

What difference does inclusive language make?

Mapping out discourses in the Norwegian prostitution field



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30 ECTS Credit

Spring 2023

Acknowledgements

This study is my final project at the Master's Program *Global Development in Theory and Practice* at the University of Bergen. This has been a process that has been full of challenges, highlights, and valuable lessons. I have many people I wish to express my gratitude to.

First and foremost, I wish to express my gratitude to all of my wonderful participants that accepted my request to be a part of this study. Thank you for taking your time to share your insightful wisdoms, reflections, and patience (especially when it came to my, at times, digital incompetence). I would also like to give my sincere thanks to my contacts at FOKUS – Forum for Women and Development, where I conducted my internship, for your never-ending kindness.

I express my greatest gratitude to my supervisor at University of Bergen, Siri Lange. Thank you for support, guidance, resources, and advice. I am especially grateful for always showing great enthusiasm for this study and my ideas, which encouraged me to push on with this project.

My heartfelt thanks to all my dear family & friends who has supported me throughout this project, it means everything. Especially thanks to Synne, Kathrine & Marie for always brightening my mood, being by my side, encouraging words and for spending hours this semester listening to me talk about my thesis. Finally, thank you Jørgen, for your continuous love and support, for proof-reading, for always believing in me, and for always making me laugh.

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Abstract:

People in prostitution are frequently referred to in derogatory and condescending ways. Contemporary debates on prostitution have been characterized by diverging feminist approaches. These approaches are rooted in contesting assumptions about prostitution, and policies. At the same time, poverty, the upsurge in natural disasters, and wars increase the risk for vulnerable people to get sex trafficked, something that has made human trafficking and prostitution closely linked together. Norway has a unique approach to prostitution policy and have what is called a “Sex Purchase Act”. This act criminalizes buying sex, while selling sex is legal. The debates about prostitution, and how we talk about people in prostitution are particularly interesting in a time when people are opposing “wokeness”, and what is perceived as a way of policing language.

This thesis aims to explore how organisations working in the fields of prostitution and/or human trafficking experience the prostitution discourse. Additionally, it aims to explore why it is important to care about discourse, especially in relation to marginalized groups. Data was collected through a qualitative study which included five in-depth interviews with seven participants, representing different organisations in the field. The data was coded inductively, using discourse analysis and empowerment as the conceptual frameworks.

All the organisations made attempts to not use terms that they themselves find stigmatising or ill-fitting for them as an organisation to use. For instance, all organisations have shifted from using the term “prostitute” as it is perceived as negatively framing a person in prostitution. However, all organisations still use the term “prostitution”, since it does not say anything about the person involved. Furthermore, the thesis explores and discusses how the organisations talk about the term “sex work”, and the binary categories of “helpless victim” and “happy sex worker” that have been proposed by public media. This study proposes that being conscious about discourse is a tool for the organisations to care about their clients. It is also important to understand that all the organisations’ reflections are based on their own discursive realities.

Key words: discourse analysis, prostitution discourse, prostitution field in Norway, gender studies, empowerment-theory

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

“Language is power, life and the instrument of culture, the instrument of domination and liberation” – Angela Carter.

Over the past year I found myself having several discussions with peers, family, and friends about the concept of being “woke”. Most of the discussions are concerned with whether it is something that is harming or benefitting the public debate. Originally, being “woke” was the equivalent of being well informed and up to date (Oxford, 2017). To “stay woke” was originally slang for being aware of or conscious of racism constituted by white supremacy (Cammaerts, 2022). The term has since expanded from its original roots in black culture. “Woke” can be defined as being a person that is aware and actively conscious about societal facts and issues, especially of racial or societal justice (Merriam-Webster, 2023). Social media and digital culture have simultaneously given the term its immense popularity and facilitated its downfall (Vela, 2022). Appearing “woke” on digital platforms is something that has up until recently been viewed as desirable by activists and celebrities. However, there has been a growing body of critique against this notion the last couple of years, and it has been deemed as “virtue signalling” which has contributed to distancing the term from its original meaning (Sobande, Kanai & Zeng, 2022). Moreover, it has since become a term that has been used to ridicule the people in favour of using the term (Vela, 2022), typically as a form of right-wing humour used against “sensitive” people belonging to the political left (Sobande, Kanai & Zeng, 2022). In Norway, popular news outlets write stories about young people calling themselves “anti-woke” criticising it for being political correctness going “too far” (Pang, 2023), while other actors deem it as a method of throttling freedom of speech and withholding democratic values (Bandeby, 2023). Furthermore, “woke-culture” is blamed for policing language and terminology (Cooperman, 2023). Is “woke-culture” nothing but a tool used by certain groups to limit freedom of speech?

This development serves as an interesting backdrop for this master thesis, which aims to explore discourses within the prostitution field. One argument often heard about (and from) people within prostitution is that they often experience being framed into stereotypical and

reductional categories (Stella, 2013). Furthermore, traditional understandings of prostitution are expanding alongside with technological advancements. Some of the prostitution field has for instance started to move over to digital platforms and have made experts on the field question whether “webcamming” or “sugar-dating” can be categorized as prostitution (Kock, 2020). Globalisation and migration led to an increase of migrants selling sex in Norway (Norli, 2006). This also heightened the risk of human trafficking, as wars, natural disasters, poverty, and illegal migration are all factors increasing the probability of sex trafficking (Andreassen & Holm-Glad, 2022). Paying attention to language and terminology is relevant for the field of global development in general. Scholars are for instance proposing to use terminology like “the majority world” or “the global south”, rather than “developing countries” or “the third world” (Jakobsen, 2012). These factors call for a constant evaluation of the discourses surrounding prostitution; Thus, this study attempts to investigate some of the reasons why it is still important to care about discourse, and what kind of impact language can have when we talk about marginalized groups.

1.2 Context – The development of policies regarding prostitution in Norway

In Norway, the sale of sex occurs on primarily two spheres. The first one is called the “indoors marked”, (*innemarked*). These are arenas where buying/selling sexual services is scheduled at another place than the public, such as in apartments or massage parlours. This is the most common form of prostitution in Norway. “Street-prostitution”, (*gateprostitusjon*), happens in public spaces. It is common that the people selling sex are approached at set locations by the buyers (Norli, 2009). Migration based on selling sex has been prominent in Europe for centuries and has typically been associated with a high degree of mobility. In Norway it is not illegal for migrants who do not have a workers permit to sell sex, as selling sex is not recognised as work (Pro Sentret, n.d.b). While it is challenging to properly map out tendencies in the Norwegian prostitution field, there has been some observation made on how it has shifted throughout the years. The dominant group in street-prostitution before the turn of the millennium used to be Norwegian women with drug addictions (Norli, 2009). From the year 1999 there was a drastic influx of migran women selling sex, both in the indoors marked and in street-prostitution (Norli, 2006).

In 2000, the UN convention against transnational organised crime released the Palermo-protocol, which aimed to suppress and prevent trafficking in human beings. This protocol called especially for the protection of young children and women (General Assembly, 2001, p. 32). In 2008 the Norwegian government introduced a new law regarding buying sexual services, which was implemented the 1st of January 2009 (Rasmussen et al., 2014). The law, called the Sex Purchase Act (*Sexkjøpsloven*), was inspired by a similar law introduced in Sweden in 1999 as a mode to combat violence against women. The law criminalizes the buyer by making it illegal to buy sex, while protecting the seller by not criminalizing the selling of sex (Danna, 2011). Countries like Iceland, Northern Ireland and France among others have since decided to implement the “Nordic model” with the intention to combat exploitation and the demand side that drives sex trafficking (Nordic Model Now, n.d.). While the Norwegian Sex Purchase Act is an interesting topic in and of itself, it is not the focus of this master thesis. It is however important to recognize the law as part of the framework for the discourse on prostitution in Norway. Contemporary debates on prostitution internationally are often concerned with which method is best suited to address the issue. Should one criminalise the buyer as an attempt to minimize demand, or is it better to find a way to regulate the market? Activists and feminist groups disagree with each other on what is the best approach, which is part of the reason that it might be a challenging topic to discuss. It is argued that contemporary debates on prostitution stems from the “sex wars” happening in the 1980s, where the two opposing sides were either abolitionists or “pro-rights”. This type of rhetoric, that started in the US, still has an immense influence on how we talk and think about prostitution (Baker, 2015). The aim of this thesis is therefore not to argue for or against any approach to the topic, but rather to investigate the contemporary discourse regarding prostitution in Norway.

Discussions regarding prostitution, especially linked to the Scandinavian model, are highly gendered. One common perception is that buying sex is an act of violence done to women by men. This reduces women that sells sex to victims, while simultaneously eliminating the voices of male and transgender selling sex (Bjørndahl, 2010). In Norway there are various organisations that works for and with people in prostitution, and who have experienced different forms of exploitation. The purpose of this study is therefore also to explore whether debates surrounding people selling sex in Norway has a strong binary-position. The study will

also attempt to explore how the words we use about people selling sex might create a gendered bias within this topic.

1.3 Research Questions

This study aims to explore contemporary discourses within the Norwegian prostitution field. I wish to further explore how different organisations working with people in prostitution consciously use language, and how they reflect on some of the terminology relating to the field. The study will look more closely at the following research questions:

- *What kind of terminology do five organisations in the Norwegian prostitution field choose to use when talking about the field of prostitution?*

- *How do the organisations reflect upon the terminology that they choose not to use?*

1.4 Structure of the thesis

This introduction is followed by seven additional chapters. The following chapter presents the conceptual framework of the thesis. The third chapter reviews the relevant literature on the field. Chapter four outlines the methodological approach used to conduct my study. Chapter five briefly presents the organisations that were interviewed. In chapter six the findings from the study are presented. Chapter seven discusses the findings in relation to previous literature and the theoretical framework. Finally, chapter eight gives a conclusion to the thesis, and outlines suggestions for future research.

2 Conceptual framework

This chapter will discuss the conceptual framework of the thesis. I will use discourse theory and analysis, as well as empowerment as my conceptual framework. The theories will be presented and discussed, and relevant research using these theories will be presented. By combining these two theories, we can explore whether language and shaping of discourses can be used as a source of empowerment.

2.1 Discourse theory & analysis

Contemporary understandings of discourse theory are built on a framework for understanding social phenomenon conceptualized by Michel Foucault. Foucault define discourse as an institutionalized way of speaking or writing about reality, which defines what can be said and thought (Bhattarai, 2020). In other words, discourses can influence the way we talk, think, and interpret a subject. Different discursive frames influence the way people understand the same phenomenon (Johannessen, Rafoss & Rasmussen, 2018). In discourse theory language has a very central position, as it is both constructed and biased. The way people talk about an issue reveal something about their own personal beliefs regarding the matter (Gill, 2000; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2013). Human action is also assumed to be permeated by language. Foucault describes discourses as a social practice, with their own sociohistorical context of production. In other words, all discourses exist and are shaped by different contexts, actors, and historical milestones surrounding them (Carbó, et al., 2016).

Discourse analysis is a method to interpret and study text. There are multiple ways a researcher can conduct a discourse analysis, and no fixed ideal type. One of the dimensions researchers seek to explore using discourse analysis is how socially constructed knowledge and processes are linked to actions and practices, and how they shape the way we understand the world (Gill, 2000). Rosalind Gill (2000) argues that *“It is useful to think of discourse analysis as having four main themes: a concern with discourse itself; a view of language as constructive and constructed; an emphasis upon discourse as a form of action; and a conviction in the rhetorical organization of discourse”* (p. 174). Discourse analyses are dependent on the theme of the study and the researcher themselves. The analysis is often concerned with what ideals, attitudes and values that are deciphered in the written or spoken text. It is therefore possible to conduct a discourse analysis using data that has been gathered

and transcribed by the researcher, as is the case for my master thesis (Johannessen, Rafoss & Rasmussen, 2018). A discourse analysis is meant to be used as a tool for the researcher to investigate how meaning through discourse is constructed and negotiated in socially relevant situations (Carbó et al., 2016).

Discourses and action exist in a symbiotic relationship. Discourse influences action - actions influence discourses (Johannessen, Rafoss & Rasmussen, 2018). May-Len Skilbrei & Charlotta Holmström (2016) have investigated how this affect discourses on the prostitution field. When talking about how prostitution policies has been implemented in the Scandinavian countries and Finland they write “*These legal reforms have (...) been influenced by different national and international discourses on prostitution, gender, sexuality, public space, social work, criminal justice, human trafficking and immigration, as well as by welfare state policies*” (p. 1). Various forms of discourse analysis have also been conducted on the prostitution field. Some of the analysis concern how discourses regarding gendered norms and morality on people selling sex shape their sense of self (Jordal, Öhman & Wijewardene, 2020; Stenvoll, 2002). Others explore whether discourse on selling sex as “sex work” perpetuate gendered expectations to selling and buying sex (Weatherall & Priestely, 2001).

2.2 Empowerment theory

Naila Kabeer (2005) defines power as the ability to make choices, which suggests lack of power means to be denied choice. From this context empowerment can be understood as the act of somebody that has previously been denied choices, acquiring the ability to make choices (p. 13). Empowerment can be examined through three dimensions: *agency*, *resources*, and *achievements*. In empowerment theory, agency is when a person has the power to *make* and *act on* own life choices, regardless of other actors’ opposition to this. Moreover, it is equally important to have a sense of agency, as empowerment is affected by how people see themselves, which will affect the way they are seen by society (Kabeer, 2005, p. 14).

