culturally constructed, in the service of fighting for equality. But this has also led to a division within feminist ranks as post- and third wave feminists have critiqued the sexlessness of second wave feminism and returned to conventionally feminine or porn-influenced sexuality that play into conventional notions of male exploit and female passivity, receptivity and domesticity.

The evolutionary philosopher and feminist Mary Midgely advocates a revisitation of sexual differences (as in her 1988 article, "On Not Being Afraid of Natural Sex Differences") in order to enhance feminist aims. She argues that characteristics of gender must make evolutionary sense, regardless of the politics and narrowness of historical socio-biology. Leading evolutionary biologists today have problematized traditionally

understood sexual roles and behaviours with theories including cuckoldry, female mating by subterfuge, sperm competition and male parental care.<sup>li</sup> But in general, cultural and political feminists have been reluctant to delve into arguments about men and women's evolutionary natures, likely due to the historical misuse of overly deterministic socio-biology.

This project, with its categorization of articles according to "major Truth Claims," sought to identify broad patterns, and it is acknowledged that some nuances within the articles may not have been captured by the Truth claim categories. Single articles sometimes included competing, simultaneous, or conflicting affective strategies of ironic moralism, or morbid titillation. The categorization of Truth claims was only one facet of the analysis. Other aspects of the articles were captured in the evaluations of characterizations, framings and nomenclature etc. A closer, more interpretive reading of articles might supplement the quantitative analysis of broader patterns with a qualitative dimension.

A future project might also provide a parallel qualitative analysis of the more empathetic or balanced articles. During the initial informal research for the project, a palpable frustration about the simplistic characterizations and polemical narratives of prostitution was also observed, (if impressionistically). This frustration may generate the very steady stream of popular media focused on prostitution. Again, some might argue that perennial interest in the issue can be explained by prostitution's forbidden magnetism, but the unrelenting aspect of the articles, programs and documentaries suggests that the public may be hoping for more informative discussions. Despite the

media's continued attention to the subject, the public's interest in questions surrounding prostitution remains unsated.

An outrage over sensationalism, skepticism of clichéd tropes about prostitution, and interest in the complex social and personal conditions that lead women to sex work was particularly observable in articles after the 2006 serial killings of sex workers in Ipswich, England. Matthews (2008) summed up the public response to the Ipswich murders and reflected that this represented an evolution in news reports, particularly compared to coverage of a case of prostitute murders thirty years previously. He reflected,

the public response and media reporting of the murders in Ipswich appear, however, to represent something of a watershed in attitudes towards the women involved in street prostitution. Compared to the ways in which the victims were reported in the 'Yorkshire Ripper' case some 30 years before, there was noticeably more public sympathy for the plight of these women and a greater sensitivity in reporting" (Matthews vii).

Other commentators also made note of a new tone in the coverage, observing a less sensational treatment of the crimes than in the past and a gradual evolution. In a 2008 article entitled "The Same Old Story?" in *The Guardian* (G2008/314), Joan Smith traced news coverage of violence against prostitutes to the era of Jack the Ripper, still notorious in the public imagination as an iconic killer of prostitutes. Like Matthews, Smith argued that Victorian media attitudes towards prostitutes as society's immoral, underclass throwaways prevailed unnoticed during the coverage of the "Yorkshire Ripper" in the 1970s, but that this had changed with Ipswich. Some readers were repelled by the reports

that contained an implied acceptance of the women's murders: as street prostitutes, the women had exposed themselves to danger, and their deaths had been unfortunate, but predictable. Readers resisted more prurient reporting that used the term "Ripper," or references to the women as victims wholly defined by their work as "prostitutes" and not individuals. Smith wrote,

In Ipswich and elsewhere, people were outraged by TV and radio bulletins that baldly announced five 'prostitutes' had been murdered in Suffolk...the dead women were daughters, mothers and girlfriends but their whole lives were being defined by something they had embarked on out of absolute desperation. 'As soon as it became a national story, it became apparent that the language used to describe the women was inappropriate,' says a journalist who went to Ipswich when the third body was found (G2008/314).

*The Guardian* was particularly self-reflexive about the language used in the Ipswich coverage, with an editorial dedicated to the issue (G2006/285).

Other articles, such as a series entitled "All someone's daughter" (G2006/115), appearing in *The Guardian*, profiled the women and suggested the complex factors contributing to their lives in prostitution, drawing on empirical research. Sex workers were portrayed as victims of violence (as victims of Ipswich), as well as being women who had consented to the dangers of sex work, as women facing addiction, poverty, criminalization, marginalization, family support pressures and personal tragedy. In other words, the intersection of social, economic, legal and personal factors was explored. This was done with interviews with family and friends, reflecting more balanced sources, though some of the nomenclature (i.e. "vice girls") was found to bring unstated

associations (distortions of Sincerity).<sup>lii</sup> This thesis was in some ways spurred by these encounters with public frustration about the discourses of prostitution, a frustration visible in many recent news reports.

