

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/257771229>

Decriminalization of Sex Work: Feminist Discourses in Light of Research

Article in *Sexuality & Culture* · March 2014

DOI: 10.1007/s12119-013-9174-5

CITATIONS

30

READS

5,392

1 author:



[Jacqueline Comte](#)

Laval University

9 PUBLICATIONS 37 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

Decriminalization

of Sex Work :

Feminist Discourses

in light of Research.

Jacqueline Comte

Sexologist (Master's Degree)
and PhD student in Sociology of Sexuality.

École de Service Social, Université Laval, Quebec City, QC, Canada
e-mail: jacqueline.comte.1@ulaval.ca

Sexuality & Culture An Interdisciplinary Quarterly
ISSN 1095-5143 Online 2013, March 31, Sexuality & Culture DOI
10.1007/s12119-013-9174-5

Sexuality & Culture An Interdisciplinary Quarterly
ISSN 1095-5143 Volume 18 Number 1 Sexuality & Culture (2014) 18:196-217
DOI 10.1007/s12119-013-9174-5

"The final publication is available at link.springer.com".

Abstract

Three main ideological stances exist regarding sex work issues: abolitionism, sex-positive feminism, and decriminalization. We argue for decriminalization based on decades of research results. Researches on female sex workers are most often done through feminist theory and focus on gender relations and on the experience of oppression and/or agency. They examine the motivations to do sex work, the experience of being objectified, the stigma related to sex work, and, finally, the impact of this kind of work on self-esteem, on couple relationships, and on social relationships. Researches on male sex workers examine power dynamics, representations of masculinity, self-perception, and the socioeconomic conditions that lead to sex work and influence safe-sex practices. Usually, feminist approaches do not take the experiences of male sex workers into account. However, taking these experiences into consideration would give a broader perspective to the understanding of sex work, as the experiences of male sex workers show many aspects similar to those of female sex workers. We contend that a woman's sexual experience has been socially constructed as being part of her identity, in such a way that she becomes socially devalued whenever she does not comply to norms, thus making sex work a 'degrading' experience even though it is not intrinsically so.

Key words

Sex work, feminism, abolitionism, decriminalization, identity.

Sex work and oppression of women

The analysis of sex work and of the sexual oppression of women produces two diametrically opposed feminist interpretations. One explains this sexual oppression through the objectification of women. It maintains that any message or speech objectifying a woman's body or describing a woman as sexually desiring and available is to be proscribed, as it is the only way we can create a society in which women are

fully considered subjects rather than objects to be used by men. Consequently, the sex industry must be eliminated entirely (Barry, 1979, 1995; Dworkin, 1979, 1993; MacKinnon, 1985). The other feminist interpretation asserts that the sexual oppression of women results from a patriarchal control of women's sexuality, which forces them to sexually belong to the men to whom they are married and forbidding them any other form of sexuality; otherwise, they will be stigmatized as 'whores' and socially despised and ostracized. Thus, to free oneself from oppression involves affirming one's right to experience sexuality one's own way, even when that sexuality is outside current norms and is marketed, instead of submissively accepting to confine it to the marital setting (Califia, 1994; Pheterson, 1989, 1996, 1998; Rubin, 1984).

These two opposite understandings of the patriarchal control on the sexuality of women obviously lead to a complete and apparently insoluble disagreement between the feminists who are abolitionists and those who militate for the decriminalization of sex work. To understand the phenomenon in its whole and to be able to take a position, it is obviously useful to study the argumentation used by each stance. It is even more necessary, however, to acquaint oneself with the whole set of research work that has been published during the past few decades. We will first explore the three main ideological stances regarding sex work issues: abolitionism, sex-positive feminism, and decriminalization. We will then see the results of different researches on sex work as it is experienced and explained by the men and women who do sex work, thus giving us an insight into what really happens. Doing so, we will gain evidence which both invalidates the basic abolitionist affirmation saying sex work is inherently violent and supports the arguments for decriminalisation. Finally, we will offer a sex-positive explanation on why sex work has been traditionally stigmatized, justifying by the same token the necessity to decriminalize it, on the basis of a feminist ideology.

The abolitionist argumentation

The abolitionist stance is against all forms of sex work regulation. It considers sex workers to be victims who should not be criminalized but helped to quit prostitution, and it militates for a total disappearance of sex work, including prostitution, pornography, erotic massage and erotic dance. Neo-

abolitionists take one step further and ask for the criminalization of clients (e.g., Coalition Against Trafficking in Women¹, Farley et al., 2004; Farley, 2003, 2004; Farley et al., 2009; Hugues, 2005; Jeffreys, 1997, 2008, 2009; Raymond, 2003, 2004; Waltman, 2011²). Abolitionism is generally associated with radical feminism³, even though the latter includes many different positions. Thus, some authors (e.g., Guillaumin, 1995; Pheterson, 1996; Tabet, 1991) consider sex work as a practice of resistance against the domination of men over women, and consequently will not be abolitionists. Moreover, the 'sex-positive' feminists also present themselves as being radical feminists, while they actually fight for decriminalization.

According to abolitionists, prostitution is rape. It is not only the buying of women and children for their use as sexual objects, it constitutes an exercise of power over women. It has been created by the patriarchal system in order to keep women subordinated by objectifying them and reducing them to their sex, and, thus, by dehumanizing them (Barry, 1995; Dworkin, 1979, 1993; Jeffreys, 1997, 2009; MacKinnon, 1985). In the past decades, seeing that women were making progress towards equality, men as a dominant group, promoted the growth of the sex industries in order to reinstall their supremacy and maintain their economical and sexual exploitation of women (Jeffreys, 2009; Poulin, 2004). Not having lost much of its power (and it is even more flagrant in the developing countries, as women are denied education and

1 International organization promoting abolitionism, <http://www.catwinternational.org>.

2 As well as feminist political instances or lobbies that are active in many countries. In the province of Quebec, where the author lives, it is the case regarding the '*Conseil du statut de la femme du Québec*' (2012). A few more examples among many others : Women's Coalition for the Abolition of Prostitution, in Canada (<http://www.rapereliefshelter.bc.ca>); Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (<http://www.catwinternational.org/>), which is international; Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation (<http://caase.org>), in the United States; Poppy Project (2008), in the United Kingdom; National organization for Women's and Young Women's Shelters (<http://www.roks.se/about-roks-1>) in Sweden; and Sanlaap (<http://www.sanlaapindia.org>) in India.

3 Radical feminism sees the oppression of women by men as the foundation of the system of power under which human relationships are organized in society. Following this, women have to fight against the patriarchal system until the whole system changes and frees them from oppression. Contrasting with this radical current, there exists a moderate feminism that simply aims for the amelioration of the condition of women by means of legislation changes.

maintained in low paying jobs) the patriarchal system maintains women in poverty. It also trains women to be sexual objects for men through early sexual abuse. These two conditions, either separately or together, make them vulnerable to the manipulation of pimps and procurers. Thus, men merely have to make use of the despair that women feel to enslave them through a prostitutional system which, on the one hand, compels women to satisfy alleged masculine sexual needs, and on the other, enriches pimps and procurers. Organized and sustained by and for men, the sex industry spreads more and more extensively thanks to an international network of organized crime which, by bribing media and political leaders of just about every country, promotes prostitution, by-passing laws so that it can maintain its procuring activities, and attempts to get laws changed and have prostitution legalized. Organized crime does this by contributing generously to political parties, by publishing false testimonies in the media saying that sex work improves the lives of the women who do it, and by financially sustaining 'front groups' (that is, sex workers' associations) to promote decriminalization of the sex industry (Audet, 2008; Farley, 2009; Jeffreys, 1997, 2009; Poulin, 2004).