Resources provide people with the ability to make use of their agency. Resources can be accessed through other actors. In development work, resources are typically provided by Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). It can also be accessed through other forms of organisations. Padmaja Barua & Haldis Haukanes (2020) have written an article about female workers in India that unionized. They argue that the women achieved empowerment from within after

this unionization. Lastly, achievements can be measured through the individual's potential, which is accessed through their agency and resources. It is important to look at these three dimensions as intertwined, as changes in one of the dimensions will affect the other (Kabeer, 2005, p. 15).

Empowerment is a concept that is widely used, and it can hold different meanings depending on the actor. Moreover, the term empowerment has been criticised for being a buzzword that has diverted from its original meaning and value, and that has the tendency of employing a top-down perspective (Batliwala, 2007; Cornwall & Rivas, 2015). An example of a top-down perspective can be found in the Millennium Development Goal of "empowering all women and girls". The focus is often on how women are either victims of discriminatory practices or heroines that, after being "lifted" out from said practices, contribute to value creation in their local communities (Cornwall & Rivas, 2015, p. 400). When talking about women's empowerment the concept indicates that the person has in some way been disempowered. Empowerment is also not something that can be received through a third party. The third party can in many ways facilitate empowerment, but it is the person itself who achieves empowerment. Empowerment is also an ongoing process, with no end goal. Not all have the same opportunities for empowerment, and it is therefore important to employ an intersectional lens when discussing empowerment theory. Dimensions such as class, ethnicity, and gender should be taken into account (Mosedale, 2005). It is especially important to consider these in development studies, as ideas and modes of empowerment might vary from different cultures and classes. The global north has for instance been criticised for failing to recognise women's rights in the Middle East and pushing their own ideas of empowerment into the discourse (Abu-Lughod, 2009).

Empowerment discourse has been politicised throughout the years and have been among others adopted by social movement groups (Batliwala, 2007). Within the prostitution field, empowerment can in some cases be used to address what sort of resources and needs the people selling sex themselves identify (Wanjiru, et al., 2022). Another approach challenges the construction of a victim-narrative, as this takes away the person selling sex's agency and source of empowerment. This approach argues that both people who voluntarily sell sex and people who are victims of human trafficking should be empowered (Cojocar, 2016). One

study also proposes that women's organisations can be used to empower women selling sex into finding a job that does not stigmatize them to the same great extent that prostitution does (Khanza et al., 2015). Alline Pedra Jorge-Birol (2011), argue that human trafficking victims should be empowered through other actors, like law enforcements and sufficient support systems.

3 Literature review

This section is a literature review covering mostly prostitution and human trafficking. I conducted the literature review both before and after the data collection process. The first part consists of an overview of dynamic, international feminist theories and attitudes towards the field of prostitution, which is ultimately linked up to the Norwegian Sex Purchase Act. Then I go through what kind of research that has been conducted in Norway on the prostitution field. Lastly, I address some of the gaps that I have identified in the literature. I conducted most of the literature search in English, as I found it challenging to find relevant and recent articles on the prostitution field in Norwegian. Almost all the articles were peer-reviewed. I used the database “Oria” and to some extent “Google Scholar” to search for publications. I ran several searches with key words like “prostitution and feminism”, “prostitution and the Nordic model”, “sex work and feminism”, “prostitution debate in Norway”. Using the same search words in Norwegian gave me far less and more inaccurate results.

3.1 Attitudes from the feminist movement

Sex-selling has been a contested topic throughout history. Annette Jolin (1994) argues that debates on the prostitution field usually harms the person selling sex, as they are usually heavily debated and not given the voice to speak on the matter. This argument is strengthened by looking more closely at how the image of the person selling sex, usually a woman, was perceived as either as a victim of (male) lust or a “contagion of evil” (Liggins, 2003). Some of the non-feminist critique of prostitution in the global north has previously regarded prostitution as something that can be perceived as immoral and sinful, all the while portraying the person selling sex as a greedy actor (Jaggar, 1997). Furthermore, early feminist attitudes towards prostitution perceived people selling sex as “fallen women” and stressed the importance of women to “lead the prostitute back to a better life” (Liggins, 2003). More recent feminist studies, seeks to move beyond these types of social stigmas of people in the sex industry (Hallgrimsdottir, Phillips & Benoit, 2006; Desyllas, 2013). Instead, contemporary debates concerning prostitution in the public are usually divided into two views: the radical view and the liberal feminist view (Vicente, 2016). For the remaining of this study, these terms will be used to describe these two central views on prostitution. As this thesis seek to move beyond this perception, I found it necessary to further investigate and describe the arguments from the opposing sides to explain how they can be contested. To put it simply: the radical view favours prohibition or abolition, while the liberal view favours

decriminalisation and depenalisation of prostitution (Beran, 2012; Sullivan, 2003; Vicente, 2016). As we will further explore in the next paragraphs, the question of morality has prevailed within the prostitution-field. Although, the blame has to a larger degree moved from the person selling sex over to the person buying sex.

3.1.1 Radical feminist approach

Prostitution has been a topic within feminist debates in the global north in the last 150 years. Initially, it was perceived as something that should be eradicated and moved beyond (Jaggar, 1997). This aligns with the radical view, emerging in the early 1970s, wanting to abolish prostitution as it is perceived as an act of violence done by men towards women that furthers the objectification of female bodies (Skilbrei & Holmström, 2011; Pollis, 1995; Vicente, 2016). The radical view also argues that the selling of sex by women always involves some degree of coercion (Beran, 2012; Jaggar, 1997; Robinson, 2007; Weitzer, 2005). The Sex Purchase Act in Norway, commonly referred to as the Nordic model, assume sex-selling as a form of exploitation of women, and criminalizes the buyer rather than the seller (Olsson, 2019; Pollis, 1995; Skilbrei & Holmström, 2011). In other words, the Sex Purchase Act is supposed to be understood as a preventative law that takes on a social responsibility and attempts to limit exploitation and trafficking (Jakobsson & Kotsadam, 2013; Olsson, 2019; Rasmussen, et al., 2014).

3.1.2 Liberal feminist approach

As a contrast, the liberal view looks at laws prohibiting selling sex in any way as something denying the person selling sex the right to control their own bodies (although there is disagreement within liberal feminism of whether people selling sex is practising free agency) (Butler, 2015; Robinson, 2007). Nevertheless, the liberal view often argues for the recognition of selling sex as *work*, thus lobbying for giving people selling sex more rights and protective laws. The liberal view also argues that a person selling sex suffers discriminatory practices from society (Scoular & FitzGerald, 2021; Vicente, 2016). Furthermore, it critiques the radical view for lacking an intersectional point of view which overlooks different vulnerabilities, and for potentially upholding inaccurate stereotypes about people selling sex (Brunovskis & Skilbrei, 2018; Skilbrei & Holmström, 2011; Weitzer, 2005).

3.1.3 Towards a new approach to prostitution

Parts of what makes this debate challenging is the concern and protection of sex trafficking victims. This concern has in some ways shifted the debate into discussions of whether someone is selling sex by own will or by coercion (Spanger, 2011; Sullivan, 2003; Weitzer, 2005). Some argue that researchers should look beyond the binary narratives of either the radical or liberal view, concluding that they are “ideal types” (St. Denny, 2014). Rather than criticising one side, and praising the other, researchers should evaluate strengths and weaknesses in both sides and move towards a more multifaceted understanding of the prostitution field, which aim to protect both victims and people identifying as sex workers (Beran, 2012; Sullivan, 2003). Ana S. Q. Liberato & Kathleen Ratajczak (2017) argue that further research done on the field should use a phenomenological approach, exploring the issue from the point of view of the people directly involved to form a more accurate picture of the prostitution field. Furthermore, it is argued that the binary opposition between radical and liberal feminist approaches are deeply rooted in a privileged position from both sides. They also propose the binary categorization of “helpless victims” or “happy hookers”, which contributes to an emotionally loaded discursive field (Phipps, 2017).

3.2 Norwegian context

There is also some research done in Norway about how the discourse surrounding the prostitution field in Norway has changed. Trine Rogg Korsvik (2016) argues that the field has been through a paradigm shift, from what can be described as a radical view dominating the 1980s, towards a more post-modern, “neutral” view in the 1990s. By “neutral”, Korsvik (2016) means that the post-modern view is not affiliated with any larger feminist movements and that it puts forward a more neo-liberal discourse on the subject. Nevertheless, the discourse in Norway changed in the year 2000, when Norway signed the UN trafficking protocol (the Palermo Protocol), which put forward the idea that by reducing sex purchase you would also reduce instances of human trafficking (Skilbrei, 2012). The Sex Purchase Act has been argued to be a preventative method of reducing instances of sex trafficking and violence against women (Jakobsson & Kotsadam, 2013; Olsson, 2019; Strøm, 2009). Contradicting research argues that the increased attention on this linkage might contribute to a negative impact and stereotypes about people selling sex. It has been argued that migrant women have been presented as “faceless victims”, without been given a proper voice (Kock & Nadjar, 2015). Another study looking more closely at women from post-Soviet countries who

engage in selling sex, emphasizes that the perception of them as victims intersects with representation of themselves, and their class, ethnicity, gender, and nationality. They chose to identify as “proud women” or “proud Russians”, thus rejecting the reduction of them as “only” victims or a “prostitute” (Jacobsen & Skilbrei, 2010).

3.4 Gaps in literature

I have identified several gaps based on this literature review. The first gap is that most research done on this theme is concerned with either the liberal or the radical view. Most of the research done on this field is also concerned with female experiences of selling sex, and it seems like there is little inclusion of an intersectional perspective. In Norway, a lot of the research is concerned with the two binary perspectives, and the Sex Purchase Act. Furthermore, several of the same articles are referred to time over and again, implying that this is not researched a lot. I was also unable to identify articles mapping out discursive patterns within the prostitution field. However, a small body of literature is attempting to look at what benefits both the radical and liberal view have, when discussing how to conduct future research on this field.

4 Research design & methodology

This chapter outlines the methodological choices for collecting and analysing data.

Additionally, I reflect on my own positionality as a researcher, ethical considerations, and challenges I faced throughout the data collection.

4.1 Research design

I applied a qualitative research design and followed an interpretive social science (ISS) approach. This approach finds it important to understand people's lived experiences and is concerned with questions of meaningful social actions and socially constructed meanings (Neuman, 2014). In this case, my role as a researcher is to understand the subjective realities of the different organisations that I interviewed. One of the benefits of using qualitative methods, is that it allows the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of their research area. In my case, it provided me with the opportunity to get a thorough explanation about the organisation's intentions and opinions on the subject, conveyed through the staff. Personally, I perceive reality as something that is subjective, which is the reason I positioned myself into an ISS-paradigm in the first place (Yilmaz, 2013). In the case of this research, quantitative methods would be ill-fitted in answering my research questions, as I am interested in exploring different discursive meanings.

Furthermore, the study was inspired by phenomenological research design. This approach is used when a researcher wishes to describe several individuals' experience of a phenomenon, aiming to uncover similarities in their experience. Data is collected to formulate a universal description of a given problem, it usually focuses on subgroups in a larger context (Creswell et al., 2018). This was done by interviewing representants from the organisation, that provided me with information about their organisations point of view and then by comparing it to a larger phenomenon (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

4.2 Study area

The study area was Oslo, where most of the organisations I interviewed are located. This became the study area due to the following reasons:

- i. The largest organisations working with people selling sex are located in Oslo
- ii. I was in Oslo for an internship where I gained knowledge of the organisations

- iii. The organisations in Bergen that I contacted were unable to participate

4.3 Participants

4.3.1 Recruitment criteria

In phenomenological research, the ideal number of participants are between 5-25 (Creswell et al., 2018). Ideally, I would have enough time and resources to interview as many organisations as possibly, providing my research with a thick and rich set of data. However, this is an 30etcs thesis which meant that I had a limited timeframe and capacity. I also had to take the number of organisations working on the field of prostitution into account. I ended up interviewing seven participants, representing five different organisations. When recruiting participants, I had the following criteria:

- i. They should be over the age of 18.
- ii. They work in an organisation that either works directly with, or works with dilemmas tied up to people that has experienced selling or buying sex
- iii. Participants must speak either Norwegian or English to understand the intent with my study, and ensure quality answers
- iv. They have considerable knowledge of their organisation's history, political opinions, and discourse

4.3.2 Recruitment process

Participants were recruited through a method which can be described as purposive sampling, as I contacted organisations that fitted my specific criteria (Neuman, 2014). In November 2022, I had an informal meeting with one of the human trafficking organisations I ended up interviewing. I had gotten in contact with them through my internship with *FOKUS – Forum for Women and Development*. At this meeting, the representative of the organisation pointed me in the direction of possible organisations working within the human trafficking / prostitution field that could be interesting for me to interview. I contacted the organisations via emails, which included an invitation to partake in the study, as well as information about the study and a consent form. This was at times a challenging process, which I will discuss in further detail in subchapter 4.10.1. All interviews were held on a digital platform and conducted in Norwegian. This was due to the fact that all organisations that were able to get back to me within my own timeframe were in Oslo and I am based in Bergen. The recruitment

process started in early January, and all interviews had been conducted by the end of the month.