But despite some evolution from the traditional portrayals of prostitution, clichés continued to prevail, and there remain serious challenges to advancing more complex discourses about the issue. While some of the news coverage of Ipswich indicates that there is concern about the current state of prostitution, much of the coverage lacked sensitivity or a sophistication of analysis. In general, as this dissertation showed, media coverage often distorts the issue of prostitution. Ultimately, only 8 percent of the sampled articles presented arguments that were balanced (using mainly socio-economic, versus emotionally affective or moralistic arguments). This may be chalked up to the political and cultural capitals of the news outlets. From the mid-2000s onwards, the top two claims were still that prostitution was a matter of women's victimization or a neutral business transaction, with inter-coder reliability suggesting that these broad patterns of discourse were consistent. Therefore, the conclusion that historical ideas of gender underscored many depictions of prostitution is not altered.

While the project was a media study, (not focused on recommendations but the context in which policy, feminist and public discussions are held,) its findings may point to some directions for policy and research. Habermas suggests that laws are founded on rational public consensus, which is predicated on public discourse, and on communicative ethics. Specific policy recommendations are outside the purview of the project but it is recommended that the policy making process follow Habermas' universal pragmatics by:



- Considering evidence and counter evidence
- Avoiding the use of un-examined, and culturally “loaded” language
- Having all the relevant players at the table for discussion, and,
- Achieving a consensus predicated on these communicative ethics

The familiar discourses, whether excessively lurid, pragmatic or moralistic, often go unchallenged by better information about women’s experiences in prostitution. There is also a need for further empirical analyses of institutional power structures and their impact on women’s “choices” or “consent” in entering the sex trade. The character of prostitution in the U.K. continues to change. The number of people entering prostitution is on the decline in urban centers like London and recent studies have estimated that 41 to 50 percent of sex workers in Britain are foreign-born (TAMPEP, 2009, p. 15; Hubbard et al., 2008, p. 139). There are a variety of experiences in the sex trade, with factors more complex than many popular depictions convey; public recognition of this is necessary to form appropriate policy.

The media play a crucial role in constructing discourses of prostitution for the public and policy makers. Media do not create attitudes and behaviours in a direct cause-and-effect manner, but can set the agenda for what the public thinks is important. Key findings of this project were that many media discourses are distorted compared to empirical realities, are often expressed in dualisms and dichotomies, and that literature provides alternative ways of conceptualizing questions of harm and choice. Ongoing analyses of the popular discourses that create the context of policy are necessary.

## Appendix 1 – Media Analysis: Coding Sheet

Article number:

Newspaper (circle one):    Guardian        Daily Mail

Date of publication:

Headline:

### Truth claims

*Dominant argument; prostitution as a phenomenon (circle one):*

**A1. Exploitation of women**

**A2. Business transaction (i.e. instrumental, neutral)**

**A.3. Empowering to women**

**A.4. Biologically inevitable**

**A.5. Illicit fun (“kinky,” “taboo” expressed positively)**

**A.6. Immoral (“spiritually degrading”)**

**A.7. Public health risk**

**A.8. Public nuisance**

**A.9. Other:**

*Characterization of sex workers:*

Characterization	Details provided:	Evidence provided
Economic Class	Impoverished/Homeless Low Working Middle High Other:	
Age		
Addictions	Alcohol Drug (specify):  Other:	

Mental illness		
Attractiveness		
Relationships		
Emotions		
Other		

*Characterization of clients:*

Characterization	Details provided:	Evidence provided
Class	Homeless Low Working Middle High Other:	
Age		
Addictions	Alcohol	

	Drug (specify): Other:	
Mental illness		
Attractiveness		
Relationships		
Emotions		
Occupation		
Other		

### **Sincerity**

*Nomenclature used for sex workers:*

Nomenclature	Number of references
Prostitute	
Sex Trade Worker/Sex Worker	
Hooker	
Call girl	
Street Walker	
Escort	
Whore	
Other:	

*Nomenclature used for clients:*

Nomenclature	Number of references
Client	
Kerb-crawler	
Punter	
Other:	

*Framing of sex workers:*

Framing	Associative Terms	Evidence provided
Victim		
Pragmatic		
Ambitious entrepreneur		
Con Artist		
Seducer		
Criminal		
Sinner		
Public Health		