All the while, women and children are being subjected to violence and rape through selling and buying transactions that occur between pimps and prostitutes⁴ (that is, the clients). Kept in a situation of sexual slavery, these victims can only submit themselves to the demands of the prostitute who pays for them. The very nature of prostitution opens the door to all possible kinds of violence and brutality that men are capable of, including torture and killing. Women who enter into prostitution in an apparently consenting way just do not know the violence to which they will be subjected. The difficulty they experience in getting out of it later arises not because they find advantages in prostitution, but because they do not have the resources to free themselves and they need help to succeed. It follows from this reading of the situation that prostitution and trafficking in women are directly and intimately connected, and that it is only by abolishing prostitution that we will be able to eliminate the trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation. Thus, abolitionists refuse to make any distinction between 'voluntary' prostitution and 'forced' prostitution, no more

4 This is the term coined by Jeffreys (2008) to “give the buyer the status of perpetrator in the practice of prostitution”. By the same logic, the woman involved in prostitution is not a *prostitute* (and even less a *sex worker!*). Rather, she is a *prostituted woman*, a term showing that “somebody must be doing something to the woman for her to be prostituted” (Jeffreys, 1997:5).

than they do between 'women trafficking' and 'voluntary migration with the aim of doing sex work'. Being by its very nature rape, violence, and the subordination of women by men, prostitution cannot, by any means, be voluntary (e.g., Audet, 2008; Barry, 1979, 1995; Dworkin, 1979, 1993; Farley et al, 2004; Farley, 2003, 2004, 2005; Jeffreys, 1997, 2008, 2009; MacKinnon, 1985; Poulin, 2004; Raphael & Shapiro, 2004, 2005; Raymond, 2003, 2004; Ricci et al, 2012; Waltman, 2011; Wynter, 1998).

Abolitionists also explain that what seems to be free consent among some prostituted women is merely a submissive acceptance of the traditional exploitation of women. In this sense, it constitutes an answer to the conditions of poverty into which the patriarchal system puts women. The prostituted woman submits to masculine interests and collaborates with the oppressor so that she can cope better with her situation than she would by resisting. Thus, some women would prefer to play according to men's rules by identifying with the desires of the latter and positioning themselves as sex objects, maintaining that they find pleasure in doing so. However, this is only a kind of identification with the aggressor in which they become exactly what the aggressor demands they be; that way, these women get a better deal in a world where masculine domination remains hegemonic. Thus, prostituted women who maintain that it was their choice to enter the sex industry and that they are comfortable within it, or even empowered through it, are women who identify themselves so well with the masculine culture that they do not recognize their alienation (Golden, 2007; Jeffreys, 2009; Poulin, 2004). Barry (1995:89) explains:

'Individually and institutionally, the lived experience of dehumanized sex harms women and sustains the gender class condition. It is oppression. Consent to oppression or an apparent 'will' to be objectified is a condition of oppression. It is never a state of freedom. Sexual exploitation is oppression, and that means that it will be accepted and even promoted within the oppressed class. That is what oppression is! This is how every form of oppression is sustained.'

Furthermore, some abolitionists will argue—how can we speak of consent when we know that the *mean* age of entry into prostitution is *14 years old* in developed countries, including Canada and the United States? It is senseless to imagine that after having been used in prostitution as a child when she obviously

could not consent, a woman would suddenly have the freedom to choose whether to continue, once she reaches 18 (Poulin, 2004).

The intrinsic harmfulness of prostitution, according to the abolitionist discourse, comes from an intimate tie between sexuality and the core identity of the person, since sexuality is experienced within the most intimate parts of the body. Consequently, to sell one's body (as they say) and sexuality destroys not only the integrity of the body but also the integrity of the identity itself. Abolitionists explain this with the understanding that, for sexuality to be fulfilling, it must be experienced within a spontaneous sharing of affection where both partners are equally subjects of their sexuality. Whenever sexuality happens outside these conditions and is, for example, reduced to mechanical and repetitive acts without desire and pleasure, it necessarily becomes devastating, as it attacks the core identity of the person. Prostitution, as abolitionists perceive it, is a place where affective sharing is impossible since the prostituted woman is merely a body used by the client to ejaculate into. This is so even in cases where the man requires the woman to be “sexually active and responsive as well as emotionally engaged” (Barry, 1995:34) as what she will be doing, then, can only be an “enactment” (Barry, 1995:34), the real thing not being possible because spontaneity is eliminated by the simple fact that there is a contract. And this is, by nature, *violence*: it destroys the integrity of a person's body and soul (Anderson, 1993; Audet, 2008; Barry, 1995; Camirand, 2004; Jean, 2007; Radin, 1996).

For all these reasons, abolitionists believe that decriminalization or legalization⁵ (for them, there is no difference between the two in terms of effects) would utterly harm women as a class by maintaining their sexual and economic exploitation. It would only serve the interests of pimps, procurers and prostitutes, but not those of the prostituted women themselves. Even worse, it would lead to the growth of the sex industry and to an increase of the trafficking of women and children for the aims of prostituting them, as laws would be favorable to such activities.

5 Decriminalization means that all articles related to (adult) prostitution are deleted from criminal law; legalization means that certain activities related to prostitution become legal while others remain illegal (see Corriveau, 2010)

The sex-positive feminist argumentation

On their side, sex-positive feminists see patriarchy as the cause of the sexual repression of women. Created within a patriarchal system that controls women's sexuality in order to maintain women in a reproductive role, present laws and dogmas stigmatize and punish women who venture into any form of sexuality that does not conform to the restrictive frame of monogamous heterosexual sexuality. Thus developed a double standard, where men are free to express sexuality outside marriage but where the women who do the same are labeled as 'easy women' and as 'whores'. Considering that sexual re-appropriation is, for women, a powerful emancipating factor, sex-positive feminists deem it necessary to fight against this double standard and to encourage women to explore their sexuality (Bell, 1995; Califia, 1994; Queen, 1997; Rubin, 1984; Willis, 1992).

These sex-positive feminists see the position of anti-pornography and anti-sex work feminists as being essentialist: it attributes a perverse sexuality to men on the grounds of their presumably having a sexuality focused on the genitals, whereas women's sexuality would be the moral model to follow as theirs would be focused on feelings and love. Such a position, on the one hand, maintains the feeling of guilt women have toward their sexual desires and acts that are labeled as 'deviant'; on the other hand, it stops women from exploring their own sexuality, as they are not allowed to express any alternate sexuality (e.g., sexuality without emotional attachment, lesbianism, bondage/ domination/ sadomasochism, and sex work) without being stigmatized. Thus, sex work has been criminalized and stigmatized with the aim of controlling women's sexuality, not with the aim of protecting women against moral alienation.

Consequently, sex-positive feminists pose sex work as an opportunity for sexual exploration and personal growth regarding one's own sexual taboos and prejudices. According to them, we have to question the moral codes that forbid women to be 'sexual' outside the legitimate couple; allow ourselves to explore sexual acts, activities, and role playing that can be found within sex work and that seem interesting either because they sound exciting or simply because they are new; enjoy the pleasures generated by this type of work (e.g., pleasure in finding oneself beautiful and desirable, pleasure in mastering the art of the courtesan, erotic pleasures); and, ultimately, get rid of all feelings of guilt that have been socially instilled toward such

sexual expression. Doing so would bring about greater comfort in one's own body and sexuality as well as toward the sexuality of others (Bell, 1995; Califia, 1994; Queen, 1997; Rubin, 1984; Willis, 1992).

Concerning the fact that sex work happens mainly between female sex workers and male clients, sex-positive feminists explain that the limited presence of women as clients is directly due to the sexual repression of women, which does not allow them to envisage the possibility that they might legitimately desire a sexual activity for themselves without necessarily having to take the other's desires and needs into account (Califia, 1994; Queen, 1997). Without this social control over women's sexuality, women would not be inhibited regarding their own sexual needs and would allow themselves to pay for the sexual services of a competent sex worker, in the same way they now do when they go to a healthcare professional (Bell, 1995; Califia, 1994; Queen, 1997). Consequently, sex-positive feminists argue and militate for both decriminalization and destigmatization of sex work, as this would help open social mentality about female sexuality and make it both less guilt-loaded and more fulfilling, even for women who are not in sex work but who simply want to experience sexuality outside restrictive norms.