4.4 Methods of data collection and accumulation

I decided to conduct semi-structured interviews, as this method is open, flexible, and provides the participants with an opportunity to talk more freely on a subject (Punch, 2014). By following a phenomenological research design, the questions I asked were open-ended and left room for reflection. I also made sure that the questions were always related to the phenomenon (Creswell, et al., 2018). The interviews were mostly one-on-one, in some cases two members from the same organisations joined. Although I believe that a focus-group would provide an interesting discussion on the topic, it could make it more challenging for some participants to speak more freely. Some of the organisations I interviewed have conflicting opinions on the matter, and although I believe that all participants would behave respectfully to each other, a focus-group could potentially lead some of the conversation astray. One-on-one interviews eliminated distractions, pitfalls and made it easier for me to compare the organisations experience to each other. Prior to the interview, I developed an interview guide, which I decided to share with the participants ahead of the interview. This was to give them the opportunity to prepare, and if necessary, discuss some of the answers with colleagues. Moreover, I chose to send the interview guide beforehand to make sure that the respondent would feel comfortable throughout the interview. I realise that I chose a topic that has been heatedly debated, and that some of the organisations might feel scrutinised because of this. It could also be challenging for the participants to answer questions about the organisation's opinion on the matter, without having some time to prepare beforehand. With the consent of the participants, I recorded all the interviews on a digital recorder. I used a notebook throughout the interview to note emphasis or points I found interesting and important to look back at when conducting the analysis.

4.5 Data management plan

I transcribed the data and stored it on a password protected computer. I decided to anonymise the participants' name by replacing it with the name of the organisation they represented. Two of the interviews had two participants, which is not separated in the findings and analysis-chapter. The recordings will be deleted on the 1st of June 2023.

4.6 Data analysis model

For analysing my data, I followed Braun & Clarke's (2006) understanding of thematic analysis, as it provides a more flexible approach to thematic analysis and does not consist of strict guidelines, compared to Attride-Stirlings' (2001) guidelines for a thematic analysis. This method seeks to identify, analyse and report patterns (themes) within data. It assists the researcher by organising and describing a data set in detail. One of the arguments for using a thematic analysis, is that it makes it easier for the reader to evaluate the research and makes it more comparable to similar research conducted on the same theme, as well as facilitating for further research in the future (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Braun & Clarke's (2006) method consist of six steps. Initially, the researcher needs to familiarize themselves with the data, then the researcher needs to generate initial codes with interesting features of the data. After this, the codes get organised into potential themes, these themes get reviewed and checked whether they work in relation to the coded extracts. Then the themes get defined and named. Lastly, the report is produced (s.87). Having chosen discourse analysis as a conceptual framework, I organised and coded data in accordance with how the participants use different terms. All data was coded manually, by the help of post-it notes and a matrix that I developed. This was at times a challenging process, as I had a lot of data-material. However, it became more manageable when I was able to identify similarities between the organisations' answers, and better understand the different patterns.

4.7 Trustworthiness of research

For ensuring quality in my research, I used Sara J. Tracy's (2010) eight criteria. I decided to use these because they made it possible for me to make a rich and thorough review of my research. Tracy's (2010) intention by creating these criteria was to recognise that research processes are different among scholars, and following all criteria religiously would result in unfruitful results. These eight criteria are therefore more flexible. The next paragraph will go through the criteria and how they fitted my research.

The first criteria is choosing a *worthy topic*, meaning that the researcher choose a topic that has not thoroughly been covered by previous research and is relevant to the political climate (Tracy, 2010). Most research done on the prostitution field in the 2000s has concerned the Sex Purchase Act, and whether it is effective in preventing sex trafficking (Jakobsson &

Kotsadam, 2013; Olsson, 2019; Strøm, 2009). Little research has been done on what terms and language the different organisations working with people selling sex, and what effect it has. I ensured that my research had *rich rigor* by ensuring that the data collection was done thoroughly and collected a sufficient amount of data. Throughout the research process I was self-reflexive, transparent about my intentions, and open about shortcomings and positionality, ensuring that my research had a high level of *sincerity* (Tracy, 2010). *Credibility* is achieved when the findings are perceived as trustworthy, and whether the findings are correct or accurate (Tracy, 2010). This was done by including thick descriptions from the dataset, and by including enough details from the dataset so that the reader is able to come with their own conclusion and impression of the findings. I also employed the method of member reflections (Tracy 2010; Yilmaz, 2013), by asking the informants follow-up questions, and making statements of informant's account checking whether I had understood their answers correctly. Moreover, the informants were invited to verify the quotes I wanted to use and provided them the opportunity to give feedback on the findings-chapter, in order to assure that the sentiment was accurate, which is called member-checking (Birt, et al., 2016). *Resonance* is used about the way the research accurately affects and reaches their audience (Tracy, 2010). A method of making sure the research has a high level of resonance is to ensure that it has *transferability* (Yilmaz, 2013), which I achieved through providing thick descriptions of the setting, context and people. Additionally, this will aid the reader to decide whether this study is applicable in other research settings. There is limited research on the discourse on the Norwegian prostitution field, which ensures that the study is a *significant contribution*, as it generates new knowledge and encourages further research on this area (Tracy, 2010). *Ethics* are ensured throughout the research, which I will explain in further details under chapter 4.8 & 4.9. Lastly, the *meaningful coherence* requirement is met through the usage of methods that fits where the research is positioned within the paradigm and chosen theories. It connects literature, research questions, findings, and interpretations with each other in a meaningful way (Tracy, 2010).

4.8 Role of the researcher

Throughout the data collection process, I was aware of my own role as a researcher and the issue of reflexivity. This involved being aware of my own role as a researcher, and analysing what potential impact my study might have, as well as my own premade assumptions. I chose a topic that I found both interesting and important, which made it even more crucial for me to

be neutral when meeting with the different organisations. The researcher does inevitably affect the research somehow, but by establishing an agenda prior to data collection it is easier to be more subjective (Malterud, 2001). I also reflected over my own privileged position as a white student from the global north, as I chose to write a thesis of the discourse on a subject that I myself had no personal experience from. I wished to avoid contributing to further marginalisation, as people selling sex experience a lot of stigmatizations. I chose to study this topic because I wanted to give organisations the opportunity to express their opinions in a non-judgemental environment. It was important for me to ensure that the analysis was not one of my own opinions and assumptions on this subject. I was also aware that in this context, I was often considered as an outsider, which in some cases made it more challenging for me to gather data. At the same time, my internship at FOKUS granted me the opportunity to get to know some of the actors within the field.

4.9 Ethical considerations

It is important to ensure that the research study is ethically responsible, taking great care of the rights of the participants. The ethical considerations that have been ensured in this research was *confidentiality* and *informed consent* (Punch, 2014). Ethical considerations can vary from different contexts and different disciplines, but a common denominator for all research is that they need to receive ethical clearance from an ethics committee prior to the data collection (Green & Thorogood, 2014). When conducting interviews, it is important to be mindful of how the questions are framed, avoid pushing boundaries, and not discuss intimate details of the respondent. The experience for the participants is usually enhanced when they feel seen and listened to (Green & Thorogood, 2014).

4.9.1 Informed consent & confidentiality

Retrieving informed consent from participants ensure that the participants are not coerced, persuaded, or induced into my research against their will (Green & Thorogood, 2014). I sent all the participants an email with details of my research and a consent form. This provided them with information about what the data would be used for and what rights they had. Each interview started with me explaining my own background and purpose of the study, as well as a quick run through of how I would handle the data, anonymity, et cetera. It was also important for me to be transparent about my research motive, so that I did not risk that the participants felt surprised or tricked into answering leading questions. I also made sure to

assure to uphold the principle of confidentiality. This involved not disclosing any personal information of the research, and make sure that the participants were not identifiable (Green & Thorogood, 2014). The participants were asked about the organisations point of view, not their own. This made personal information neither interesting nor necessary to disclose for my research. I also offered the participants with the opportunity to member-check the quotes I wanted to use for the findings-chapter, which near all of the participants wished to do.

4.9.2 Ethical clearance

I received ethical approval from the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) / Sikt before collecting any data. The study was registered and authorised, after filling out a notification form stating the intent of my research. The study is also registered in RETTE, the University of Bergen's system for research project management.

4.10 Challenges and limitations

4.10.1 Recruiting participants

The recruitment of participants proved to be challenging. Some of the organisations' email address were well hidden, and they only had a general email address. This often added an additional stage, as I had to be redirected to the accurate staff member of the organisation. One of the results was that it took longer time for the organisation to get back to me. During this stage I also realised quickly that the organisations I contacted had a lot on their hands, and a busy schedule. My master's thesis is of course my own top priority, but I could not expect that it would be theirs. Many expressed interests in partaking but were at the time unable to participate due to other responsibilities. This is an issue I could have avoided by starting the recruitment process earlier. Some of the organisations did take some time to answer my emails, due to various reasons such as other obligations, people falling ill, and so on. However, in the end I received a reply from all the organisations I contacted, either accepting or saying that they were unable to participate. Three of the organisations that I contacted were unable to participate.

4.10.2 Meeting on Zoom / Teams

I conducted one interview successfully on Zoom, and the rest on Teams. I had originally planned on conducting all of the interviews on Zoom, but after experiencing technical

difficulties I had to start using Teams-meeting. I had less experience using Teams-meeting, making the second interview at first a bit awkward as I had to navigate the new meeting form on short notice. However, the participants in the second interview patiently and kindly waited for me to get set and answered all my questions, despite the technical issues causing the interview to last 15 minutes longer than initially planned. The internet connection was at times unstable, causing minor glitching in the video. However, the sound quality was always good, and I was able to successfully record on a tape recorder and transcribe all interviews. Personally, I would have preferred to conduct in-person interviews as this would be more efficient and comfortable for both parties. It would also have allowed me to get a proper understanding of the participants body language and potential social clues that gets lost on digital platforms. Nonetheless, I do not believe the lack of in-person interviews affected the answers from the participants in any significant way.

4.10.3 Time management

Four of the interviews lasted from 50-65 minutes, and one interview lasted for about 90 minutes. I found it more difficult in the beginning to manage time properly on a digital platform. For instance, the technical difficulties I experienced took up some of the time, and I had to more often repeat the question to clarify the participants intent. One of the interviews were stopped after 60 minutes, due to Teams-policy that allowed me to only meet 60 minutes at a time. We did successfully manage to continue the meeting, but the interview was considerably longer than the rest. It can also at times feel a bit unnatural for people to meet digitally, as it does not allow you to have a more formal introduction. The beginning of the interviews consisted of some small talk that did end up taking some of the interview's time. Additionally, some of the interviews got delayed due to technical issues with signing in and such. After conducting two interviews, I realised that I could have managed time in the interviews better. For instance, I noticed that I spent a considerable amount of time discussing the organisations background. Although interesting information, this was also something I could acquire through their websites. This also made the interviews last for a long time, causing both the participants and me to grow more tired towards the end of the interview. Nonetheless, I did gain even greater knowledge of the organisations structure and origin.

After transcribing the two interviews, I adjusted the interview guide and added more efficient questions about the organisation. I also realised when transcribing that some of the interviews at times went off topic. This was something I as a young researcher found difficult to manage, as I wanted to give the participants the opportunity to speak freely on the matter. Some of the participants also used examples or gave me answers they for various reasons asked me to not use as data. Even though I was unable to use it as data material, I found these anecdotes very interesting as it personally provided me with a deeper insight into the complexities of the field. As a representative, it is always important to be mindful of how the organisations are presented in the public sphere. The importance of gaining confidence to accurately manage time is something I consider today as a valuable attribute if I wish to conduct further research.

5 Norwegian CSOs: mapping out different actors in the field

This chapter is a presentation of the organisations I interviewed for this study. The five organisations that were included in this study can all be defined as Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), and they are based in Norway. CSOs is an umbrella term that is commonly used to refer to different kinds of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Community Based Organisations (CBOs), and CSOs are often seen as the connecting link between state and society. Historically, CSOs are non-profit based organisations formed by volunteering members of society to advance interests, values, or identities (Veltmeyer, 2017). In Norway, many CSOs are partly or fully state funded. This is because they are regarded as playing an important role in maintaining the welfare state, democratic governance, and other types of public obligations (Saglie & Sivesind, 2018). Historically, CSOs in Norway have always had a close relationship with public authorities, resulting in numerous arenas for cooperation and dialogue between the parties. One can understand this as a symbiotic relationship where CSOs and public authorities shape each other (Loga, 2018).

5.1 Presentation of Organisations

The participants consist of three human trafficking organisations, *Lightup*, *Marita Women* and *ROSA*, and two organisations working as interest- or centre of expertise on prostitution, *PION* and *Pro Sentret*. They all have their own mandate within the prostitution field and offer different types of services. Additionally, they receive various types of funding for fulfilling their own unique mandate on the field. The organisations will be presented in alphabetical order.