Threat		
Public Nuisance		
Other		

*Framing of clients:*

Framing	Associative Terms	Evidence provided
Aggressor		
Client (Business/Neutral)		
Fool ("Easy Mark")		
Seducer		
Criminal		
Sinner		
Public Nuisance		

Public Health Threat		
Other		

## Legitimacy

*Article Sources: (circle all that apply)*

Sex worker(s)

Client(s)

Friend/family of sex worker(s)

Friend/family of client(s)

Police

Politician

Government

Advocate

Researcher

Local citizen

Other:

Balanced?    Y       N

## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> Following other researchers in the United Kingdom, this project will use the terms prostitution and sex work interchangeably. It should be noted that “sex work” is a less specific term that can sometimes refer to stripping or other work in the sex industry; in this project, sex work refers to prostitution.

<sup>ii</sup> See Brooks Gordon (2006), McKeganey and Barnard (1996), and Bullough and Bullough (1987), for long-term and cross-cultural studies of prostitution.

<sup>iii</sup> Again, although the law defines a person who exchanges sex for other resources, even if coerced, as a prostitute, this project explores non-coercive prostitution by adult women. It is acknowledged, however, that clear definitions of coercion and free will are not always applicable, as revealed by policy debates (Introduction), empirical studies of prostitution (Chapter Two) and as debated in feminist discussions (Chapter Three).

<sup>iv</sup> The commonly held view that Mary Magdalene was a prostitute has been critically assessed and disputed by many religious scholars including King (2003).

<sup>v</sup> Acton ends his work by expressing some doubts about the force of seduction and a comment about the preternatural promiscuity of many of the lower orders in London: “Certain quarters of the town are positively infested by juvenile offenders...It is true, these young things spring from the lowest dregs of the population, and from what I can learn of their habits, their seduction – if seduction it can be called – has been effected, with their own consent, by boys no older than themselves, and is an all but natural consequence of promiscuous herding, that mainspring of corruption among our lower orders” (p. 29).

<sup>vi</sup> See Fisher (1997) for more discussion of Victorian policies.



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<sup>vii</sup> This study included interviews with three male sex workers.

<sup>viii</sup> GMB stands for the “General, Municipal and Boilermaker’s” Union, one of the two giant general unions, along with the Transport and General Worker’s Union, in Great Britain.

<sup>ix</sup> The tests were carried out by designated official doctors.

<sup>x</sup> This argument was made, for example, in *The Westminster Review*, “Prostitution: Governmental Experiments in Controlling it,” Vol. 37, 1870, reprinted in Nield, 1972, pp. 151.

<sup>xi</sup> Some might argue its fundamental principles emerged with de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* (1953) or Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* (1963).

<sup>xii</sup> This villainization of the male client, or “kerb crawler,” is also evident in British policy discourses, from the Wolfenden Report of the 1950s to current Home Office policy dedicated to “tackling the demand” for prostitution by naming, shaming, charging and “re-educating” male clients. See Sanders (2009), Hubbard et al. (2008), and Kilvington et al. (2001).

<sup>xiii</sup> Other research situated sex even more generally in an historical global context as labour, positioning sex on a spectrum of women’s labour activities. See, for example, Karras (2004), “Women’s labors: reproduction and sex work in medieval Europe” and Guy (2004), “Sex work and women’s labor around the world.”

<sup>xiv</sup> Classic examples of such reconsiderations are studies on the liberatory potential of media texts such as soap operas by Modleski (1982), television serials such as *Sex in the City* (Akass & McCabe, 2006) or activities such as shopping (Storr, 2003).

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<sup>xv</sup> Ashby (2005) has linked neo-liberalism to Girl Power, an early aspect of post feminism. McRobbie (2006) has also argued that post feminism's assurance to women that they now lived in a meritocracy free of systemic barriers reified a New Labour brand of individualism (p. 63).

<sup>xvi</sup> One popular American feminist commentator on the pornification of culture was Ariel Levy (2006).

<sup>xvii</sup> O'Connell Davidson (1998/2003) identified an associated image of prostitutes as "tarts with hearts," who take a lighthearted approach to sex work and view their clients with benevolent fondness (p. 151). Examples of this image include the recent television characters of Bet Lynch (*Coronation Street*) and Kat Slater (*East Enders*).

<sup>xviii</sup> See Paglia (1990), Robertson (1996) or Shwichtenberg (1993).

<sup>xix</sup> The U.K. government has theoretically recognized the potential problem of displacing prostitutes to new spaces of exclusion, observing that "a comprehensive approach [is] necessary, in order to ensure that all sectors of the market for sex were tackled and to avoid the risk of displacement, from enforcing measures in one particular sector" (Home Office, 21).