The argumentation in favor of decriminalization

Feminists specifically campaigning for the decriminalization of sex work usually do it through one of the many sex workers' rights organizations that exist around the world⁶. They concentrate their argumentation on the very negative effects that criminalization and stigmatization have on the life and working conditions of sex workers and conclude that decriminalization is necessary in order to improve these conditions (e.g., Brock, 1998; Cantin et al., 2006; Delacoste & Alexander, 1998; Ditmore, 2006, 2010; Jenness, 1993; Mensah, 2006a; Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, 2005; Parent et al, 2010; Mensah et al, 2011). These feminists differ from sex-positive feminists in that the former do not necessarily consider sex work as being a source of sexual exploration; rather, they see it as *legitimate work* one may chose, and they militate for its social

⁶ The first structured one, COYOTE (stands for Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics), was created by Margo St-James in San Francisco in 1973. Nowadays, more than a hundred of them exist all around the world. A list of these organizations and information about the sex workers' rights movement can be found at the Web site of the organization 'Sex Work Activists, Allies and You' : <http://www.swaay.org> .

recognition as such.

These feminists maintain that while coercion and the trafficking in women for sexual purposes sometimes do happen – these also happen among domestic, agriculture, and sweatshop workers (Toupin, 2006) – they constitute only a small portion of the reality of sex work. The great majority of female sex workers freely choose to get involved in the sex industry. This choice is made in the same way as in any other kind of work, that is, by considering all job opportunities and by comparing the benefits and limitations that come with each opportunity (Agustin, 2007; Brock, 1998). Therefore, to mix up situations of forced prostitution with those of freely chosen sex work and situations of trafficking in women with those of sex worker migration is to deny the right to autonomy and self-determination for millions of sex workers, and this on the basis of an ideological reasoning that does not correspond to the experience of the female sex workers themselves (Agustin, 2007; Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women⁷; Toupin, 2006).

This confusion between voluntary and forced sex work maintains the judicialization and stigmatization of sex workers. Unfortunately, positioning sex work as a crime produces inhuman working conditions and allows situations of violence to happen. It does so by denying sex workers access to police protection, which causes sex workers to be infinitely more vulnerable to theft, rape, and brutalities from clients, as the latter know that the police will not intervene if the sex worker dares to lodge a complaint against them. This same situation also makes sex workers more vulnerable to murder, as the murderer knows that, often, the police will not investigate the murder of what is considered *social trash* (Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, 2005; Delacoste & Alexander, 1998; Ditmore, 2010; Mensah & Lee, 2006).

Moreover, criminalization reinforces this situation of vulnerability by forbidding sex workers from organizing themselves into teams and receiving clients in business premises, even though this type of work organization would offer much greater security against potential violence from clients. This also discourages the use of condoms during sexual acts, as the police use the possession of condoms or their presence in the work environment as 'proof' of sex work activity. The criminalization of solicitation in public premises forces

7 International organization promoting the view that there are differences between forced and voluntary prostitution as well as between migration for sex work and trafficking; their aim is to promote the rights of women migrant workers and trafficked persons. Their Web site : www.gaatw.org.

sex workers to retreat into isolated areas; this makes them more vulnerable to violence from clients, all the while preventing them from taking the time to evaluate the degree of potential danger of new clients and, thus, from deciding when to accept the transaction and when to refuse it. This criminalization of communication for sex work purposes, as well as of the use of business premises such as massage parlors for sex work, prevents the sex worker from adequately negotiating acts, fees, and safe sex with clients. This sometimes creates misunderstandings, which generate stress for the sex worker and frustration for the client who will then be less willing to respect the limits imposed the sex worker (Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, 2005; Cantin et al., 2006; Delacoste & Alexander, 1998; Mensah & Lee, 2006; Parent et al, 2010; Mensah et al, 2011; van der Meulen & Durisin, 2008).

The social and legal non-recognition of sex work as a 'job like all other jobs' also hinders the attainment of working conditions that respect the legal minimum norms. Sex workers have no real negotiating power over their working conditions, as they cannot file a complaint with the legal authorities so that employers imposing abusive working conditions would have to respect these norms (Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, 2005; van der Meulen & Durisin, 2008; Mensah & Lee, 2006).

Even though laws against procuring are presumed to protect sex workers against exploitation, their main effect is actually one of isolating female sex workers. These laws make it impossible for a sex worker to share an apartment with another adult, as this adult would automatically become liable for being charged as procurer. Not only does this situation constitute a breach of the right to privacy; it also marginalizes female sex workers even more (Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, 2005; van der Meulen, 2010).

Consequently, sex worker associations tend to ask for the complete decriminalization of all activities related to sex work. Unlike the legalization carried out in some countries (e.g., in Nevada, where sex work is legal in state brothels but remains illegal everywhere else), decriminalization means that everything related to adult sex work is deleted from the criminal code. Situations of violence, coercion, exploitation, and human trafficking are already the object of laws and do not need laws specific to sex work (Corriveau, 2010). It only remains necessary, then, to regulate the practice of sex work through the civil code, as it is done for any other type of work, a situation that would allow a better respect for the rights of sex workers as citizens and

workers.

As for transferring criminalization from sex workers to clients (as demanded by the neo-abolitionists), the Swedish experience demonstrates that far from diminishing violence towards sex workers, this makes them more vulnerable, as this law forces women to hide in order to reassure their clients. This isolates the women even more and prevents them from receiving help when necessary. Client criminalization diminishes their number on the street, which causes a price decrease, brings about fierce competition, and encourages clients to insist on sexual acts without condom use. On their side, rushed by the fear of being spotted and thus losing the transaction, sex workers do not have time to size up the prospective client, while those who dare to do so despite the law are more often aggressive (Levy, 2011; Stridbeck et al, 2004; Dodillet & Ostergren, 2011; Ostergren, web).

Finally, criminalization maintains prejudices towards sex workers. It forces them to hide and to lie outside their working premises to avoid many humiliating situations –humiliating not because offering sexual services is a source of shame, but because 'normal' people (e.g., clients, family, friends, or health professionals) believe they have every reason to despise these workers more or less openly for the work the latter are doing (Ditmore, 2010; Mensah, 2006a).

However, according to feminists asking for decriminalization, decriminalizing sex work will not be enough to get rid of stigmatization because social prejudices are persistent. To improve both the life conditions and the working conditions of sex workers, it is necessary to educate people on the fact that most sex workers are neither delinquents nor victims as a result of their work activities; rather, they are people, just like everybody else in society. What makes sex work a job different from others is not the fact that it commercially satisfies the sexual needs and desires of paying clients, but the social attitudes that label the sex worker as an irresponsible, deviant, and degraded person. It is equally necessary to educate clients so that they realize that sex workers do have the same right to respect and consideration as does any other worker, and that any aggressive or criminal behavior will be prosecuted and penalized (Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, 2005; Cantin et al., 2006; van der Meulen, 2008).

Reality as it is studied by scientific research

The world of sex work has been the object of a wealth of studies within the last thirty years. At the start, these researches focused mainly on the deviant aspect of sex work on the basis of “symbolic and legal representations of the bad woman or whore” (Pheterson, 1996:30). These works also most often used the most easily accessible sampling, that is, the visible ones (street sex workers) or the captive ones (sex workers in jail, or using the services of community organizations open to drug addicts or to the street youth). Such a process produced research results that are certainly relevant for these groups of sex workers but not for all sex workers as a whole. Unfortunately, these results tended to be generalized to all sex workers, which reinforced the model of deviance and of personal and social degeneration applied to them (Pheterson, 1996).

Even though some present-day researches still present these same errors due to sampling, most acknowledge the fact that their results cannot be generalized to all sex workers. There has been a broadening of the field of research as well; it now includes female erotic dancers (who, also being more easily accessible, tend to become the best studied group of sex workers) and, to a lesser degree, erotic masseuses, porno actresses, and female escorts. Research also now looks more often into male sex work.