5.1.1 Lightup

Lightup is a Norwegian democratic youth organisation, that is both politically and religiously autonomous. It was founded in Oslo in 2013 and were started by a group of young people wishing to combat human trafficking. They have sister organisations in both Germany and Austria, and they are connected through a board where each country selects representatives. They describe themselves as being the only youth organisation seeking to prevent human trafficking in Norway, and their vision is “A world without human trafficking and sexual exploitation”. *Lightup* wish to provide young people with the opportunity to talk about and attempt to prevent different forms of human trafficking, like prostitution, pornography, and forced labour (Lightup, n.d.). Their target group is young people from the age of 13-30.

5.1.2 Marita Women

Maritastiftelsen founded in 1984, originally started out as an organisation for people combatting drug addiction. The organisation aims to help people out of challenging life situations, and to assist them in life managing. One of their services is the *Marita Café*, which serves as a meeting spot for people in difficult life situations and staff members (Marita Women, n.d.a). After a while, the café started to receive a growing number of visitors that had experiences selling sex and had different needs than the original clientele. *Marita Women* was founded as a part of *Maritastiftelsen* in 2013, originally as an exit-program for women with experience selling sex. In 2016 they started to provide shelters for female victims of human trafficking (Marita Women, n.d.b). *Marita Women* supports female victims of human trafficking as well as women who report that they are (or have been) in prostitution voluntarily.

5.1.3 PION

PION got founded in 1990 in Oslo and describe themselves as an interest organisation for people selling sex, regardless of gender, sexuality and gender identity/or gender expression. Their work is based on direct contact with their clients, and they aim to be visible for people selling sex. Their mandate on the field includes working against criminalisation, condemnation from the society, stigma, and discrimination. It also involves actively partaking in discussions about prostitution, on both a national and an international scale (PION, n.d.). They seek to promote the rights, health and political interests of people selling sex. *PION* conducts HIV- and STD-preventative work and offer their clients juridical help when necessary (Renland et al., 2020; Pro Sentret, 2021).

5.1.4 Pro Sentret

Pro Sentret is a centre of expertise for prostitution, that was founded in 1983 and located in Oslo. Their work includes client management with people selling sex, and competence enhancement and research done on the Norwegian prostitution field. Regardless of being based in Oslo, they conduct nationwide knowledge dissemination. *Pro Sentret* believe that all work on the prostitution field should apply a human rights approach. They wish for a society that does not stigmatize but rather shows solidarity towards people selling sex. Selling sex

should in addition not be something that the person perceives as their only “available” option. Prostitution is according to them not a personal trait but an action (Pro Sentret, n.d.a).

5.1.5 ROSA

ROSA describes themselves as an unofficial identification organ for cases of human trafficking. They are a part of *Krisesentersekretariatet (KSS)*, an independent umbrella organisation for shelters in Norway working for a future without violence against women, interpersonal violence in close relationships and domestic abuse (ROSA, n.d.). *ROSA* were founded in 2005 based on the government’s action plan against trafficking of human and children 2003-2005. ROSA’s jurisdiction is to coordinate and secure shelters, as well as securing proper funding and information to adult victims of human trafficking. *ROSA* provides victims with juridical guidance, health care, educational opportunities, and other activities. They are a nationwide service, that cooperates and refer victims to The Church City Mission, and the Salvation Army’s shelters (ROSA, n.d.).

6 Prostitution and sex-work: Diverging viewpoints on contested terms

This chapter will go through some of the main findings from the interviews. Throughout the interviews, I gained insights into the structure, target groups and clients of the organisations. All of the organisations were asked what type of terminology they used for their clients ¹, and of some of the other terminology used within the prostitution field in Norway. Despite having categorized the organisations into two primary groups, I quickly realised that debates regarding the terms used about people selling sex grew more complicated the more I learned about the contemporary discussions of the matter. I find it necessary to explore some of the ways the different organisations chose to describe people selling sex. I would like to remind the reader that all interviews were held in Norwegian, and the answers from the representatives are a reflection made on the discourse within the Norwegian prostitution field.

6.1 “Prostitute” – an outdated term

For people not working on the field, the terms “a prostitute” (*prostituert*) or “to prostitute oneself” (*prostituere*) might be most familiar. It is used in the media, in articles, in documentaries and in everyday speech. It became clear throughout the interviews that these terms are outdated and not used by the organisations I interviewed. Based on my dataset, I have identified two primary reasons for this that was shared by all of the organisations:

- Wanting to describe the person as something else than just their source of income.
- This term has a lot of stigma.

Most of the organisations, regardless of approach towards the prostitution field, shared these two assumptions. The two reasons were also often mentioned after one another. According to the organisations, using the term “prostitute” can put a label on the person selling sex, which reduces them to “only” being a person selling sex. This was looked at as something that was both undesirable for the person selling sex, and the organisations working with them. In the next two subchapters, I will go deeper into the two objections regarding the term.

¹ It should be noted that while Rosa, Pro Sentret and Marita Women use the term client when addressing the people they assist, Pion uses the word “user” (“bruker” in Norwegian). As Lightup works towards political change and not directly towards individuals they use none of the above. For the sake of simplicity, I will use the word “Client” from this point onward.

6.1.1 “Prostitute – Self-perception and stigma

Organisations working with human trafficking shared the belief that calling somebody a “prostitute” is very reductionist. The person should not be defined based on their source of income, or what they happen to do. Although this view was shared by all organisations, the participants representing human trafficking organisations had a somewhat clearer emphasis on this. In the interview with *Marita Women* the participant pointed out:

Prostitute is kind of what is most used in our society. But I often say, “they are not just that”, just like the rest of us. We are not only a “mother” or a “student”, but we are also all so much more. And we must be allowed to be defined as something more than just that. It is so stigmatized.

The organisations also spoke of the importance of giving an individual the room for being something else than their source of income. This was also important to be careful of especially when meeting with their clients. This is a conscious choice made to ensure a more level playing field between the staff of the organisations, and their clients. Whether you found yourself in an exploitative, or voluntarily position, a person should have the right to be defined by other qualities. From the perspective of a human trafficking organisation, separating the person from selling sex simultaneously meant separating them from “only” being somebody that experienced exploitation. They also described the term as stigmatised, and in their experience, it holds a lot of negative associations. *ROSA* described the term as stigmatised due to its reduction of a person and stated that they would never say to a person “you as a prostitute...”, as the term does not define the human being. Nevertheless, the term prostitution was still something that most of the organisations used. When talking about the “prostitution-field” for instance, or “people involved in prostitution”. The organisations described their reasons for using this still, as it was not used to describe a person. Prostitution describes a situation a person selling sex find themselves in, and not the person itself. This was highlighted as an important distinction by the organisations: While *prostitution* exists, the people involved are not *prostitutes*.

6.1.2 Stigma

PION and *Pro Sentret* agreed on the importance of not reducing a group of people into what they do to get an income. However, they more heavily emphasized the negative stigma that is associated with the term. The term has historically been used about people selling sex in a degrading manner, thus making it a term that has too much negative history for organisations working together with and for the rights of people selling sex to use. It also has a lot of negative associations and synonyms. From the interview with *Pro Sentret*:

It is outdated and tied to many different things. If you go into the [Norwegian] thesaurus and look at the results on “prostitutes” (prostituere) or “prostitute” (prostituert) it is really awful. It is used as a synonym to degrade oneself, to dirty oneself. It is also used to describe somebody that is “selling their souls”, for instance about a politician that “prostitute” themselves meaning that they are “selling themselves” and therefore lacking values and integrity. It has become a synonym that describes an act that is wrong, dirty and lacking integrity, to the extent that it actually is a synonym in the thesaurus.

Based on my dataset, and illustrated by this quote, I make the assumption that the organisations working more as knowledge and interest centres on prostitution have a slightly different experience of the stigmatisation of people selling sex when using the term “prostitute”. This term is associated with exploitation and describes something that is done involuntarily. It is also associated with doing something that is bad, dirty, or undesirable. *Pro Sentret* and *PION* describe their work as aiming to make the experience of selling sex more comfortable and safer for their clients. It does not necessarily mean helping them out of prostitution.

One argument made by *PION* was that using the term “prostitute” does not imply that the person is working *with* selling sex, but they *are in* the act of selling sex. In their opinion, the term additionally gives out the association that the person is in an exploitative relationship. In the interview with *PION* they said that the term prostitute gave the association: “*That one is caught in a trap, and in the midst of something. That you are a victim, and not something else, and thereof reduced to somebody that does not have agency*”. In their experience, there are

still some clients that they meet that talk about themselves as “prostitutes”. According to them, this gives the people selling sex the negative association of being somebody that sells themselves and it can be harmful for their self-esteem. They chose to not use this term to fight negative associations with this term. For them, it describes selling sex as an exclusively bad situation where all the people selling sex is a victim.

6.1.3 Addressing people selling sex

This separation and wish to avoid negative stigma help explain how some of the organisations chose to describe people selling sex. How they address clients directly, varies and is something that we will go into greater detail later in the text. Some of the organisations addressed in the interview that they separated what terms they used when speaking among colleagues, and what terms they used when writing official documents, having seminars, and other activities on the organisation’s behalf. The different ways the organisations refer to people selling sex, is in this part a representation of how they address these people as representatives for the organisation.

Most organisations working with human trafficking had different ways of describing people who sell sex, but generally they used a variation of “a person in prostitution”. *Lightup* described themselves in the interview as an organisation that were very involved in the correct usage of terms:

We care a great deal about terms, and we feel like we are on a journey of discovering new ones. We encourage to use terms like “persons that find oneself in prostitution” or “persons that sells sex”, because we wish to use as neutral terms as possible and not put a label on other people.

ROSA use the term “exploited in prostitution” (*utnyttet i prostitusjon*) or “exploited for sexual purposes”. They also found it important to separate the person from the situation. “*We would say “exploited to prostitution”, not for instance a prostitute. We do not use what word.*” They assist all people that has suffered some form of exploitation. Most of their clients have experienced sexual exploitation and wish to find an alternative to prostitution. However, they

also support people that has been exploited but still wish to continue selling sex. *Marita Women* describes themselves as a service directed at all people identifying as women. They use the term “women who have experience with selling sex” (*prostitujsonserfaring*) when writing applications, etc. They use the word *women*, as they mostly meet women at their café, and therefore wish to emphasize that their clients are first and foremost women. They also use the term “experience”, as some of their visitors to the café are women that does not sell sex anymore but does not have that big of a network outside the café. “*It is important for me, to underline that it is an experience, but you are not defined as a human being by this experience. You are defined in an entirely different way.*”

The organisations working as knowledge and interest centres used terms emphasizing that the person was selling sex. *Pro Sentret* did for instance use the terms “a person that sells/trade sex”, “person that sells sexual services” or a “sex-seller”. They did not have a standardized norm, but most employees usually used a variation of that. *PION* also use the term “sex-seller”, but most often they say and write “sex worker”. The next section will look more closely at the term “sex work”, and what opinions the different organisations have of it.

6.2 Opinions on the term “sex work”

The organisations were asked whether they used the term “sex work”, and what their opinions on the term was. This part will go through some of the reflections that was made from the different organisations. I will first present the answers coming from the organisations that use the term. *Pro Sentret* said during the interview that they did not have any big objections against using the term. They did not use it in official reports and such, but it was used among colleagues. It could also be used to get some variety when talking for a longer period, as saying “people that sells sex” can be somewhat stilted in the long run. However, *Pro Sentret* problematised the term during our interview. In the interview, the representant from *Pro Sentret* pointed out that “sex work” is a somewhat broad term, which goes beyond the services that they offer. From the interview with *Pro Sentret*:

A lot of the research we do and our target group that we work closely with are the people that sell sex for money. We do not have a lot to offer strippers for instance, which could be perceived as sex workers. (...) Pornography is at any rate a part of it.

Pornographic actors, camming... We have those conversations. To what extent do we represent that group, and to what extent should we represent people that do camming.

PION raised the point that the term “sex work” in many ways contested the narrative of the person selling sex as a passive agent, and that it not necessarily always had to do with coercion or force. It also recognised that selling sex was a form of labour. In their opinion this could be harmful and a way of disempowering people selling sex by their own free will. During the interview with *PION*, they said that their clients called themselves “sex workers”, and that this was what they preferred to be called. Another important aspect with this term is that it emphasizes the transactional part of selling and buying sex, thus giving the person selling more agency.

Sex work is a choice. You kind of take the power of definition back with it. The power to define for yourself whether or not you are in a bad situation. (...) Carol Leigh invented the term, to highlight the economical bit of sex work and play down the morale bit. It is about people selling sex, for various reasons. All international human rights organisations, among others WHO and Amnesty, use this term.

All organisations working with human trafficking informed me that they did not use the term “sex work”. However, they did not have any objections against people identifying as “sex workers”. Most of their scepticism towards the term, was tied up with the “work”-part. Some of the organisations pointed out that there is an uneven power-dynamic within selling sex between the seller and the buyer, which is something you do not find in a regulated job-market. Using “sex work” as a term might also undermine potential exploitation. In the interview with *Lightup*, the representative discussed some of the logical gaps the term might contribute to:

We refrain from using sex work. It is because we believe that selling sex cannot be juxtaposed with other work, and it camouflages a part of the exploitation present in the sex industry. It is also very vague as of who is the worker, is it both the one selling and somebody that potentially exploits them like a pimp? (...) some people can find

themselves in the sex industry before they turn 18. It is not the case then, that they turn 18 and come of age, and then turn into sex workers.