<sup>xx</sup> Today, policy options and models of intervention include the Swedish model (criminalization of clients); the Dutch model (managed zones); the Victoria (Australia) model (licensed brothels); the New South Wales and Austrian models (registration) (Brooks-Gordon, 2006, p. 50). So-called compromise, or "soft policy options" include making use of funding to NGOs to carry out harm minimization models; rights-based approaches (improving the employment opportunities and human rights of sex workers; regulated tolerance/regulationism/regulated intolerance/negative regulationism (which

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are not approaches per se, but discourses of pragmatism that see sex work as a problematic social fact) (Phoenix, 2009, 14-15).

<sup>xxi</sup> Critical theory, including feminist theory, has historically conceptualized consent as either explicit, implicit or absent in individuals' actions, but postmodern theory has deconstructed the very concept of consent. Since Walter Benjamin and the Frankfurt school, many explored the structural limits that hinder individual choice in liberal capitalist economies. Marxist, feminist and post-colonial scholars historically identified systemic injustice against disenfranchised groups (i.e. infringements of rights, or the trampling of reasonable consent in contexts of labour, pay equity, or discrimination on the basis of race, class or gender, etc.) and prescribed compensatory infrastructures, such as socialistic policies. Until the postmodern turn, these theories imagined that the presence or absence of individuals' consent could be ascertained upon an assessment of socio-economic conditions and systemic gender, class, and/or racial hierarchies. Since the postmodern turn, these structural categories have been considered too broad and deterministic to be meaningful. Instead, postmodern critiques explored the possibility that individuals might identify in highly specific and dynamic ways within the conditions they face and theoretical notions of "coercion." More generally, postmodern criticism has questioned traditional feminist categories of subjectivity and experience. At the same time, in the West, neo-liberalism has promoted a credo of individual choice and self-determination through participation in the market. These developments have produced a post feminist movement that repudiates traditional, collective feminist goals.

<sup>xxii</sup> "Quality" is a term used within the newspaper industry, not a normative judgement.

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<sup>xxiii</sup> The Daily Mail ranks second after the tabloid broadsheet, *The Sun*, which had a circulation of approximately 3 million (Reynolds, 2010).

<sup>xxiv</sup> *The Daily Mail* has, as of 2005, consistently held the highest female readership (Cole, 2005).

<sup>xxv</sup> This possibility may be borne out in the increasing number of articles that have appeared during certain years over the last decade. See Table 1. *Guardian* and *Daily Mail*: comparative raw query results 2000-2009.

<sup>xxvi</sup> It was noted that the relevance algorithm would also be taken into account when generalizing the findings.

<sup>xxvii</sup> Hence, the participation of sources (i.e., inclusion/exclusion, voice/silence) was the focus of the examination of Legitimacy. This project is based on Habermas' notion that public opinion - conveyed in public sphere media such as newspapers - can come to represent a kind of social consensus, silencing those outside the consensus.

<sup>xxviii</sup> Other non-British studies of media discourses of prostitution include Dando (U.S.A., 2009), Hallgrimsdottir, H.K. et al. (Canada, 2006), Stenvoll (Norway, 2002), Lowman (Canada, 2000); and Grjebine (India, Malaysia, Philippines, 1987).

<sup>xxix</sup> Other popular Neo-Victorian works featuring prostitute protagonists not discussed in this thesis include Shari Holman's *The Dress Lodger* (2000), *The Observations* (2006) by Jane Harris, and Phillipa Stockley's *A Factory of Cunning* (2006).

<sup>xxx</sup> Hiebert Alton (2003), for example, has traced portrayals of childhood from the nineteenth-century to the *Harry Potter* series.

<sup>xxxi</sup> Examples of other neo-Victorian novels include: *Mr. Pip* by Lloyd Jones (2006), the story of a character's attachment to *Great Expectations*; *The Master*, by Colm Toibin

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(2004), a fictional portrait of Henry James; and *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1996) by Jean Rhys and *Charlotte* (2000), by D.M. Thomas, a prequel and a rewriting, respectively, of *Jane Eyre*.

<sup>xxxii</sup> Ultimately, “neo-Victorianism embraces a kind of democratism of imaginative representation that is not always found in Victorianism” (Llewelyn, 2008, p. 167). Nineteenth-century works also used the female image to address larger social issues. Writers such as Thackeray (*Vanity Fair*), Trollope (*Can You Forgive Her?*), and Eliot (*Middlemarch*, *Daniel Deronda*) among others, gave voice to questions about the meaning of women’s roles and ambitions, but also reflected more expansively on the ethics of industrial capitalism and class ascension. Ruskin argued that the role of literature during the Victorian era was not only to make women’s issues manifest, but to explore the emotional life in all people, which was threatened by nineteenth century industrial capitalism (Davis, 2002, p. 251). The Victorian subgenres of sensation novel and New Woman fiction were explorations of the deviant and defiant female. Observing the modern trend in prostitute protagonists, scholars such as Anderson (1993) have noted that women’s transgression as subject matter has a rich history in Victorian writing. Nineteenth-century fiction with gender-transgressive themes include Mary Augusta Ward’s *Marcella* (1894) and Mona Caird’s *Daughters of Danaus* (1894).