Studies of the sex work experience are more often done within the framework of feminist theory when they are about female sex workers. While abolitionist research specifically works for the demonstration that sex work is violence without exception, other feminist studies focus on gender relations and on the experience of oppression, or of agency, these women experience when working. Moreover, through this same feminist framework are examined the motivations to be a sex worker, the experience of being objectified, the stigma related to sex work, and, finally, the impact of this kind of work on self-esteem, on couple relationships, and on social relationships in general (e.g., Abel, 2011; Bernstein, 2007; Bradley, 2007; Bruckert, 2002; Bruckert & Chabot, 2010; Bruckert & Parent, 2007; Chapkis, 1997; Downs et al., 2006; Jayasree, 2004; Jeffrey & MacDonald, 2006; Mensah, 2006b; Orchard, 2007a, 2007b; Parent, 2001; Parent & Bruckert, 2005; Pasko, 2002; Sanders, 2002, 2004, 2005, 2006a, 2006b; Shaver, 2005; Shaver et al., 2011; Wardlow, 2004; Warr & Pyett, 1999; Weatherall & Priestley, 2001; Welzer-Lang et al., 1994). These researches, as well as many others that are not specifically feminist in their approach (e.g., Firme, 1991;

Lewis et al., 2005; Messervier, 1999; O’Doherty, 2011; Oerton & Phoenix, 2001; Scambler, 2007) present an extremely varied experience of sex work and one, above all, that is described by a majority of sex workers as being neither completely oppressive nor completely liberating.

For example, research concerning western middle-class women engaged in off-street sex work⁸ will tend to encounter women sex workers who had never been forced into sex work by a pimp, and who freely chose their work (e.g., Bernstein, 2007; Bradley, 2007; Bruckert, 2002; Bruckert & Chabot, 2010; Bruckert & Parent, 2007; Chapkis, 1997; Downs et al., 2006; Jeffrey & MacDonald, 2006; Mensah, 2006b; O’Doherty, 2011; Oerton & Phoenix, 2001; Parent & Bruckert, 2005; Pasko, 2002; Sanders, 2002, 2004, 2005, 2006b; Warr & Pyett, 1999; Weatherall & Priestley, 2001; Welzer-Lang et al., 1994). Although this choice may not always be a 'real' one when, as in some cases, it is 'forced' by the need to pay for one's drugs, most often the decision to get involved in sex work is made after one has weighed the pros and cons regarding the different work opportunities available (Jeffrey and Macdonald, 2006; Mensah, 2006b). The great majority of these sex workers already had work experience in another domain when they became involved in sex work. Many possess at least a high school diploma (or almost completed it), and a good number of them took college or university studies. Some had even occupied a professional position or currently have one (Bernstein, 2007; Bruckert & Chabot, 2010; O’Doherty, 2011; Parent & Bruckert, 2005; Sanders, 2005; Shaver, 2005; Taylor & Newton-West, 1994; Welzer-Lang, 1994). Thus, for many women in the western world, it is not a lack of work skills or the need for survival that leads them to become involved in sex work, it is rather because they find advantages in doing so, compared with other work opportunities. Among these advantages, there is the possibility to make money faster, to have more free time, and to be self-employed. For some women, sex work is also an occasion to “encounter people, [...] to enjoy a pleasant life and/ or to explore one's own sexuality” (Parent & Bruckert, 2005:9; my translation). These examples, while describing only a part of all of the sex workers characteristics and experiences that can be found within the sex industry, do give a picture that is quite different from the victim that is being drawn by abolitionists, thereby contradicting their claim

⁸ However, categories are not mutually exclusive, and some of the referenced research also interviewed working class sex workers, as well as ones who worked on the streets, and found that many of them also freely chose sex work and were working without pimps.

that doing sex work necessarily means being a sexual slave at the hands of a pimp.

However, even when sex workers freely chose this type of work, have no pimp, and mostly encounter respectful clients, they can still be easily victimized by the stigmatization and criminalization surrounding sex work activities. In the occidental world⁹, to be a sex worker generally involves maintaining the secret about one's professional activities to avoid being despised and discredited. The whole stigma also frequently puts self-esteem at risk. Many female sex workers will tend to maintain a clinical performance and avoid all sexual desire and pleasure during work in order, on the one hand, to not perceive themselves and be perceived as 'real whores' but also, on the other hand, to maintain the feeling that they remain faithful to their lover or husband (Abel, 2011; Bruckert, 2002; Messervier, 1999; Parent & Bruckert, 2005; Sanders, 2002, 2004, 2005; Warr & Pyett, 1999). In fact, many sex workers are torn between the feeling of pride they have regarding their work and the feeling of guilt that dictates to them that they should not be doing such work (Bradley, 2007; Bruckert, 2002; Bruckert & Parent, 2007; Messervier, 1999; Parent & Bruckert, 2005).

Criminalization remains a major constraint. It tremendously limits the possibilities to organize one's environment to protect oneself against possible aggression (Bruckert & Chabot, 2010; Lewis et al., 2005; Shaver et al., 2011; van der Meulen & Durisin, 2008), prevents sex workers from getting the government-regulated minimal norms for working conditions respected when they work as employees in erotic dancing bars and other sex service establishments (Bruckert, 2002; Bruckert & Chabot, 2010; Parent & Bruckert, 2005; van der Meulen & Durisin, 2008; Shaver et al., 2011), limits healthcare access (Bruckert & Chabot, 2010; Shaver, 2005; Shaver et al., 2011), and constitutes an important source of trauma for the women who get mistreated by police authorities during arrest (Bruckert & Chabot, 2010; Jeffrey & MacDonald, 2006; Lewis et al., 2005; Parent & Bruckert, 2005). Furthermore, by maintaining the notion of sex work as a moral crime against society, criminalization maintains stigmatization which, on its turn, is source of denigration on the part of others, isolation, internal conflicts, and lower self-esteem (Bradley, 2007; Bruckert, 2002; Bruckert & Chabot, 2010; Bruckert & Parent, 2007; Warr & Pyett, 1999).

⁹ Stigmatization and criminalization are also experienced by sex workers in many developing countries (Ditmore, Melissa, 2008; Global Commission on HIV and the Law, 2012). However, the author will only discuss findings related to sex work in western countries.

Street sex workers, escorts, erotic dancers, and masseuses most often perceive themselves as workers, and even as professionals. They establish personal limits regarding the services they provide, and during the transaction with the client they are the ones who control the situation rather than the client. Doing sex work, therefore, does not give them over to the client to do whatever he wants, but quite the contrary. They sell a product (sexual fantasy, girlfriend experience, sexual arousal, stimulation, and satisfaction), and, as such, they set out their work as a performance in such a way as to maintain a good paying clientele, all the while protecting their own physical, sexual, and emotional integrity. The ways of proceeding vary, depending not only on the type of work and sex work environment, but also on the personal motivations to be a sex worker and to go from pure instrumentalization (of themselves *and* of the client) to a warm and friendly professional relationship. Thus, many female sex workers make use of a whole set of techniques intended to manipulate the client (letting him believe that they are real sex beasts and that they prefer him among all clients) to extract as much money as possible from him without, in fact, really giving him anything in exchange but a counterfeit intimacy (Bruckert, 2002; Pasko, 2002); others are more authentic listeners towards their clients (Bernstein, 2007; Bruckert, 2002). On their side, a number of masseuses, escorts, and street sex workers make use of a clinical and sterile approach, in which they take the role of an actress responding to the client's desires without, however, feeling any personal emotion or sexual interest (Sanders, 2005); others will involve themselves sexually and emotionally in what is for them a sexual exploration and/or a means of personal growth, or yet simply because a client is interesting for them (Bell, 1995; Bernstein, 2007; Parent & Bruckert, 2005; Queen, 1997; Sanders, 2002; Warr & Pyett, 1999). Whatever way they may undertake their work, sex workers do have power in the transaction with the client. They are not passive and devoid of control.