Marita Women & ROSA, the two human trafficking organisations working directly with clients, stated in the interviews that they for the most part did not work with people identifying as “sex workers”. They often met people that wanted to find an alternative source of income and were victims of exploitation. Part of the reason that they do not actively use a term as “sex work” is that they wish to use language that underline that they have been in an exploitative situation. By calling this “work” it could potentially be harmful for their clients. It is however important to specify again that this does not necessarily reflect that the organisations are reluctant to let people identify themselves as “sex workers”. It is rather linked up to their mandate as an organisation that works with instances of human trafficking and exploitation. It would not be fitting for them as an organisation to use this term, as they mostly work with people that do not wish to continue selling sex.

6.3 Passivating discourse – “helpless victims” vs. “happy sex workers”

This part will go through some of the examples where discourse can be passivating. All organisations found it important to reflect over the concepts you use, especially in meeting with marginalised groups. Words are perceived as very powerful, as it can both affect the way other people perceive a person, as well as self-perception. This part is mostly concerned with how discourses can put somebody into a category that might not reflect the reality. Some of the organisations pointed out that public media in Norway have had the tendency of wanting to frame the Norwegian prostitution-field into a more sensational way. During the interview, some organisations used a recent NRK documentary as an example of how people in prostitution gets framed inaccurately. This was a documentary about Norwegian massage parlours, which “investigated” its potential link to prostitution and sex trafficking. The documentary was later condemned for not following ethical guidelines for the press in Norway (NRK, 2023). In the interview with *PION* the representative pointed out that public discourse frames the participants as either a “helpless victim” or a “happy sex worker”. Variations of this category were also discussed by some of the other organisations. They often have the binary gender-categories of a female seller and a male buyer. The next paragraphs will go through some of the reflections that were made on categories “helpless victim” and

“happy sex worker”. The category of “happy sex worker” is heavily inspired by Phipps (2017) “happy hooker”, but I have chosen to refrain from using the term “hooker” in this thesis as this is a degrading term.

Framing somebody as a “victim” can potentially contribute to negative stereotypes of all people selling sex. Some of these were explored when the organisations were asked about their opinions on the terms “victim/survivor” to describe somebody that has been sexually exploited. According to some of the organisations these types of terms could be beneficial to use in certain type of settings, for instance when wanting to emphasize that somebody has been the victims of a criminal offense. The representative from *Pro Sentret* also pointed out that these were terms that were probably more commonly used in English, and in a Norwegian setting you would rather use the neutral term “exposed” (*utsatt*) However, the main critique of both “victim” and “survivor” is that these terms can potentially take away the agency of both people exposed to human trafficking and people selling sex alike.

One of the criticisms coming from the human trafficking organisations were that the term “victim” in some cases fail to recognise how mentally strong a lot of the people they meet are. In the interview with *ROSA* the representatives said they would never go into a meeting, insistently calling one of their clients a “victim”. This does not mean that they do not use the term at all. *ROSA* would say a “victim of human trafficking” in official documents, or in meetings, et cetera. However, the term is somewhat problematic for them to use in a meeting with somebody that has experienced exploitation. In a meeting they would rather emphasize to their clients that they have been through a lot of hardships, that were not their fault, but still had the strength to go through it. The representative from *Lightup* explained in the interview how they avoided to use terms that perpetuated a victim-narrative, such as “voiceless”. In their opinion this narrative makes people subjected to human trafficking seem helpless: “*We know that the biggest heroes are themselves*”, by this quote *Lightup* are talking about people that find the strength to fight their way out of exploitation. In the interview with *Marita Women* the participant reflected upon the amount of stigma the term “victim” holds. They said that they themselves would never call somebody a “victim” in a meeting with a client. Firstly, it does not match the way they want to build trust with their clients. Secondly, the women they meet at the Café have a lot of negative associations with it:

I have never met anybody that has told me “I am a victim of human trafficking”. They would rather say something like “are you stupid, do you believe that about me?”. None of us wants to identify as a victim.

It is important to note that this quote reflects the opinion that is often shared by the clients of *Marita Women*. They have an idea of what a victim is, and that does not correlate with how they perceive themselves. The participant from *Marita Women* specified that their client’s “distaste” for this term is directed towards the people that finds themselves in a similar situation. It is a way for them to distance them from the situation in saying that “somebody else is that stupid, but I am not”. Ultimately, the organisations working with human trafficking questions find it important to see a person as somebody that is more than just a “victim”. People that are exploited endure a lot of suffering, and still have the strength to fight to get out from these situations. One of the organisations also pointed out that some media outlets might have the tendency to put forward a “victim”-narrative, as it is more captivating for the reader to read stories like that.

The organisations working more with people selling sex voluntarily also problematised using terms like “victim” or “survivor”. In its worst sense, it is terms that can take away agency from the person selling sex and contribute to the portrayal of all people selling sex as passive victims. This can potentially be harmful for both people experiencing sexual exploitation, and people selling sex voluntarily, as it can perpetuate inaccurate stereotypes about them. The representatives from *PION* pointed out that this puts forward a narrative that selling sex is something you are “trapped” in. Additionally, it downplays the strength needed to be able to live in such a challenging situation. From the interview with *PION*:

In the passive-victim-discourse, that you are a “junkie” that must sell yourself to earn money to buy drugs, or a victim of human trafficking, there is a lack of looking at how strong they are. I would myself never survive being homeless, so it requires an immense power. It is strong people that find themselves in a form of exploitation, but

by calling them “survivors” or “victims” you eradicate the right for them to be an acting subject, that finds themselves in a terrible life situation.

Although *Pro Sentret* did not have any strong opinions for or against the terms “victim / survivor”, they did point out that language can in some cases be used to be passivating. During the interview, they mentioned the previously mentioned documentary from NRK about Norwegian massage parlours as an example of this. The representative from *Pro Sentret* point out that the women are said by the documentary makers to be “moved all around the country”, thus giving out an association of them as moveable objects; The more natural way would say that the women are “travelling” all around the country. In another example *Pro Sentret*’s representative underlined how using the word “girls”, for instance “the girls in prostitution” “the girls on the street”, contributes to the passivating discourse; it is a patronising way of addressing grown women. From the interview with *Pro Sentret*:

It is very passivating and disempowering in the public discourse, which we try to avoid. We believe that people selling sex are fundamentally as capable as all other people. For instance, in speaking up for themselves, understanding their own situation, and making active choices. Rather than just being «passive victims» all the time.

The “happy sex worker” functions as the counterpart to the “helpless victim”. It was pointed out in the interviews with the organisations working more with people selling sex voluntarily, that the “happy sex worker” was often characterized as a person that sells sex without any apprehensions. The organisations pointed out that this was a stereotype of people selling sex that was not realistic. It is not realistic that somebody is entirely happy in that situation. The representative from *Pro Sentret* pointed out that the idea of a “happy sex worker” is often a white, privileged woman, that sells sex because they “love it”. This puts forward an unrealistic picture of some of the implications of selling sex. *PION* also criticised the narrative of the “happy sex worker”. They often signify a woman that loves their job, their customers, and money. Their motivation for selling sex for both male and their own pleasure. Both organisations criticise this way of portraying selling sex, as it is a stereotype that does

not exist. It can in some cases be paternalizing, objectifying, and does not paint a realistic picture of how it is to sell sex; the “happy sex worker” is not a strong woman with agency. From the interview with *PION*:

The “happy sex worker” is not presented as a strong woman, an entrepreneur – they are just a person that loves to satisfy men. It is also not a strong woman in that narrative, they are somebody that loves their job, money, and all their clients. Nobody loves their job in real life,

6.4 Including & reaching target groups

This section will briefly go through some of the additional reflections the organisations made on discourse and why it is important. When asked about what impact they believed discourse could have on their target group, some organisations answered that they believed it could contribute positively to their image of themselves. The organisations find it important to carefully select what concepts to use, as they all work with marginalised groups. This was achieved by not using any words that are hurtful or uncomfortable for the clients. Another method was through adapting the language they used depending on their clients and being sensitive towards their clients’ experiences. *Marita Women* also found the way we talk about marginalised groups extremely important. They perceive language as a tool to empowering their clients. Especially since most of the women they meet often experience scrutiny from themselves and others. *Marita Women* when asked about what impact they think caring about discourse has:

I believe that we can lift self-respect by talking about them in another way than they have been told before, as well as value. It is very common to meet that wall of their own inner resistance, “what you are telling me is not the truth”, “I do not matter, I am just trash”. That kind of mental shift is not something that is done overnight.

Ligtup believes that conscious term-use can potentially have a preventative effect on human trafficking. Discussing different terms can be a source of enlightenment and inclusivity.

Including in the sense that marginalised groups might feel like they have a voice and opportunity to participate in the public discourse. From the interview with *Lightup*:

It can be inclusive, because it is so important to include the voice of people that has experience with exploitation. In situations like these, being cautious with what terms we use can give persons the experience that there is room for them as well and that they have their own voice. We also believe that it can contribute to a positive change for policy development.

Both *Pro Sentret* and *PION* believe that using terms cautiously is an important step to secure inclusivity and create a safe space for the people that can potentially be negatively affected by public discourse. Words are very powerful, as they can not only include but also exclude. Both organisations aim to mirror what language their clients use about themselves. *Pro Sentret* for instance use the term “sex trade” (*bytte sex*) as it is more commonly used by male sex sellers and buyers. *PION* has a fieldworker from Thailand whose work concerns the experiences of people from Thailand selling sex in Norway. This gives them an insight to terminology. As the representative from *Pro Sentret* points out it can be very uncomfortable for someone to join a debate that uses a lot of hurtful language about them. They also point out that it is very important to think about what language you use about people selling sex, as this is a group that experiences a lot of stigmatising language, both by public media and the general population. Furthermore, getting people that themselves have experience selling sex to join the public debate is difficult. They also believe that this ultimately can affect policy-impact. *Pro Sentret* about terms influence:

It has an impact on the groups physical and psychological health, and their opportunity to themselves participate in public discourse. It is harder to participate in this debate if you are constantly mentioned in ways that is unbearable and stigmatising. It can be extremely uncomfortable for a person to read about themselves being discussed in this way.

Lastly, caring about discourse and terms for the organisations is important as it is a method to reach their specific target groups. *PION* and *Pro Sentret* said in the interviews that they used language as a way to signal to their target group what kind of services they are offering.

6.5 Summary of findings

The organisations' opinions on discourse consist of several factors. All organisations shy away from using the term "prostitute", as they find it stigmatising and limiting for the people selling sex. However, "prostitution" is still used when talking about the "prostitution field in Norway" or somebody "involved in prostitution". Organisations working with human trafficking and organisations working as interests and knowledge organisations on the prostitution field had contesting opinions on the term sex work, which ultimately is linked up to their target group and their mandates. Organisations working more with victims of human trafficking did not use this term at all, but the organisations working more with people selling sex voluntarily did more often use it. Some of the organisations criticised media outlets into two binary categories that either was "helpless victim" or "happy sex worker". Both categories take away a lot of agency from the actual people and are both negative stereotypes. Lastly, the organisations use discourse and are mindful of what terms they use to ensure inclusivity.

7 Discussion

This chapter will discuss the empirical findings in relation to the literature review and conceptual framework as a basis for the arguments raised in this section. The discussion starts with addressing what kind of impact the radical vs. liberal approach to prostitution has had on the public debates. Then the discussion addresses why the organisations interviewed have moved beyond using the term “prostitute”, and why the term “prostitution” is still used. Then follows a discussion of the influence discourse and organisations have on each other. Finally, I will address the binary gender-categories and their impact on the discourse.

7.1 Echoes from the feminist “sex wars”

An article from Baker (2015) illustrates how prostitution debates started in a “sex war”-paradigm, that stills influences the way we think and talk about prostitution. Understanding the historical, feminist debates is therefore important when discussing rhetoric and terminology within the prostitution field. It can be closely linked up to policy-development on the field, as illustrated by the influence of radical feminism (Olsson, 2019; Pollis, 1995; Skilbrei & Holmström, 2011). Additionally, it can also serve as an explanation as to why it is a delicate topic to discuss. Most of the debates identified in the literature review were concerned with the division of an abolinistic or a sex-positive approach; A radical or a liberal approach (Beran, 2012; Sullivan, 2003; Vicente, 2016). Internationally, it is discussed whether it would be beneficial for other countries to follow a Nordic model, thus applying a more radical method of diminishing demand and combatting exploitation (Jakobsson & Kotsadam, 2013; Nordic Model Now, n.d; Olsson, 2019).