<sup>xxxiii</sup> The analysis looked at slightly fewer *Daily Mail* articles (167 in total) than *Guardian* articles (175 in total). Thus, comparisons between the papers are made according to percentages, versus raw numbers.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> The few multi-faceted articles that express the point that *prostitution is difficult to generalize about* (A.11.) draw on the similar conclusions of various prostitution studies.

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<sup>xxxv</sup> In the year 2000, the most prevalent claim about prostitution was that it was a neutral business transaction, characterizing nine, or 30 percent of articles sampled. This was closely followed by the claim that prostitution was the victimization/exploitation of women, evident in eight, or 27 percent of articles. By 2003, the most common claim of that year was that prostitution was a matter of illicit fun; this claim was seen in 29 percent of articles. However, the year 2003 is distinguished by having a relatively even distribution of the claims, and the small number of articles – seven – with this claim limits conclusions about wider cultural trends. In the year 2004, statistical differences become slightly more significant. The most frequently occurring claim was that prostitution is the exploitation or victimization of women, now evident 31 percent of articles, followed by the claim that it was immoral, seen in 17 percent of articles. In 2005, the argument that prostitution is the exploitation or victimization of women was again most common, observable in 28 percent of articles, followed by the claims that it was neutral or illicit fun, both observed in 13 percent of articles.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Initially, the raw query results also revealed significant peaks during the period of 2006 to 2008. However, it must be noted that these raw numbers included a small number of duplicate articles, as well as articles unrelated to prostitution caught by Boolean search terms. They also reflect articles discussing male or underage prostitution, issues that are outside the scope of this project's analysis. For this reason, firm conclusions were not drawn based on raw total reference amounts.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Although appearing at a low overall statistical rate, this last was found to be a trope in articles describing murdered women. For example, a *Daily Mail* article from 2000 describing the trial of a murderer of prostitutes notes the presence of the victim's mother

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in court and concludes with her statement that “To me, she [the murdered daughter] meant everything. I really miss her. She was a prostitute but she was still my daughter” (DM2000/5). More comment on this characterization will be included in the Conclusion.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> This figure includes characterizations of alcoholism, represented as other in Table 6.4.

<sup>xxxix</sup> *The Daily Mail* appears to acknowledge its middle/working class position and capital and there are several examples of its critique of upper class pretension. In one article about a woman who was profiled in the broadsheet press for becoming a sex worker to pay her child’s school fees, a reporter mocks *The Guardian*, *Independent*, *Spectator* and *Telegraph* as “posh papers” who were “fooled” into believing that “a Hovis hooker” was really “an English Rose.” By contrast, it claimed that it would reveal the sordid and immoral story behind her class pretence: “The Mail on Sunday can reveal today that she is simply a common prostitute, an alcoholic whose former husband calls her a 100 per cent liar” (DM2003/62).

<sup>xl</sup> The idealization of the gentry wife came to be known as “woman worship” during the 1860s (Houghton, 1957, p. 350).

<sup>xli</sup> Gendered theories of excessive male sexuality were already pervasive in Europe. Poovey (1988) argues that the conception of men and women’s opposite sexual natures was based on a scientific conception of male and female bodies as binary opposites that dated back to the Renaissance (p. 6). As early as the Middle Ages in Europe, writes Salmon (2008), prostitutes were considered “a necessary evil, an outlet for the intense male sex drive” (p. 122). Napoleon Bonaparte is alleged to have said, “Prostitutes are a necessity. Without them, men would attack respectable women on the streets” (Bullough

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and Bullough, 1987, p. 188). For further reading on earlier historical theories of sexuality see Schiebinger (1989) and Tuana (1993).

<sup>xlii</sup> It should be noted that there is another nuance to many Victorian discourses of gender and prostitution, related to class. As noted in Chapter Two, women of the lower classes were described as being more naturally inclined to prostitution than higher classes.

Though Dr. Barr demonstrates sympathy and hope for the women held under the Contagious Diseases Act, his testimony stipulates that reform was only possible “taking into consideration the natural bent of women...of this class” (Committee, 1866/1989, p. 29). Spongberg (1997) argues that Darwinism helped to propagate the idea of prostitutes as atavistic and uncivilized, “As evolutionary ideas spread, prostitutes began to be seen not merely as pathological females but as atavistic” but ideas of prostitutes being the product of poor breeding and so physically degenerate, had been around since the 1830s” (p.7).