Different researches mention violence as being part of sex work. This violence, however, is not at all omnipresent. According to the affirmations of sex workers, the great majority of clients do have a perfectly correct attitude towards them and they do, as well, respect the limits imposed by the sex worker. In fact, many of them hope for an emotional relationship as much as they want sex and look for what is called a 'girlfriend experience' when they are with the sex worker (Bernstein, 2007; Bruckert, 2002; Pasko, 2002; Sanders, 2008;

Parent & Bruckert, 2005; Welzer-Lang, 1994). However, the criminalization of their work hinders sex workers from organizing themselves for self-protection against aggressive clients and from asking for police protection. This, combined with social stigmatization, is what puts them more at risk of being assaulted even though violent clients are relatively rare. Moreover, violence levels are not the same everywhere; violence is much more frequent on the streets than indoors (that is, in erotic dancing bars and sex service establishments) (Lewis et al., 2005; O'Doherty, 2011; Shaver, 2005; Shaver et al., 2011).

Furthermore, at the psychological level, what we observe is that it is not the selling of a sexual performance – and thus presenting oneself as a sex object – that is experienced as 'violence', but the insults and denigrating attitudes some clients have and to which sex workers are more vulnerable because of the whore stigma. However, female erotic dancers are able to maintain self-esteem and body image appreciation levels that are similar to those of female college students, according to a study conducted among middle-class women of a mid-size American city (Downs et al., 2006). In another American research, “porn actresses [were found to have] higher levels of self-esteem, positive feelings, social support, sexual satisfaction and spirituality compared to [a matched sample of women who were not porn actresses]” (Griffith et al., 2012:1).¹⁰

Middle-class occidental sex workers working indoors often find other advantages in their sex work activities besides interesting income. Many of them report that doing sex work tends to encourage a positive self-image and body image, a greater comfort with one's body and sexuality, and greater self-confidence in general. It also makes possible the development of some skills: professional self-presentation, self-assertiveness and keeping of professional boundaries, professional listening and interpersonal skills to rapidly size up the situation and the client to adequately interact with him, and talents as an actress during role playing (Bernstein, 2007; Bruckert, 2002; Sanders, 2005, 2006b; Parent & Bruckert, 2005; Welzer-Lang, 1994).

Concerning the displacement of women for sex work purposes, the works of Agustín (2006), Robinson (2002), and Scambler (2007) shed some light over what actually happens and, above all,
¹⁰ Obviously, as these studies used convenience samples, they cannot be generalized to all dancers or porn actresses. However, they do give examples of the experiences some sex workers have that contradict abolitionist claims about a necessarily negative impact of sex work on one's life.

demonstrate that even though there is a trafficking of women for sexual slavery purposes, it remains that a great number of women voluntarily immigrate for sex work purposes. For them, it is a source of income that would otherwise be out of reach. They sometimes have to pay an agent to help them cross the border, since they cannot do it legally. However, they remain in control of their life, of their body, and of their earnings, and they usually manage to quickly pay the debt incurred for crossing that border. And, whether the migration occurs within the same country or across borders, women often send money to their families in order to help them with their expenses. This indicates that they keep control of their earnings and that their involvement in sex work is due to a desire to improve the quality of life of their families.

Furthermore, in some non-occidental contexts, for example, in New Guinea (Wardlow, 2004), in some regions of Africa (Tabet, 1987; 1991), and among the sacred prostitutes in India (Orchard, 2007a, 2007b), sex work constitutes, for the women using it, a means of resistance against the patriarchal domination to which they are subjected. Women offering sex in exchange for goods or money reach some autonomy towards male power, in the sense that, by doing so, they reach independence from their father, brothers, or husband. However, it is not done without problems, since these women then have to suffer the stigmatization reserved for all those whose sexuality does not conform to the dictates of the system.

Sex work is also done by men. Studies on male sex workers are done outside a feminist framework and frequently focus on safe-sex practices. Examined are the power dynamics between male sex workers and their male and/or female clients, the symbolic representations regarding masculinity and sex work, the self-perception as a sex worker, and the socioeconomic conditions that often lead to sex work and influence the possibilities regarding safe-sex practices (e.g., Aggleton, ed, 1999; Dorais, 2005; Mai, 2012; Morrison & Whitehead, eds, 2007; Scott et al., 2005). What follows from these researches is that male sex work can be found in almost every country of the world and that it is well established, even though it is not as frequent as female sex work. As far as numbers are concerned, estimates give a picture of about 20% to 35% of all sex workers being men (Aggleton, 1999). Motivations, power dynamics, violence from clients, and stigmatization experienced by male sex workers show many aspects similar to those experienced by female sex workers.

Thus, it may be a question of simple survival, a way of quickly making money, a means of exploring

sexuality, and/or an opportunity to encounter people and get an interesting social life. Moreover, the power dynamics in male dancing bars are very similar to those observed in female dancing bars (Demarco, 2007), which puts into question those theoretical models that interpret the oppression of female dancers by male clients as being a consequence of gender relations. Male sex workers may be victims of verbal and physical violence not only from male clients but also from female clients, as well as from passers-by – in which case, violence is motivated by homophobia. Where stigmatization is concerned, it is either the homosexual behavior with male clients or, when having female clients, the interpretation that one is thus 'kept by a woman' that causes ostracism, because it enters in conflict with social definitions of masculinity (Scott, 2005).

As for sexual tourism, it seems that women are much less hesitant about becoming clients outside their own home environment. Their behavior is then very much comparable with that of male clients: some female clients look for a romantic relationship, while others want acquaintances that are purely sexual. On their side, both male and female sex workers actively approach their clients, offer them their services as 'tour guides', and expect to receive goods and money in return. Rarely identified as sex work even though there is a clear exchange of sex for material resources, this type of 'holidays relationship' is perceived as being mutually beneficial by both parties, and exploitation, when present, may be done from both sides (Albuquerque, 1998; Sánchez Taylor, 2001).

The research results cited here do not address the vast array of sex work experiences as they are focussed on rather positive experiences of sex work. However, taken together with other similar studies, they constitute a body of scientific studies that contradicts abolitionist claims that sex work is *always* violence against women (and children) by means of their sexual and economic exploitation. There are indeed situations where women are sexually and economically exploited by men, but as these research results show, it is far from always being the case. Furthermore, what a man experiences as a sex worker, like what a woman experiences, can be just as much experienced in a setting of violence and subordination as in a setting of autonomy and professionalism, meaning that the sex of the worker and that of the client are not intrinsically linked to violence when this happens.

Contrasting results, ranging from quite positive to very difficult sex work experiences, depend

largely on the socio-economic environment from which participants are recruited. For middle-class women and men working in larger occidental cities, sex work is more often a choice among different revenue-generating possibilities and more often experienced as something positive in their lives even if they also have to deal with its stigmatization. On the other hand, socio-economically vulnerable people more often experience sex work as something they would rather not do but have to do to merely survive, which may bring them to experience powerlessness and a sense of lack of personal and social worth. As such, studies exploring the experiences of sex workers engaged in survival sex will tend to describe very problematic situations, even when conducted in a non-abolitionist perspective.

Being morally condemned, criminalized, and stigmatized, sex work remains mostly invisible, and it thus becomes impossible to really know either the number of sex workers or the boundaries of the sex worker population being studied. Quantitative studies that would be really representative of all sex workers as a group are therefore unrealizable, even in a single sector, since it is not possible to get random samples (Sanders, 2006a; Shaver, 2005; Weitzer, 2010). Representativity criteria for qualitative studies are also difficult to meet as sampling will 'tend to be biased toward the more cooperative participants' (Shaver, 2005 :296), toward the most visible sex workers and toward sex workers in crisis whenever the researcher interviews social or health care workers (Shaver, 2005). Because of this, studies about sex work can never claim to completely represent a group of sex workers and much less the totality of all sex workers. Most studies that are independent from abolitionist ideology will recognize their limitations in this respect and will not pretend their results to represent all sex workers; rather, they give a glimpse of what certain sex workers – those who participated in the study – experience both within and outside their work.