One of the reasons that I chose to include the historical aspect of prostitution, is that discourse has to be understood as something that gets shaped by their own sociohistorical context (Carbó, et al., 2016). To understand contemporary debates on prostitution, we have to understand the historical backdrop, and in this case it is the two dominant approaches stemming from radical and liberal feminism. A lot of contemporary research done internationally can be framed into one of the two. The matter gets further complicated when looking at the issue of human trafficking. According to some of the articles identified in the literature review about the prostitution field, it is sometimes challenging to separate questions about prostitution and human trafficking from each other (Spanger, 2011; Sullivan, 2003;

Weitzer, 2005). As previously mentioned, this is something that the organisations I interviewed want to move away from. What benefits could making a more clear distinction between these two issues make? One of the advantages could be that one would be able to explore this topic and get more nuanced discussions (St. Denny, 2014). Wishing this to be a more nuanced debate was identified at different points in the findings-chapter. For instance, when looking at the way discourse has been passivating for the people involved, under 6.3. It can additionally be at times challenging to discuss the prostitution field, as it can often turn into a debate regarding morals. Is it morally good to facilitate for more exploitation? Is it morally good to deny somebody labour rights?

I am certain that none of the organisations I interviewed would answer yes to any of these questions, regardless of their mandate on the field. When interviewing organisations working with people selling sex, I received a unique opportunity to hear their opinions on the matter. It can seem tempting to categorise them into a binary understanding of the prostitution field. However, this temptation is more problematic than one might assume. Beran (2012) & Sullivan (2003) propose a new method of understanding the prostitution field and emphasize that it is important to have a deep understanding of both sides. Moreover, the article by Phipps (2017) point to how both positions can be related to privilege by the activist from both sides, and it is necessary to move beyond this categorisation. As we will see throughout the discussion, this is something that is dependent on their own experience as an organisation working with different target groups. I propose, based on my empirical findings, to look at the organisations as different entities each having their own mandate to fulfil on the Norwegian prostitution field. All organisations share the common goal of working against exploitation and for a more secure future for people selling sex. However, they have separate roles and obligations they work towards.

7.2 From “prostitute” towards...?

“Is there a correct way to address people in prostitution?”, is a question that it is easy to ask yourself if you are not working in the prostitution field. It is something I, and the peers I have talked about this study with, have asked ourselves. Finding universal appropriate language is a complicated task, especially since the different organisations can be hard to compare.

However, all the organisations agreed on what terms they wanted to move away from. They all reported some degree of aversion to the term “prostitute”. It was a shared attitude from the

prominent actors on the prostitution field that they had moved away from this type of language. The two main reasons that were identified for wanting to stop using this word was a) wanting to separate the person from the action, and b) the stigma that is associated with this word.

Kabeer (2005) identified agency, resources, and achievements as three important dimensions within empowerment theory. A person's agency is closely linked up to self-perception, which can be enhanced by using resources. These resources can be at times accessed through CSOs. In this case, separating a person from the action can be looked at as a method for human trafficking CSOs to provide resources for the people involved and strengthen their sense of agency. Refraining from passivating discourse, conveys to the person that their experiences does not define them. Kock & Nadjar (2015) identified how a lot of contemporary debates on prostitution has been focused on sex trafficking and what can be understood as an underlying victim narrative. Based on the interviews, I would argue that despite newspapers still using the term "prostitute" that might hold a lot of associations of somebody that is helpless and in despair, the organisations working directly with people getting exploited does not use that word; Not calling them a "prostitute" can be perceived as a source of empowerment. This is a decision made from the organisations based on a deep understanding of the people they work with and their own perception of themselves and the term. It is also an attempt to not define them as only "victims". Empowerment theory has, among other things, been criticised for pushing a top-down perspective, and putting forward a sort of "victim-narrative" (Batliwala, 2007; Cornwall & Rivas, 2015). I argue that the organisations themselves wish to move beyond this narrative and wish to meet their clients on common ground. This was illustrated in the findings-section the numerous times the organisations stated that they would never refer to somebody as a "victim" in a meeting-setting or define somebody as a "prostitute". I propose that the organisations are aiming to empower people that has experienced human trafficking, by not using stigmatising terms (Cojocar, 2016; Jorge-Birol, 2011).

The organisations have more knowledge of all the stigma associated with this term, which was further explored when looking more closely at the answers from the organisations working with people voluntarily in prostitution. They pointed to how it is a term associated with force and victimhood. It is a term that has a lot of synonyms equivalent to "degrading

themselves”, and so on. This type of rhetoric can be reminiscent of the rhetoric identified in the article from Liggins (2003) & Jaggar (1997), which described the negative way women in prostitution has been described. Either as “fallen women” needing guidance to get into a more morally right path, or “contagion of evil”, still needing guidance. This type of social stigma illustrates how people selling sex has been judged by the terms used to describe them. Jolin (1994) argued that debates on prostitution have been harmful for the person selling sex, and they have not been given any agency. Looking at it from this perspective, not calling them a “prostitute” can be looked at as an attempt from the organisations to move beyond this type of narrative. The new proposed narrative from the organisations is that people selling sex can make their own decisions, and that they are not to be defined by outdated understandings of the term “prostitute”. This can also be understood as an example of how different discursive frames influence how somebody understands a phenomenon, which is an aspect that will be further explored in a later part of the text (Johannessen, Rafoss & Rasmussen, 2018).

A central part of empowerment is agency, the ability to make powerful choices one’s own behalf (Kabeer, 2005). Looking at the term “prostitute” from this perspective might imply that the organisations do not use it as it is a term that has a lot of predetermined assumptions. It is not associated with the image of a strong person that despite having been sexually exploited is able to seek help. It also brings forward the assumption that all the people selling sex are forced into it by third parties, thus diminishing the voices of people selling sex as a way of generating income. By referring to someone as “involved in prostitution”, the organisations signal clearly that this is something that does not define them. Johannessen, Rafoss & Rasmussen (2018) talk about how discourse can shape action, and empowerment theory has been used in prostitution to address what kind of resources people selling sex themselves define (Wanjiru, et al., 2022). Looking at the empirical findings, not using the word “prostitute” can be understood as a way of listening to the way people selling sex wants to be defined and give them the power to determine how they are perceived. This is for instance illustrated in the quote from *PION* when they state that they use the term “sex worker”, as it is a term that gives more agency to the people involved. Defining self-perception is something that is explored in the article by Jacobsen & Skilbrei (2010), where the Russian women selling sex call themselves “proud Russians”. This stemmed from a wish from the “proud Russians” to have other identification factors than just selling sex. This can reminisce the argument made from *Marita Women* about how people are defined in different ways. A

mother is not only a mother; A person selling sex is not only a “prostitute”. This argument might be helpful to look at, when trying to understand why the term “prostitution” is still used. “Prostitution” is something that a person can be involved in, and it leaves room for more nuances. It also does not hold the same expectations concerning gender, which I will further elaborate on in another paragraph.

Which term should one use, if not “prostitute”? The answer to that is a bit complicated and requires us to look more closely at the relationship between discourse and the mandates of the organisations.

7.3 Discourse shapes organisations; Organisations shapes discourse

This part of the discussion will look more closely at the relationship between the organisations and discourse. One way of understanding why the organisations use the type of terminology they use is to interpret it as a way to signal what kind of services they offer, as well as their mandate. Based on my empirical findings I propose that language is in a way used by the organisation to position themselves within the prostitution field. Looking back at discourse theory, it is an example of how the way people talk reflect their own personal beliefs regarding an issue (Gill, 2000; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2013). Caring about terminology is also a method for the organisations to care about their clients. This was an aspect of discourse that was further explored in the statement from *Pro Sentret*, where the participant discussed how it might be uncomfortable for people to join a public discourse where they are constantly portrayed in a negative way. Understanding language as something that is constructed (Gill, 2000; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2013), using inclusive language might make the services offered by the organisation seem more inviting and welcoming. Human action gets influenced by discourse (Carbó, et al., 2016), which means that the organisations attempt to use inclusive language as something that might have a positive effect on the people selling sex. The literature review explored how people in prostitution have experienced scrutinization and have been subjected to different forms of verbal abuse throughout history (Jaggar 1997; Jolin, 1994; Liggins, 2003). The organisations I interviewed for my master thesis take great care and consideration into what kind of language they use.

None of the organisations had any objections against people using terms about themselves that they as an organisation did not use. For instance, a human trafficking organisation would not object to one of their clients calling themselves a “sex worker”, but they would not themselves use that type of terminology. This can be explained by again looking at how discourse gets influenced by personal beliefs regarding an issue (Gill, 2000; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2013), as we investigate how language and meaning of the discourse is constructed depending on their social position (Carbó et al., 2016). The next paragraphs will go through how the organisations position themselves within the prostitution field.

Using the example of a human trafficking organisation again, their experiences get shaped by the fact that their clients are people that have experienced exploitation. This is the reason that *ROSA* describe the people they meet as “exploited to prostitution”. Their centre of expertise is mostly concerned with people experiencing exploitation, and the language they use is therefore a reflection of that reality. *Marita Women* offers services directed to women, and thereof use the phrasing “women with prostitution experience”. Emphasizing that it is an experience that they have. It is another example of how language gets shaped by the organisations mandate in the field. This does not mean that any of the two organisations never meet people that are in prostitution voluntarily, but their mandate is connected to human trafficking. Moreover, *Lightup*, stated in the interview that they used the phrase “person in prostitution” because they did not to put any label on people. *Discourse* also determines what can and cannot be said (Bhattarai, 2020), which in this case is illustrated by the human trafficking organisations positionality in the discourse.

Looking at the reflections made from *PION* and *Pro Sentret* on “sex work”, it becomes even more clear how organisations are shaped by their surroundings. They have, for the most part, experiences with people finding themselves voluntarily in prostitution. For their case it would be inaccurate to use a formulation like “exploited to prostitution”. In some cases, they might meet somebody that has been subjected to exploitation, but that is not something they themselves specialize in. “Sex work” was problematised as a term by the representative from *Pro Sentret* in the interview. They were reluctant to use it in official documents, and in a lot of the information that was published about their organisation. They described “sex work” as a term that could entail multiple meanings and did not want to put forward a false narrative of

what kind of services they offered. This raises an interesting point about the way that language and terms in some contexts gets taken for granted, and that they are shaped by different contexts and actors (Carbó, et al., 2016; Johannessen, Rafoss & Rasmussen, 2018). From these answers I propose that language can be understood as an action that changes depending on situational factors. It also proves why it is important to be conscious about what language you use, especially if you wish to use it to include others. It is also interesting to see how two organisations that at first glance can have a lot of similarities still have different experiences of a term.

PION uses the term “sex work” because they want to mirror what kind of language their target group use. This term can be looked at as a mode of self-empowerment from the people selling sex. The people that wish to get more labour rights chose to emphasize that they are *working*. This is again an example of how discourse influence actions and practices (Gill, 2000), and how empowerment is linked to the ability to make choices (Kabeer, 2005). One could also approach the usage of “sex work” as an attempt to find the equivalent of a working “title” for people selling sex, and in that sense, legitimising selling sex as a form of labour. The term “sex work” can also be perceived as something closely linked to liberal feminist approaches to feminism (Scoular & FitzGerald, 2021; Vicente, 2016). This goes to show how feminist debates contribute towards shaping discourse and language. This term has also been adopted by large, international human rights CSOs like Amnesty and by the UN (WHO), as described in the interview with *PION*. Is “sex work” the natural succeder for “prostitute”? Looking at the discussion where the organisations mandates were distinguished from each other, one can understand why this could be problematic. It is not an issue that anybody identify as a “sex worker”, or even organisations that align more with liberal feminism using it. It is problematic because selling sex is not always “sex work”, but in some cases “sexual exploitation”. Nevertheless, I argue that all the organisations seek to move beyond social stigma of people in the industry, as has been identified as a goal in recent feminist studies (Hallgrimsdottir, Phillips & Benoit, 2006; Desyllas, 2013). However, they have their own separate mandate on the field to fulfil, which makes their experience and understanding of contemporary discourse different.

7.4 Gender dimension

This part will go through some of the gendered aspects of this study. I will look more closely into the “sex wars”, where the radical approach towards prostitution started as an assumption that buying sex was an act of violence done by men against women (Bjørndahl, 2010). In Norway, the literature describes how the Norwegian prostitution field has shifted from consisting of mostly Norwegian, female, drug addicts, to being more dominated by female migrants (Norli, 2006; Norli, 2009). Prostitution has throughout history, and to some extent in modern times, had a strong connection to binary gender categories. The person selling sex has often been portrayed as female, and the buyer has been male (Liggins, 2003; Skilbrei & Holmström, 2011; Pollis, 1995; Vicente, 2016). What impact do these gendered expectations have on the actors in the prostitution field?

Looking back at how empowerment theory has been used when talking about prostitution, it is proposed to implement an intersectional lens (Mosedale, 2005). This is further investigated when looking at how gender-categories can in its worst sense exclude the voices of transgender and male sex sellers. When somebody is excluded from public discourse, it is more challenging for them to make sure that their needs are met. It also puts forward an image of prostitution that does not match reality. The gendered categories were explored by some of the organisations when talking about the term “prostitute”. Both *PION* and *Pro Sentret* said that this term communicated the association to a woman selling sex. *Pro Sentret* pointed additionally out that she often was a “privileged woman from Norway”. This is an example of how discourse can be reductive for the people involved. By using more gender-neutral terms, like “sex work”, “sex trade”, “sex-seller”, or “people in prostitution”, the organisations work towards a more inclusive discourse. By including this type of discursive frame, it can have an impact on how we talk, think, and interpret prostitution (Johannessen, Rafoss & Rasmussen, 2018). Moreover, it illustrates how the organisations change and adapt their language by looking at how the prostitution field itself are changing as they gain more knowledge about it.