<sup>xliii</sup> Proponents of the Contagious Diseases Acts, such as Dr. Barr and Acton, also viewed women as salvageable and the beneficiaries of reform. Dr. Barr claimed to have observed dramatically “altered conduct” in “temper and disposition” on the part of women who were forcibly subjected to Lock Hospital treatment and a stay on the “monotonous wards” (Committee, 1866/1889, p. 29).

<sup>xliv</sup> This is not to suggest that Darwin would have deemed prostitution natural to modern man. It is possible to conclude that Darwin believed that the sex drive of the male was higher than the female’s, but *Descent* did not posit that casual copulation on the part of modern human males was natural. Darwin reported that polygamous and polyandrous human cultures likely existed before modern man’s emergence, as a mechanism that



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ultimately ensured man's survival. He also reported that polygamous or "licentious" cultures continued to exist. But Darwin made distinctions between past "primitive" man, contemporary "savage" man (his name for various global tribes), and modern, "civilized" man. Despite the existence of polygamy and promiscuity throughout time, Darwin did not think that modern man behaved like his ancestors or "savage" man. He noted that, "at a very early period, before man attained to his present rank in the scale, many of his conditions would be different from what now obtains among savages" (Darwin, 1886/1972, p. 594). Darwin's main arguments against the continuation of promiscuity were sexual jealousy among males, which lead to violence, but also, he suggested, a kind of natural satiation on the part of males who had successfully mated with one desirable female (Darwin, 1886/1972, pp. 589-90).

<sup>xlv</sup> Albeit, McRobbie writes, with an individualistic, neo-Liberal emphasis (p.2).

<sup>xlvi</sup> For instance, there are some researchers who claim that men's evolutionary desire for a variety of casual female sexual partners is the explanation for prostitution. For example, evolutionary psychologist Catherine Salmon's article, "The World's Oldest Profession: Evolutionary Insights into Prostitution" argues that,

Ancestral men and woman differed in some of the adaptive problems they encountered in the mating arena. However similar women and men's parenting investments may have been, their minimum possible investments differed significantly. If a man fathered a child in whom he did not invest, this reproduction would have occurred at almost no cost. Even if such opportunities did not come along frequently in ancestral human populations, taking advantage of them when they did was adaptive enough that males evolved a sexual

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psychology that makes low-cost sex with a new woman exciting enough both to imagine (fantasy and pornography) and to engage in (one-night stands and prostitutes), and that motivates men to seek out such opportunities...(Salmon 127).

<sup>xlvii</sup> Many of the historical terms that originated at this time, identifying women as prostitutes, for example, “common prostitute,” as well as strategies, such as fining women who “loiter” or exhibit anti-social behaviour have also survived to this day. The term “common prostitute” was used until the 1990s and “ASBOS,” the Anti-Social Behaviour Order continue to be applied. The endurance of these policies and terms also suggests that nineteenth century discourses continue to inform contemporary ones.

<sup>xlviii</sup> This framing of prostitution as a matter of public nuisance above moral concerns appears to be illustrated by a published letter to the editor in *The Daily Mail* that calls for government to “Legalise all vices” in non-residential areas “so children, women, and...men don’t have to put up with it” (DM2007/136).

<sup>xlix</sup> See Lillian Faderman and Sharon Marcus on the subject of women’s relationships in the Victorian era.

<sup>1</sup> Sugar’s intense spiritual status anxiety is also similar to that described by cultural philosophers writing during the nineteenth century. There are rich insights by those who first witnessed the intensification of capitalism, the Victorians, and questions, first intuited during the Victorian era by philosophers such as Mill, remain unanswered today about the limits of individual choice and consent in capitalist economies where social disparities persist. The lack, rather than enhancement, of individual control that accompanied capitalism has also been documented in terms of its phenomenological effects among ordinary people. By the 1860s, writes Evans (1957), “Laissez faire was

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dead in economic theory, but it was still alive as a social fact...[the government] did nothing active in themselves to advance the physical, mental and spiritual welfare of individual citizens” (p. 159). Among Victorian poet philosophers there was a general recognition of the impact of industrial capitalism on people’s self-determination and also the intangible aspects of happiness. After male members of the masses were granted the vote in 1867, philosophers such as Carlyle questioned the quality of life that extended beyond governmental action or the new (basic) level of health ensured by improved factory conditions (Altick, 1973, p. 50). These critics of liberal capitalism pointed out the need for intervention, as well as the inappropriateness of reductive economic models to human relations.