However, abolitionist studies do present anecdotal horror stories as examples of what usually happens in sex work and generalize statistics – in order to 'confirm' the inherent violence of sex work – from studies that were necessarily performed using convenience samples, all the while discounting whatever evidence that contradicts their theory, whether from their own studies or from those of others (Weitzer, 2010). Starting with an *a priori* understanding of sex work as being violence against women, these researchers choose to listen only to the testimonies of women who 'admit' having been victims of violence, since the

others are either too alienated to 'admit' their victimization through sex work, or are forced to lie by a pimp. Furthermore, recruitment premises are often those where sex work is recognized as being the most difficult (e.g., in the underprivileged districts of Vancouver where many Amerindians try to survive by means of sex work) or in help centers for women who want to quit sex work (e.g., Farley et al., 2004); 'prostitution survivors' are used as recruiters and interviewers (e.g., Raphael & Shapiro, 2002, 2004); the way sampling was done is not sufficiently specified (e.g., Farley & Balkan, 1998); and when looking for possible causes for entry in sex work (e.g. past sexual abuse when a child), they do not use control groups. The problem arises when these authors use the extremely high percentages of violence (e.g., Raphael & Shapiro, 2004), post-traumatic stress syndrome (e.g., Farley & Barkan, 1998; Farley et al., 2004), and physical health problems (e.g., Farley et al, 2004) that these women experience *as testifying to the reality of all women in sex work*.

Abolitionists will also misuse statistics given in other studies, making these values say something they do not. For example, they claim that in developed countries (including Canada and the United States), the average age of entry in prostitution is 14 years old (obviously not an age to 'consent' they then argue). However, this statistic comes from studies on street sex work conducted on *adolescents* and young adults, such as those of Giobbe (1992), Nadon et al., (1998) and Silbert & Pines (1992). Nevertheless, when we look at other studies about sex workers in occidental countries, we find that many sex workers started sex work when they were already adults, most often beginning in their twenties, sometimes in their thirties or even in their forties (eg., Bruckert & Chabot, 2010; O'Doherty, 2011; Sanders, 2005; Ward et al, 2004; Welzer-Lang et al., 1994). While analyzing abolitionist studies, Weitzer (2010) identifies many other examples of statistics misuse, reinterpreted findings (e.g., through the argument that because of past trauma, sex workers are often in denial of the violence and abuse they experience), and a discounting of any evidence that contradicts their theories.

Relying on research results, other academic writings done by feminists (e.g., Frank, 2007; Johnson, 1998; Kesler, 2002; Lerum, 1999; Mensah, 2002; Simmons, 1998; Toupin, 2002, 2006; Zatz, 1997) analyze what is at stake regarding sex work by challenging, using observed facts, one or more of the affirmations upon which the abolitionist ideology bases itself. Other writings (e.g., Agustín, 2006; Chaumont & Wibrin, 2007;

Mcdonald, 2004; Toupin, 2006; Weitzer, 2005a, 2005b, 2007, 2010) demonstrate the extent of their ideological bias, on the one hand, and of the important methodological and sampling mistakes they present, on the other. Therefore, these researches do not meet the scientific criteria upon which research must be based and, consequently, their value may only be in describing the reality of some of those women who indeed are in harsh conditions and practice sex work as a means of survival.

Sexual control of women and identity

A wealth of researches emphasize the variety of experiences in sex work and the necessity to decriminalize these activities since they are not, by themselves, the cause of human suffering; rather, it is the criminalization of these activities that lead to human suffering. Nonetheless, the social attitude is generally still one of prejudices and stigmatization towards sex workers. Although Judeo-Christian – and patriarchal – sexual morality has been questioned on many issues regarding sexuality and sexual identity over the past decades, which challenged and changed social norms about marriage, homosexuality, sexual pleasure and abortion, it remains strong regarding sex work. Interestingly, whereas feminist movements and the conservative moral right hold opposing views regarding the first issues, feminist abolitionists and the moral right both regard sex work as a social evil. Although their argumentation against sex work may be very different, they nevertheless made alliances to better succeed in a moral crusade that, through the use of media and political lobbying, aims to create a great social concern about the 'horrors' of sex work so that it becomes possible to promulgate laws for its eradication¹¹. This moral crusade succeeded well enough in the United States to result in an 'endorsement and institutionalization of [abolitionist] ideology in U.S. government policy and practice' (Weitzer, 2007:447).

Strangely enough, at least to the point of view of sex-positive feminists, feminist abolitionism is thus making itself accomplice to the very system it tries to fight! As the author understands it, what brings feminist abolitionism to associate itself with the moral right regarding pornography and sex work is this notion,

¹¹ See Weitzer (2007) for a thorough discussion of this alliance and the core claims that are being made in the joint moral crusade they pursue.

socially constructed and so well *integrated* that it very difficult to question, of a feminine identity that would mainly be defined by sexual behavior and experience. It is so much so that in French many widely used terms emphasize social value when associated with men but designate sexual status and behavior when associated with women. Some of these also exist in English, as we can observe in the words “master” (a man mastering a skill) and “mistress” (a lover or a kept woman).

Traditionally, the value of a woman would depend on her virginity at the moment of marriage and on her marital fidelity thereafter. Any woman who did not correspond to these criteria, be it by desire and consent or by rape, was automatically considered as 'defiled', was defined as having less value – that is 'de-graded' – and became the object of ostracism by her community (Pheterson, 1998). Thus, the identity of a woman (her capacity to define herself and to be defined by others through her personal history) (Giddens, 1991) first and foremost depended on her sexual history. At the end of the 18th century, the discursive division of the masculine and the feminine into public and private domains, a division done to justify maintaining the patriarchal system despite a political discourse of citizenship equality, defined women as mothers devoted to their family and community and, therefore, devoid of all sexual impulse. By ingeniously opposing 'mother' and 'sexually desiring woman', this definition maintained social control over the sexuality of women. Nineteenth-century feminists took over this definition of a woman by emphasizing the idea that she was of higher morality than man, as she was free from those sexual impulses – which were by essence beastly and selfish – experienced only by men (Comte, 2010).

Nourished by this notion of a greater sexual morality that was specifically feminine, and convinced that it was imperative to protect women against all forms of sexual defilement, some radical feminists of the 1970s rebelled against what they perceived as a situation where men forced their own immoral sexuality upon women. They were mistaken, however, in their choice of target. It is not the experience of a genital, purely physical sexuality, without committed feelings of love, or even the absence of sexual desire and/or pleasure while performing sex, that oppresses women. Rather, it is the interdiction of such a sexuality, which brands the disobedient woman with the whore stigma, that makes her a target for social scorn and forces her to feel ashamed (Comte, 2010). The experience of so many sex workers confirms it: it is not the act of exchanging a

sexual service for money that damages physical and psychological integrity, but the social stigmatization they are thereafter subjected to. It is also this stigmatization that, as we saw, is the real source of abuse and violence that female sex workers encounter in their daily work activities.

Decriminalizing and getting rid of the whore stigma

Contrary to abolitionist allegations, the elimination of the sexual oppression of women cannot be done by forcing men to the same repressive sexual norms that presently control the sexuality of women. This would only maintain the sexual repression of women and the stigmatization of those who dare to show a sexuality different from the one they are allowed. It is only by questioning those norms and by recognizing, for women, an inalienable right to self-determination regarding one's own sexuality that we will be able to get rid of this sexual oppression.

Therefore, to fight abuses of power and to prevent the physical violence and psychological wounds that sex workers unfortunately still too often become victims of, it is absolutely necessary to decriminalize sex work and to give it a status similar to that given to any other kind of work, whether sexual services are provided as an establishment employee or as a independent worker. It is equally essential to fight against prejudices existing towards sex workers and to recognize that they have the same rights to police protection and to social respect that other people have. Once these changes are accomplished, sex workers will be in a position to obtain better working conditions and a better quality of life. Even more, however, all women will benefit, *as getting rid of the stigma attached to present moral standards regarding sexuality* will make it possible for all women (sex workers and non–sex workers) to be in better terms with their sexuality, to more freely use it or explore it if they choose to, even within its aspects presently defined as being 'degrading', *without the risk of being socially 'de-graded'!*

Acknowledgment

The literature review that is behind this paper was supported by a scholarship received from Fond Québécois de Recherche sur la Société et la Culture (FQRSC).