This paragraph highlights the potential pitfalls that comes from public discourse’s binary categorisation of people in prostitution as either “helpless victims” or “happy sex workers”. Looking at this through an intersectional lens, I argue that this categorisation perpetuates stereotypes of ethnicity and gender. As the representative from *Pro Sentret* put it, the “happy

sex worker” was often assumed to be a privileged Norwegian woman. This is a dimension that is also explored by Phipps (2017) article addressing the relationship between privilege and the prostitution field. First and foremost, the “happy sex worker” category proposes the same gender categories as “prostitute”. Furthermore, it is a category that is rooted in a privileged position. This category does not include experiences from migrant women selling sex, thus forcing them into the “helpless victim” category, which is backed up by the article from Kock & Nadjjar (2015) about “faceless victims”. I argue that public discourses in Norway contribute to a continuous victimization of migrant women in Norway. This also excludes the voices of men and transgender people being subjected to sexual exploitation.

Marita Women brought up how challenging it can be for somebody to realise and admit that they are the victim of human trafficking, as this is a word that holds a lot of negative stigmas for them. This combination opens for the possibility that it is even more challenging for transgender people and men to recognise that they are exploited. This is a dimension that has been explored by scholars looking at how gender discourse in prostitution might shape the self-perception of people selling sex (Jordal, Öhman, & Wijewardene, 2020). Furthermore, not having a full understanding of what is happening to them might make it harder for them to seek and receive help. I argue that these categories bring forward inaccurate stereotypes of the reality of selling sex. This has a negative impact on both people selling sex, and the organisations working with them. Public discourse should move beyond these categorisations to create more constructive debates on the topic. I would like to underline that I am not proposing that public media should never address stories of exploitation or content in prostitution. It is however problematic when a complex issue gets reduced into categories that fail to incorporate the nuances.

7.5 Limitations and strengths of the study

This part will go through some additional limitations that were identified apart from the methodological limitations highlighted in chapter 4, section 4.10. I must acknowledge that conducting the interviews in Norwegian and having to translate them proved to be a challenging task and might have contributed to some of the nuances getting lost. It is challenging to express oneself in another language that is not your mother tongue, and some phrases had no obvious translations. I have therefore included the original Norwegian quotes

in an appendix. I also believe that the results of this study could be strengthened if I had the opportunity to interview a larger number of organisations. I believe that one of my mistakes were to initially include questions regarding the Sex Purchase Act, which might have made some of the organisations reluctant to participate. This is because the Sex Purchase Act has historically been a heated topic within the Norwegian prostitution field, and some organisations do not wish to disclose where they stand on it publicly.

I would however argue that the inclusion of organisation having different mandates on the field makes this closer to a true mapping of the discourse within the prostitution field. I also did member checking with the organisation on the findings-chapter, which strengthened the reliability of my study.

8 Conclusion

This master study was framed by the contemporary discussion regarding “woke-culture”. In the discussions I have had about “wokeness”, I have often found myself defending it. I do agree that it could potentially be dramatic to limit the degree of freedom of speech, but I have often found myself wondering whether this is the goal for people claiming to be “woke”. People criticise “woke-culture” for policing language and being something that only “overly sensitive” people care about. This study has explored why it is important to care about language. Furthermore, I wish that this study will illustrate how it can be beneficial to move beyond the basic understanding of being “woke” as restrictive. I argue that caring about the way we talk about marginalised groups is important, as it has an influence on the self-perception and ultimately the self-esteem of said groups. Toxic discourse makes it more challenging for representatives of marginalised groups to participate in the public discourse. Caring about how you express yourself can have a potentially positive impact on the marginalised groups in the discourse. It is not a tool for limiting how people express themselves, but rather make people think through the way they express themselves. In its most positive sense, “wokeness” is about inclusivity and being attentive to other people’s experiences. Public language has been used to stigmatise and to a certain extent control people in prostitution. From “fallen women” to “helpless victims”, from “immoral and sinful” to “privileged women” that loves their job. The discourse might change, but it still reduces the experiences of the people that find themselves within prostitution. I argue that it is important to care about language and discourse, because discourses change all the time depending on different experiences and origins. The organisations interviewed for this master thesis had different mandates and obligations to fulfil, but they all agreed that some of the terminology that has previously been used about people in prostitution is in its worst sense stigmatising.

The findings of this thesis are relevant for global development, since the terminology used within the development field is also experiencing an ongoing change. Some scholars have for instance stopped defining countries as “underdeveloped” or to refer to poor countries as “the third world”, and prefer the term “majority world” (Jakobsen, 2012). This shows that it is important to care about discourse and terminology, especially within the field of development, as it often concerns marginalised groups. One impact Norwegian CSOs can have on the discourse about prostitution is that public services can for instance opt to use terms that are more sensitive towards the multifaceted experiences of people selling sex. It can also

potentially affect the way public media writes and talks about the Norwegian prostitution field. Additionally, it can have an influence on policies proposed by larger CSOs as was illustrated with the signing of the Palermo-protocol and increased focus on human trafficking. This study also attempts to show how discourse analysis can be used as a conceptual framework in development studies addressing discourses and terminology on vulnerable groups. As researchers of global development, it is important that we continuously examine and address different sides of discourses.

The study also investigates how language can be used as a method of empowering marginalised groups. Empowerment is something that a third party can facilitate for, but empowerment itself must come from within. Using terminology that is preferred by marginalised groups can be looked at as a helpful tool for people in prostitution. This is something that is emphasized by the organisations as important for them. As an example, most of the organisations featured in this thesis have started to use more gender-neutral terminology, and moved beyond terms that can be perceived as offensive. This can potentially encourage people in prostitution to participate in the public debate. Furthermore, people in prostitution have traditionally been put into the categories of either a “helpless victim” or “happy sex worker”, which have reduced the experiences of people in prostitution. This is also something I identified as a central theme for using language that is not a continuation of a victim-narrative. They themselves do not feel as victims, and do not want to be continued to be perceived as such. Being called a victim takes away their own voice and might make them seem “helpless”. This study indicates that discourse and terminology is a method for the organisations to include and empower their clients.

This study attempts to contribute to our understanding of contemporary discourses within the Norwegian prostitution field. Although this study is limited in scope, it has mapped out some central themes. It has highlighted how challenging it might be to find a universal discourse, as the prostitution field consist of a complex set of experiences. The organisations that participated in this study use discourse that is formed by the social reality they find themselves in. It illustrates how discourse shape reality and reality shapes discourse. All organisations agree on the shared goals of combatting exploitation and caring for their clients. However, it is important to separate the organisations from each other, thereby the type of

terminology they use, which ultimately explains why some organisations refrain from using some terms. This means making a greater distinction between people finding themselves voluntarily and involuntarily in prostitution, that moved beyond the gender-binary, reductive categories of “helpless victim” or “happy sex worker”. “Sex work” and “sexual exploitation” should be understood as different phenomenon, with different discourses. This study argues that language and terminology can hold diverse meanings in contrasting arenas. Looking back at the term “prostitute”, it is an example of how organisations working directly with people in prostitution have a deeper understanding of this term. In a similar manner, organisations working with human trafficking have a different understanding of the term “sex work”, than the organisations working as either interest organisations or knowledge centres on prostitution.

8.1 Recommendations for further research

Conducting the research presented in this thesis led to more questions about terminology in the Norwegian prostitution field. It could for instance be interesting to conduct similar studies with a larger and more diverse group of participants. Another approach could be to conduct a comparative study between countries with different policies on prostitution. One could for instance compare countries where prostitution is illegal, semi-illegal and legal, to investigate whether and how policies impact the prostitution discourse. Furthermore, it would be interesting to explore discussions between people selling sex, in for instance a focus-group setting. This would open for the possibility to investigate how the participants themselves experience discourses and debates about the field, what type of terminology they use themselves and how they wish to be addressed or referred to. Moreover, this type of study could explore what kind of needs and support people in prostitution need from CSOs / public institutions in Norway. Finally, I recommend that future research investigate gender-dimensions that is still present in the field. This was briefly discussed in this study, and it could be useful to look more closely into the needs from participants that falls outside the binary gender-categories.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview guide

The interview guides were only guides, questions were adjusted as appropriate during the interviews.

Introduction to the study

1. Small talk

- a. Interviewer introduces themselves, respondent gives their personal information.

2. Information about the study

- a. Introduction of the purpose of the interview, background information.
- b. Information about confidentiality and anonymization.

Questions specific to the organization and the respondent's affiliation

3. Background information about the organization

- a. What is the name of the organization?
- b. How long has the organization existed?
- c. Size of the organization
- d. What is the organization's vision/goal?

4. Respondent's affiliation with the organization

- a. What is your position in the organization?
- b. How long have you worked for the organization?

5. How does the organization assist individuals involved in sex work?

- a. What experiences have they had over the years?
- b. Who do they usually assist (information about gender, among other things)?
- c. Experiences with women, men, and transgender individuals.
- d. Primarily victims of human trafficking?

Views on laws and concepts related to buying and selling sex in Norway

6. What is the organization's stance on the sex purchase law in Norway?
 - a. What are the strengths/weaknesses?

7. How does the organization refer to individuals involved in sex work?
 - a. Why?

8. What does the organization think (among other things) about the concepts:
 - a. Sex work/prostitute
 - b. Pimp
 - c. Modern slavery
 - d. Victim/survivor

Collaboration with other organizations

9. What impact do the terms used have, in their opinion?
 - a. Construction of victims
 - b. Construction of gender

10. What do you think about coordination between organizations that assist victims of human trafficking and organizations that work more closely with prostitution?
 - a. What strengths/weaknesses do you find in this collaboration?
 - b. How can this collaboration be improved, in their opinion?

Summary

Summarize findings, ask for clarification, and open up for questions.

Appendix 2: Information letter & Consent form

This consent form is in Norwegian, and based guidelines from the website of NSD / Sikt.

Er du interessert i å delta i forskningsprosjektet

“The impact of language: An exploratory study of different discourses concerning people selling sex”

Dette er en invitasjon til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å utforske holdninger og begrepsbruk til organisasjoner som jobber med mennesker involvert i sexsalg. I dette skrivet gir jeg deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg. Intervjuet kommer til å foregå på norsk.

Formål

Formålet med studien er å utforske hvordan debatter angående personer involvert i sexsalg kan ha ulike tilnærminger. Studien vil gå nærmere inn på hvordan organisasjonen stiller seg til sexkjøpsloven, hvilke begrep de velger/velger ikke å bruke, og hvorvidt de opplever at begrepsbruk skaper et kjønnnet bilde av personer involvert i sexsalg. I tillegg kommer jeg til å stille noen spørsmål som går inn på hvordan dere opplever samarbeid med andre organisasjoner som jobber med samme tema. Intervjuet kommer til å danne datagrunnlaget for masteroppgaven min i Global Utviklingsteori, som jeg tar ved Universitetet i Bergen.

Jeg tar kontakt med deres organisasjon fordi dere jobber med personer involvert i sexsalg, og jeg er interessert i å høre deres meninger og synspunkt. Organisasjonen deres har blitt anbefalt av andre organisasjoner som jobber med samme tema.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta

Jeg planlegger å gjennomføre et ustrukturert intervju, som har varighet på 45-60 minutter. Før og i løpet av intervjuet kommer du til å:

- Få informasjon om samtykkeskjema, anonymisering, taushetsplikt, og dataoppbevaring.
- Få spørsmål knyttet til organisasjonen du er ansatt i og din rolle i den.
- Få spørsmål om hvem dere for det meste bistår. For eksempel om det er mest kvinner fra Norge, om dere har kjennskap til om de blir utnyttet i menneskehandel, og så videre.
- Få spørsmål knyttet til organisasjonens visjon, mål og hvordan dere stiller dere til debatten knyttet til personer involvert i sexsalg.
- Bli tilsendt kopi av intervjuet, sitater jeg ønsker å bruke i masteroppgaven.

Det er frivillig å delta

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykket tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle dine personopplysninger vil da bli slettet. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg.

Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger

Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrivet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Datamaterialet kommer til å bli oppbevart på en datamaskin som er passord beskyttet. Den eneste som kommer til å ha direkte tilgang til datamateriale er veilederen min Siri Lange.

Råmateriale kommer til å bli oppbevart frem til 01.06.23 etter at jeg har fått levert og godkjent masteren min. Lydopptak kommer da til å bli slettet.

Jeg kommer ikke til å omtale deg ved navn i masteroppgaven min, men hvilken organisasjon du representerer og hvilken tilknytning du har kan forekomme.