<sup>li</sup> See, for example, Baker (1996).

<sup>lii</sup> Public concern for the women was also demonstrated when the *News of the World* offered a £250,000 reward for information leading to the arrest of the murderer, believed to be the largest press reward offered in history. The *Independent* newspaper likewise reported that the public response to police requests for tips had been "massive" (Farmer pars. 1, 2).

## Reference List

*The Daily Mail*

**2000**

- DM2000/1: Brocklebank, J. (2000, April 17). Police back bid for prostitutes' tolerance zone. *DAILY MAIL (London)*, p. 19.
- DM2000/2: Sears, N. (2000, May 26). 'Red-light preacher'; clergyman found with a prostitute in his car says he was reaching out to sinners. *DAILY MAIL (London)*, p. 23.
- DM2000/3: Kalman, M. (2000, December 13). Prostitutes are executed in new Saddam terror. *DAILY MAIL (London)*, p. 37.
- DM2000/4: (2000, August 23). GBP 1.8 m bid to get prostitutes off the street and into work. *DAILY MAIL (London)*, p. 7.
- DM2000/5: Price, S. W., & Richard. (2000, March 15). Did midlands Ripper kill ten more girls? *DAILY MAIL (London)*, p. 5.
- DM2000/6: Sears, N. (2000, March 10). I am merely carrying out a survey, said police surgeon caught in car with vice girl; doctor cleared for lack of evidence two minutes before witness turns up. *DAILY MAIL (London)*, p. 5.
- DM2000/7: Dawson, T. (2000, May 10). Cut jail figures 'by legalising prostitution'. *DAILY MAIL (London)*, p. 16.
- DM2000/8: Sears, N. (2000, June 9). I only gave prostitute GBP 30 to avoid trouble claims clergyman. *DAILY MAIL (London)*, p. 31.
- DM2000/9: Wilkes, S. W., & David. (2000, August 1). The GBP 7.5m madam in wooly slippers. *DAILY MAIL (London)*, p. 8.
- DM2000/10: Boshoff, A. (2000, February 19). Oscar in hard knocks. *DAILY MAIL (London)*, p. 26.
- DM2000/11: (2000, March 9). Prostitutes go on strike to fight Soho 'cleanup' *DAILY MAIL (London)*, p. 19.
- DM2000/12: Lowther, W. (2000, May 7). How computers killed the king of nerds...; he gave the world access to the internet and could have been another Bill Gates but he died in a seedy world of booze and strippers. Is Phillip Katz's obsession with computers a terrifying lesson for us all? *Mail on Sunday*, pp. 49;50;51.
- DM2000/13: Banks, K. (2000, August 16). The northern red-light shame of football boss; Aberdeen chief quits over a call girl liaison. *DAILY MAIL (London)*, p. 14.
- DM2000/14: Barnes, E. (2000, November 22). Teenager in care died of overdose while working as a city prostitute; grieving mother tells of how she struggled in vain to save her daughter. *DAILY MAIL (London)*, p. 17.
- DM2000/15: eliminated

DM2000/16: (2000, July 8). *DAILY MAIL (London)*, p. 44.

DM2000/17: Morris, B. (2000, February 3). You won't guess my secret; Sandra Hobson is daughter to a Harley Street doctor. She looks like any other smart suburban housewife...yet her double life is utterly immoral. *DAILY MAIL (London)*, p. 60.

DM2000/18: Daniels, A. (2000, March 14). Germany's top chain of sex shops, run by an ex-Luftwaffe woman pilot, is about to invade Britain. I had expected to find a den of iniquity but I've seen more eroticism at C&A. *DAILY MAIL (London)*, p. 13.

## **2001**

DM2001/19: Campbell, C. (2001, April 20). My escape from a life of shame. *DAILY MAIL (London)*, pp. 32;33.

DM2001/20: Doughty, S. (2001, March 30). Why we should let streets be vice zones, by labour peer. *DAILY MAIL (London)*, p. 31.

DM2001/21: O'Kelly, S. (2001, November 18). Seven women dead and a city in fear... *Mail on Sunday*, p. 62.

DM2001/22: Clarke, M. (2001, October 30). Magistrates call for brothels to be made legal. *Daily Mail (London)*, p. 37.

DM2001/23: Hunter, D. (2001, May 9). City plans zones for prostitutes. *DAILY MAIL (London)*, p. 8.

DM2001/24: Gilbride, F. (2001, August 4). Move on girls, the neighbours are outraged. *DAILY MAIL (London)*, p. 6.

DM2001/25: Walker, S. (2001, April 7). From nice gal to vice girl. *DAILY MAIL (London)*, pp. 26; 27.