References

- Abel, G. M. (2011) Different stage, different performance: The protective strategy of role play on emotional health in sex work. *Social Science & Medicine* 72:1177-1184.
- Aggleton, P. (Ed.) (1999). *Men Who Sell Sex. International Perspectives on Male Prostitution and HIV/AIDS*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Agustin, L. (2007) *Sex at the Margins: Migration, Labour Markets and the Rescue Industry*. London: Zed Books.
- Anderson, E., 1993, *Value in Ethics and Economics*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Audet, E. (2008). Le "droit de prostituer" n'est pas un droit de l'homme. *Labrys, études féministes, janvier/juin*.
- Barry, K. (1979). *Female sexual slavery*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Barry, K. (1995) *The prostitution of sexuality*. New York: New York University Press.
- Bell, S. (1995). *Whore Carnival*. New York: Autonomedia.
- Bernstein, E. (2007). Sex Work for the Middle Classes. *Sexualities*. 10(4), 473-488.
- Bradley, M. S. (2007). Girlfriends, Wives, and Strippers: Managing Stigma in Exotic Dancer Romantic Relationships. *Deviant Behavior*. 28(4), 379-406.
- Brock, D. R. (1998) *Making Work, Making Trouble: Prostitution as a Social Problem*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Bruckert, C. (2002). *Taking it off. Putting it on. Women in the Strip Trade*. Toronto: Women's Press.
- Bruckert, C., & Chabot, F. (2010). *Challenges: Ottawa Area Sex Workers Speak Out*. Ottawa: POWER (Prostitutes of Ottawa-Gatineau, Work, Educate and Resist).

- Bruckert, C., & Parent, C. (2007). La danse érotique comme métier à l'ère de la vente de soi. *Cahiers de Recherche Sociologique*. 43, 95-107.
- Califia, P. (1994). Whoring in Utopia. In Califia, P., *Public Sex. The culture of radical sex* (pp.242-248). Pittsburg & San Francisco: Cleis Press.
- Camirand, P. (2004). *Le débat sur la prostitution : quelle libération sexuelle ?*<http://sisyphe.org/spip.php?article993>.
- Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network (2005). *Sex, Work, Rights: Reforming Canadian Criminal Laws on Prostitution*. Toronto. <http://www.aidslaw.ca/publications/publicationsdocFR.php?ref=199>
- Cantin, E. (ed.) (2006). *EXXXpressions. Forum XXX proceedings*. Montréal: Stella.
- Chapkis, W. (1997). *Live Sex Acts. Women Performing Erotic Labour*. New York: Routledge.
- Chaumont, J.-M., & Wibrin, A.-L. (2007). Traite des Noirs, traite des Blanches : même combat? *Cahiers de Recherche Sociologique*. 43, 121-132.
- Comte, J. (2010). *Pour une authentique liberté sexuelle*. St-Zenon, Québec: Éditions Louise Courteau.
- Corriveau, P. (2010) Réguler le travail du sexe : Entre la victimisation et la liberté de choisir. In Parent, C., Bruckert, C., Corriveau, P., Mensah, M.N., & Toupin, L. *Mais oui c'est un travail! Penser le travail du sexe au-delà de la victimisation* (pp. 29-54). Québec: Presses de l'Université du Québec.
- De Albuquerque, K. (1998). Sex, Beach Boys, and Female Tourists in the Caribbean. *Sexuality & Culture*. 2, 87-111.
- Delacoste, F., & Alexander, P. (1998). *Sex Work: Writings by Women in The Sex Industry*. Pittsburg: Cleis Press.
- Demarco, J. R. G. (2007). Power and Control in Gay Strip Clubs. In T. G. Morrison & B. W. Whitehead (Eds), *Male Sex Work : A Business Doing Pleasure* (pp.111-127). Binghamton, NY: The Haworth Press, Inc.
- Ditmore, M. H., ed. (2006) *Encyclopedia of prostitution and sex work*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press.
- Ditmore, M., ed. (2008) Sex Workers Rights. *Research for Sex Work* (10).
- Ditmore, M. (2010) *Prostitution and Sex Work. Historical Guide to Controversial Issues in America*. Santa Barbara, Ca: Greenwood.

- Dodillet S., Ostergren P. (2011). *The Swedish Sex Purchase Act: Claimed Success and Documented Effects*, Conference paper presented at the International Workshop “Decriminalizing Prostitution and Beyond: Practical Experiences and Challenges”, The Hague. Available at:
http://www.plri.org/sites/plri.org/files/Impact%20of%20Swedish%20law_0.pdf
- Dorais, M. (2005 ©2003). *Rent Boys: the World of Male Sex Workers*. Montreal & Kingston; London; Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Downs, D. M., James, S., & Cowan, G. (2006). Body Objectification, Self-Esteem, and Relationship Satisfaction: A Comparison of Exotic Dancers and College Women. *Sex Roles*. 54, 545-752.
- Dworkin, A. (1979). *Pornography: Men possessing women*. New York: G.P. Putnam.
- Dworkin, A. (1993). Prostitution and male supremacy. *Michigan Journal of Gender & Law*, 1, 1–12.
- Farley, M. (2003) Prostitution and the Invisibility of Harm. *Women & Therapy*, 26(3), 247-280.
- Farley, M. (2004). ‘Bad for the body, bad for the heart’: Prostitution Harms Women Even if Legalized or Decriminalized. *Violence Against Women*, 10(10), 1087-1125.
- Farley, M. (2005). Prostitution harms women even if indoors: Reply to Weitzer. *Violence Against Women*, 11(7), 950-964.
- Farley, M. & Barkan, H. (1998) Prostitution, Violence, and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. *Women & Health*, 27(3), 37-49.
- Farley, M., Cotton, A., Lynne, J., Zumbek, S., Spiwak, F., Reyes, M. E., Alvarez, D. & Sezgin, U. (2004) Prostitution and Trafficking in Nine Countries. *Journal of Trauma Practice*, 2(3), 33-74.
- Farley, M., Bindel, J., & Golding, J. M. (2009). *Men Who Buy Sex: Who They Buy and What They Know*. London: Eaves. Retrieved from:
http://www.eaves4women.co.uk/Documents/Recent_Reports/MenWhoBuySex.pdf
- Firme, T. P., Grinder, R. E., & Barreto, M. S. L. (1991). Adolescent Female Prostitutes on the Streets of Brazil : An Exploratory Investigation of Ontological Issues. *Journal of Adolescence Research*. 6(4), 493-504.
- Frank, K. (2007). Thinking Critically about Strip Club Research. *Sexualities*. 10(4), 501-517.

- Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Giobbe E. (1992) Juvenile Prostitution: Profile of Recruitment. In Burgess, A.W. (Ed.) *Child Trauma I Issues & Research*, p. 117-130. New York: Garland Press.
- Global Commission on HIV and the Law (2012) Risks, Rights & Health. United Nations Development Programme. New York.
- Golden, G. K. (2007). *Qu'est-ce que la libération? Le féminisme hier, aujourd'hui et demain*. <http://sisyphe.org/spip.php?article2550>.
- Griffith, J. D., S. Mitchell, C. L. Hart, L. T. Adams & L. L. Gu (2012) Pornography Actresses: An Assessment of the Damaged Goods Hypothesis. *Journal of Sex Research*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2012.719168>.
- Guillaumin, C. (1995 ©1992). *Racism, Sexism, Power, and Ideology*. London; New York: Routledge.
- Hugues, D. (2005) *The demand for victims of sex trafficking*. Kingston: University of Rhode Island.
- Jayasree, A. K. (2004) Searching for Justice for Body and Self in a Coercive Environment: Sex Work in Kerala, India. *Reproductive Health Matters*, 12(23):58–67.
- Jean, R. (2007). *Prostitution : les limites du consentement*. <http://sisyphe.org/spip.php?article2731>.
- Jeffrey, L. A., & MacDonald, G. (2006). *Sex Workers in the Maritimes Talk Back*. Vancouver; Toronto: UBC Press.
- Jeffreys, S. (1997). *The Idea of Prostitution*. North Melbourne, Vic: Spinifex Press.
- Jeffreys, S. (2008). Normalising Prostitution and Trafficking: Language Matters. *Labrys, études féministes*, janvier/juin.
- Jeffreys, S. (2009) *The Industrial Vagina: The Political Economy of the Global Sex Trade*. Routledge: New York.
- Jenness, V. (1993) *Making it work. The Prostitutes' Rights Movement in perspective*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Johnson, M. L. (1999). Pole Work: Autoethnography of a Strip Club. *Sexuality & Culture*. 2, 149-157.