Dine rettigheter

Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke opplysninger vi behandler om deg, og å få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene
- å få rettet opplysninger om deg som er feil eller misvisende

- å få slettet personopplysninger om deg
- å sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger

Med vennlig hilsen

Rebekka Mong Andreassen

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(Student)

Siri Lange

siri.lange@uib.no

+47 55 58 48 32

(Veileder)

Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet til Rebekka Mong Andreassen, og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:


- å delta i et uformelt intervju
- at intervjuet blir tatt opp
- at opplysninger om organisasjonen jeg representerer samt min tilknytning publiseres

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet

(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

Appendix 3: Approval from NSD / Sikt

12.05.2023, 10:53 Meldeskjema for behandling av personopplysninger

 Sikt

[Meldeskjema](#) / [Masteroppgave i Global Utviklingsteori](#) / Vurdering

Vurdering av behandling av personopplysninger

Referansenummer 174294	Vurderingstype Standard	Dato 02.01.2023
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Prosjekttittel
Masteroppgave i Global Utviklingsteori

Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon
Universitetet i Bergen / Det psykologiske fakultet / Hemil-senteret

Prosjektansvarlig
Siri Lange

Student
Rebekka Mong Andreassen

Prosjektperiode
01.12.2022 - 01.06.2023

Kategorier personopplysninger
Alminnelige

Lovlig grunnlag
Samtykke (Personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a)

Behandlingen av personopplysningene er lovlig så fremt den gjennomføres som oppgitt i meldeskjemaet. Det lovlige grunnlaget gjelder til 01.06.2023.

[Meldeskjema](#)

Kommentar
OM VURDERINGEN
Sikt har en avtale med institusjonen du forsker eller studerer ved. Denne avtalen innebærer at vi skal gi deg råd slik at behandlingen av personopplysninger i prosjektet ditt er lovlig etter personvernregelverket.

KOMMENTARER TIL INFORMASJONSSKRIVET
Informasjonsskrivet ser for det meste fint ut, men dato for prosjektslutt og anonymisering må rettes til å samsvare med dato oppgitt i meldeskjema (01.06.2023). I tillegg mangler student og veileders kontaktinformasjon, samt informasjon om UIB sitt personvernombud. Ta gjerne en titt på våre nettsider for hjelp til formuleringer: <https://sikt.no/informasjon-til-deltakarane-i-forskningsprosjekt>

FØLG DIN INSTITUSJONS RETNINGSLINJER
Vi har vurdert at du har lovlig grunnlag til å behandle personopplysningene, men husk at det er institusjonen du er ansatt/student ved som avgjør hvilke databehandlere du kan bruke og hvordan du må lagre og sikre data i ditt prosjekt. Husk å bruke leverandører som din institusjon har avtale med (f.eks. ved skylagring, nettpøreskjema, videosamtale el.)

Personvern tjenester legger til grunn at behandlingen oppfylder kravene i personvernforordningen om riktighet (art. 5.1 d), integritet og konfidensialitet (art. 5.1. f) og sikkerhet (art. 32).

MELD VESENTLIGE ENDRINGER
Dersom det skjer vesentlige endringer i behandlingen av personopplysninger, kan det være nødvendig å melde dette til oss ved å oppdatere meldeskjemaet. Se våre nettsider om hvilke endringer du må melde: <https://sikt.no/melde-endringer-i-meldeskjema>

OPPFØLGING AV PROSJEKTET
Vi vil følge opp ved planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet.

Lykke til med prosjektet!

<https://meldeskjema.sikt.no/0374e050-8019-4730-960b-50654371c35e/vurdering> 1/1

Appendix 4: Norwegian / English translation – Quotes

Page number	Quote in English	Quote in Norwegian
26	Prostitute is kind of what is most commonly used in our society. But I often say “they are not just that”, just like the rest of us. We are not only a “mother” or a “student”, but we are also all so much more. And we must be allowed to be defined as something more than just that. It is so stigmatized.	<i>Prostituert er jo det som ligger litt i samfunnet vårt. Men jeg har jo det, som jeg ofte sier, de er jo ikke bare det. Som alle oss alle, vi er ikke bare «mor» eller «student», vi er så mye mer. Og vi må få lov til å bli definert som noe mer enn akkurat det. Det er så stigmatisert.</i>
27	It is outdated and tied up to many different things. If you go into the [Norwegian] thesaurus and look at the results on “prostitutes” or “prostitute” it is really bad. It is used as a synonym to degrade oneself, to dirty oneself. It is also used to describe somebody that is “selling their souls”, for instance about a politician that “prostitute” themselves meaning that they are “selling themselves” and thereof lacking values and integrity. It has become a synonym that describes an act that is wrong, dirty and lacking integrity, to that extend that it actually is a synonym in the thesaurus.	<i>Det er utdatert, og det er knytta til mange ting. Hvis du går inn og leser på synonymordboka og leser på «prostituert» eller «prostituere» så er det skikkelig stygt. Det brukes synonymt om å nedgradere seg selv, skitne seg selv. Det brukes også om å «selge sjela si», for eksempel «en politiker som prostituerer seg», i forhold til å liksom «selge seg selv» handler om at man da gir bort sine verdier og ikke har integritet. Det har blitt et synonymbegrep som handler om å gjøre noe galt, og skittent og manglende integritet i så stor grad at det faktisk er et synonym da for begrepet i ordboka på en måte. Det prøver vi å ikke bruke.</i>
27	That one is caught in a trap, and in the midst of something. That you are a victim, and not something else, and thereof reduced to somebody that does not have agency.	<i>At man liksom sitter i en felle, sitter midt oppi no. Man er et offer og ingenting annet, og blir redusert til noe som ikke har selvråderett.</i>
28	We care a great deal about terms, and we feel like we are on a journey of discovering new ones. We encourage to use terms like “persons that find oneself in prostitution” or “persons that sells sex”, because we wish to use as neutral terms as possible and not put a label on other people.	<i>Vi er ekstremt opptatt av begreper, og føler vi er på en reise med å oppdage nye begreper. Og vi oppfordrer veldig til å si «personer som befinner seg i prostitusjon» eller «personer som selger sex», fordi vi tenker at vi ønsker å bruke så nøytrale begrep som mulig og ikke sette merkelapper på folk.</i>

28	We would say “exploited to prostitution”, not for instance a prostitute. We do not use what word. We do not work with people that tell us “this is our profession”.	<i>Vi vil si utnyttet til prostitusjon, ikke en prostituert. Vi bruker ikke det ordet. Vi jobber jo ikke med folk som sier «dette er mitt yrke».</i>
29	It is important for me, to underline that it is an experience, but you are not defined as a human being by this experience. You are defined in a whole other way.	<i>Så det er viktig for meg, det er en erfaring du har, men du er ikke definert som et menneske ved å ha den erfaringen. Du er definert på en helt annen måte.</i>
29	A lot of the research we do and our target group that we work closely with are the people that sell sex for money. We do not have a lot to offer strippers for instance, which could be perceived as sexworkers. (...) Pornography is at any rate a part of it. Pornographic actors, camming... We have those conversations. To what extend to we represent that group, and to what extend should we represent people that do camming.	<i>Veldig mye av den forskningen vi gjør, eller de gruppene som vi jobber tett på er jo de som selger sex for penger. Vi har ikke noe særlig med for eksempel strippere da, som kan bli sett på som sexarbeidere. (...) Pornografi er i alle fall en del av det [sexarbeid], da. Pornoskuespillere, camming, det er jo sånne samtaler vi har. I hvor stor grad representerer vi den gruppa, i hvor stor grad bør vi representere folk som driver med camming</i>
30	Sex work is a choice. You kind of take the power of definition back with it. The power do define for yourself whether or not you are in a bad situation. (...) Carol Leigh invented the term, to highlight the economical bit of sex work and play down the morale bit. It is about people selling sex, for various reasons. All international human rights organisations, among others WHO and Amnesty, use this term.	<i>Mens sexarbeid er et valg. Man tar liksom litt definisjonsmakten tilbake med det. Man tar litt tilbake makten til å definere selv om man har det kjipt eller ikke. (...) Carol Leigh oppfant det, for å få inn den økonomiske biten inn i sexarbeid og få bort den moralske biten litt. Det handler om personer som selger sex som må av ulike årsaker selge sex. Alle internasjonale menneskerettighetsorganisasjoner og lignende, for eksempel WHO, Amnesty, og videre har begynt å bruke begrepet.</i>
30	We refrain from using sex work. It is because we believe that selling sex cannot be juxtaposed with other work, and it camouflages a part of the exploitation present in the sex industry. It is also very vague as of who is the worker, is it both the one selling and somebody that potentially exploits them like a pimp? (...) some people can find themselves in the sex industry before they turn 18. It is not the case then, that they turn 18 and come of age, and then turn into sex workers.	<i>Når det gjelder sexarbeid så er vi klare på at vi avstår fra å bruke det. Det er fordi vi mener at det å selge sex ikke kan sidestilles med annet arbeid, at det kamuflerer litt den utnyttelsen som finnes i sexindustrien. Det er også veldig vagt hvem som er arbeideren, er det både den som selger og eventuelt den som utnytter noen som en hallik? Og så det er i alle fall en viktig begrunnelse. (...) noen kan ha havnet inn i</i>

		<i>sexindustrien før de er 18. Da er det ikke sånn at på 18-årsdagen er de myndige og blir sexarbeidere.</i>
32	I have never met anybody that has said “I am a victim of human trafficking”, it is rather the opposite “are you stupid, do you believe that about me?”. None of us wants to identify as a victim.	<i>Jeg har aldri møtt noen som sier «jeg er et menneskehandelseffer», mer det motsatte «er du helt teit, tror du det om meg?». Ingen av oss vil jo være et offer.</i>
33	In the passive-victim-discourse, that you are a “junkie” that has to sell yourself to earn money to buy drugs, or a victim of human trafficking, there is a lack of looking at how strong they are. I would myself never survive on the streets, so it requires an immense power. It is strong people that find themselves in a form of exploitation, but by calling them “survivors” or “victims” you eradicate the right for them to be an acting subject, that finds themselves in a terrible life situation. (...). They are essentially strong human beings that has made a choice, but this aspect is not included in the prostitution-debate.	<i>Det tenker jeg også med begrepet «overlevende», hvor styrken ligger i at du klarte å kjempe deg ut. Men også i det passive-ofre-diskursen, at man er en «junkie» som må selge seg for å få penger til dop, eller er et offer for menneskehandel, så er det fortsatt et veldig fravær av å se hvor sterke de er. Jeg hadde selv aldri overlevd på gata, så det trenger en enorm styrke. Det er jo veldig sterke mennesker som havner i en eller annen form for utnyttelsessituasjon, men med å kalle dem «overlevende» eller «ofre» fratrar man dem rettigheten til å være handlende agenter, som er i en forferdelig livssituasjon.</i>
34	It is very passivating and disempowering in the public discourse, which we try to avoid. We believe that people selling sex are fundamentally as capable as all other people. For instance, in speaking up for themselves, understanding their own situation, and making active choices. Rather than just being «passive victims» all the time.	<i>Det er veldig sånn pasifisering, da. Og umyndiggjøring i den offentlige debatten, som vi også prøver å unngå da. Vi tenker i utgangspunktet at personer som selger sex er like kapable som alle andre. Typ det å snakke for seg selv, forstå sin egen situasjon, og at de tar aktive valg da. Istedenfor å bare være sånne «passive ofre» hele tiden.</i>
35	The “content happy sex worker” is not presented as a strong woman, an entrepreneur – they are just a person that loves to satisfy men. It is also not a strong woman in that narrative, they are somebody that loves their job, money, and all their clients. Nobody loves their job in real life,	<i>Den «lykkelige hora» er heller ikke presentert som en sterk kvinne, en entreprenør – det er bare en som elsker å tilfredsstille menn. Det er heller ikke en sterk kvinne i det narrativ [fra mediebildet] de er noen som elsker jobben sin, penger, og elsker alle kundene. Det er jo i realiteten ingen som elsker jobben sin.</i>

<p>35</p>	<p>I believe that we can lift self-respect by talking about them in another way than they have been told before, as well as value. It is very common to meet that wall of their own inner resistance, “what you are telling me is not the truth”, “I do not matter, I am just trash”. That kind of mental shift is not something that is done overnight.</p>	<p><i>Jeg tror at vi kan løfte selvrespekt ved å snakke om dem på en annen måte en det de har blitt fortalt før, og verdier ikke sant. Det er veldig vanlig å møte den veggen av deres indre motstand, «det du sier er ikke sant», «jeg betyr ingenting, jeg er bare søppel». Sånne ting. Sånn at det er ikke gjort over natta, å gjøre et sånt mentalt skifte.</i></p>
<p>35 / 36</p>	<p>It can be inclusive, because it is so important to include the voice of people that has experience with exploitation. In situations like these, being cautious with what terms we use can give persons the experience that there is room for them as well and that they have their own voice. We also believe that it can contribute to a positive change for policy development.</p>	<p><i>Det kan også være inkluderende, fordi det er så viktig å inkludere stemmen til personer som har erfaring med utnyttelse, og da kan det å være varsom med begrepene føre til at slike personer kan oppleve at det er rom for dem også og at de har mulighet til å være med inn og ha en stemme. Og når det kommer til utforming av politikk, så tror vi det [begrepene] kan være med på å bidra til positiv endring.</i></p>
<p>36</p>	<p>It has an impact on the groups physical and psychological health, and their opportunity to themselves participate in public discourse. It is harder to participate in this debate if you are constantly mentioned in ways that is unbearable and stigmatising.</p>	<p><i>Det har også en del å si for den gruppas egen helse og psykiske helse, og muligheten til å selv delta i den offentlige debatten. Hvis man hele tiden blir omtalt på måter som er uholdbart, stigmatiserende og kjipt, så blir det vanskeligere å delta i debatten.</i></p>