DM2001/26: Sears, N. (2001, January 30). The church-going grandfather didn't dare tell his magistrate he was in trouble over a prostitute. But on the day of his court appearance he could hide the secret no longer – she was the JP hearing the case. *DAILY MAIL (London)*, p. 7.

DM2001/27: Craven, N. (2001, April 28). Monica and son, real victims of this sorry affair. *DAILY MAIL (London)*, p. 4.

DM2001/28: Gray, R. (2001, August 31). Protests force police to close official zone for city's vice girls. *DAILY MAIL (London)*, p. 20.

DM2001/29: Ramsay, G. (2001, August 11). The price we pay for sex. *DAILY MAIL (London)*, p. 15.

DM2001/30: Dawson, T. (2001, February 22). 'Obsessed' student is freed on gun charge. *DAILY MAIL (London)*, p. 34.

DM2001/31: (2001, August 8). Fury at doctor's call to legalise brothels *DAILY MAIL (London)*, p. 15.

- DM2001/32: Brocklebank, J. (2001, March 1). My fond memories of the world's oldest profession, by marquess, aged 80; Peer's shock revelations of his youthful exploits. *DAILY MAIL (London)*, p. 17.
- DM2001/33: Stephen, J. (2001, April 15). Money for old grope. *Mail on Sunday*, p. 69.
- DM2001/34: Harris, P. (2001, June 1). Archer and the Diary of Deceit. *DAILY MAIL (London)*, p. 10.
- DM2001/35: Wright, S. (2001, July 20). MI5 spied on his sex sessions with Monica. *DAILY MAIL (London)*, p. 4.
- DM2001/36: Chapman, A. (2001, October 28). Prostitute in Archer case died penniless: Vice girl killed in car crash went on 'downhill path' after being declared bankrupt. *Mail on Sunday*, p. 21.

## **2002**

- DM2002/37: Bracchi, P. (2002, June 20). She's an arts lecturer who boasts a PhD and loves the ballet, yet Marie-Anne became a GBP 500 a time call girl. Now, with a champagne lifestyle, she's paid to be the 'companion' of a banker she doesn't even like...; my boyfriend hated it when I had sex with other men. *DAILY MAIL (London)*, p. 48.
- DM2002/38: Brooke, C. (2002, November 22). Guardians of the poor in GBP 172,000 sex junket; they were meant to help the needy. *DAILY MAIL (London)*, pp. 38;39.
- DM2002/39: Wingett, F. (2002, June 9). Angus Deayton gags the MoS from revealing sex scandal that will shock even his closest friends; Shamed presenter's lawyers in dramatic three-hour court battle to halt devastating fresh disclosures. *Mail on Sunday*, p. 12.
- DM2002/40: Sparks, I. (2002, May 15). 'Queen of vice' held. *DAILY MAIL (London)*, p. 37.
- DM2002/41: Taylor, B. (2002, April 2). Was vice girl victim...? *DAILY MAIL (London)*, p. 32.
- DM2002/42: Barnes, E. (2002, October 30). 'Red light' bill to let prostitutes work city streets. *DAILY MAIL (London)*, p. 19.
- DM2002/43: Mckinstry, L. (2002, April 9). Was the prostitutes' padre innocent after all? *DAILY MAIL (London)*, p. 29.
- DM2002/44: Barnes, E. (2002, June 1). Police warn they will not tolerate prostitute zones. *DAILY MAIL (London)*, p. 37.
- DM2002/45: Wright, D. & W. Stephen. (2002, June 15). Downfall of Britain's first dotcom millionaire pimp; girls who were a mouse click away. *DAILY MAIL (London)*, p. 31.
- DM2002/46: Weathers, H. (2002, November 21). Career girl to call girl ; when Sarah Caine moved to the Cotswolds, her neighbours admired her designer clothes and BMW...but she wasn't all she seemed. *DAILY MAIL (London)*, pp. 58;59.
- DM2002/47: Gardham, D. (2002, June 25). A coach, a call girl, the star player and the owner's son accused of beating him up. *DAILY MAIL (London)*, p. 5.

- DM2002/48: Anisa, F. W., Robert Turner, & Nadia. (2002, September 29). I SENT HOOKERS TO SADDAM; three girls died to satisfy tyrant's appalling lust says the Iraqi Embassy's pimp. *Mail on Sunday*, pp. 34;35.
- DM2002/49: Jeffreys, D. (2002, June 7). Unrepentant monster: Psychopath, wife beater, rapist and the highest earning boxer in history. So why is Mike Tyson so unashamedly evil? *DAILY MAIL (London)*, p. 48.
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