- Kesler, K. (2002). Is a Feminist Stance in Support of Prostitution Possible? An Exploration of Current Trends. *Sexualities* 5(2), 219-235.
- Lerum, K. (1999). Twelve-Step Feminism Makes Sex Workers Sick: How the State and the Recovery Movement Turn Radical Women into “Useless Citizens”. *Sexuality & Culture*. 2, 7-36.
- Levy, J. (2011). *Impacts of the Swedish Criminalisation of the Purchase of Sex on Sex Workers*. Presented at the British Society of Criminology Annual Conference, Northumbria University, 4th July 2011. Available at: <http://cybersolidaires.typepad.com/files/jaylevyimpacts-of-swedish-criminalisation-on-sexworkers.pdf>
- Lewis, J., Maticka-tyndale, E., Shaver, F., & Schramm, H. (2005). Managing Risk and Safety on the Job: The Experiences of Canadian Sex Workers. In J. T. Parsons, *Contemporary Research on Sex Work* (pp.147-167). Binghamton, NY: The Haworth Press Inc.
- McDonald, W. F. (2004) Traffic Counts, Symbols & Agendas: A Critique of the Campaign Against Trafficking of Human Beings. *International Review of Victimology*, 11, 143-176
- MacKinnon, C. A. (1985). Pornography, civil rights, and speech. Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties. *Law Review*, 20, 1–70.
- Mai, N. (2012) The fractal queerness of non-heteronormative migrants working in the UK sex industry. *Sexualities*. 15(5/6), 570–585.
- Mensah, M. N. (2002). *Visibilité et droit de parole des travailleuses du sexe: abolition ou trafic d'un espace citoyen?* 70^e Congrès de l'Association francophone pour le savoir (ACFAS).
- Mensah, M. N. (2006a). Beyond Borders. In Cantin, E. (Ed.) (2006). *EXXXpressions. Forum XXX proceedings* (pp.16-20). Montreal: Stella.
- Mensah, M. N. (2006b). Débat féministe sur la prostitution au Québec : points de vue des travailleuses du sexe. *The Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*. 43(3), 345-361.
- Mensah, M. N. & Lee, C. (2006). *Travail du sexe : tout ce que vous avez toujours voulu savoir, mais n'avez jamais osé demander! Guide d'accompagnement à la formation*. Montréal: Stella et Service aux collectivités de l'UQAM.
- Mensah, M. N., Thiboutot C., Toupin L. (2011). *Luttes XXX. Inspirations du mouvement des travailleuses du*

sexe. Montréal: Remue-Ménage.

Messervier, H. (1999). *La perception des femmes prostituées de la rue face à leur sexualité en lien avec leurs clients et leur partenaire amoureux*. Rapport d'activité de maîtrise en sexologie. Montréal: Université du Québec à Montréal.

Morrison, T. G., & Whitehead, B. W. (Eds.) (2007). *Male Sex Work. A Business Doing Pleasure*. Binghamton, NY: The Haworth Press, Inc.

Nadon, S.M., Kovela, C. & Schludermann, E.H. (1998). Antecedents to prostitution : childhood victimization. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 13, 206-221.

O'Doherty, T. (2011). Victimization in Off-Street Sex Industry Work. *Violence Against Women*, 17(7), 944-963.

Oerton, S., & Phoenix, J. (2001). Sex-bodywork: Discourses and Practices. *Sexualities*. 4(4), 387-412.

Orchard, T. (2007a). In this Life: the Impact of Gender and Tradition on Sexuality and Relationships for Devadasi Sex Workers in Rural India. *Sexuality & Culture*, 11(1), 3-27.

Orchard, T. R. (2007b). Girl, Woman, Lover, Mother: Towards a New Understanding of Child Prostitution Among Young Devadasis in Rural Karnataka, India. *Social Science & Medicine*. 64(12), 2379-2390.

Östergren, P. (n.d.). *Sexworkers Critique of Swedish Prostitution Policy*. Retrieved from http://www.petraostergren.com/pages.aspx?r_id=40716 (accessed January 23, 2013).

Parent, C. (2001). Les identités sexuelles et les travailleuses de l'industrie du sexe à l'aube du nouveau millénaire. *Sociologie et Sociétés*. 33(1), 159-178.

Parent, C., & Bruckert, C. (2005). Le travail du sexe dans les établissements de services érotiques: une forme de travail marginalisé. *Déviance et Société*. 29(1), 33-53.

Parent, C., Bruckert, C., Corriveau, P., Mensah, M.N., & Toupin, L. (2010). *Mais oui c'est un travail ! Penser le travail du sexe au-delà de la victimisation*. Québec: Presses de l'Université du Québec,

Pasko, L. (2002). Naked Power: The Practice of Stripping as a Confidence Game. *Sexualities*. 5(1), 49-66.

Pheterson, G. (Ed.). (1989). *A vindication of the rights of whores*. Seattle, WA: Seal.

Pheterson, G. (1996). *The Prostitution Prism*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

- Pheterson, G. (1998). The Social Consequences of Unchastity. In Delacoste, F. & Alexander, P. (Eds), *Sex Work. Writings by Women in the Sex Industry* (pp. 231-246). San Francisco: Cleis Press.
- Poulin, R. (2004). *La mondialisation des industries du sexe. Prostitution, pornographie, traite des femmes et des enfants*. Ottawa: Les Éditions L'Interligne.
- Queen, C. (1997). *Real Live Nude Girl: Chronicles of Sex Positive Culture*. San Francisco: Cleis Press.
- Radin, M., 1996, *Contested Commodities*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Raphael, J., & Shapiro, D. L. (2002). *Sisters Speak Out: The Lives and Needs of Prostituted Women in Chicago; A Research Study*. Chicago: Center for Impact Research. Retrieved from <http://www.impactresearch.org/documents/sisterspeakout.pdf>
- Raphael, J., & Shapiro, D. (2004) Violence in indoor and outdoor prostitution venues. *Violence Against Women*. 10, 126-139.
- Raphael, J., & Shapiro, D. L. (2005). Reply to Weitzer. *Violence Against Women*, 11(7), 965–970.
- Raymond, J. G. (2003). « Ten Reasons for Not Legalizing Prostitution and a Legal Response to the Demand for Prostitution », in M. Farley (dir.), *Prostitution, Trafficking, and Traumatic Stress*, Bringhampton: The Haworth Press, pp. 315-332.
- Raymond, J. G. (2004). Prostitution on Demand: Legalizing the Buyers as Sexual Consumers. *Violence Against Women*. 10, 1156-1186.
- Ricci, S., Kurtzman, L., & Roy, M. A. (2012) La traite des femmes à des fins d'exploitation sexuelle : entre le déni et l'invisibilité. *Les Cahiers de l'IREF, collection Agora (4)*. Montreal: Institut de Recherches et d'Études Féministes.
- Robinson, L. S. (2002). «Sex and the City»: la prostitution à l'ère des migrations mondiales. *Recherches féministes*. 15(2), 41-64.
- Rubin, G. (1984) Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality. In C. S. Vance (Ed), *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*. (pp.267-319). Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Sanchez Taylor, J. (2001). Dollars are a Girl's Best Friend? Female Tourists' Sexual Behaviour in the Caribbean. *Sociology*. 35(3), 749-764.

- Sanders, T. (2002). The Condom as Psychological Barrier: Female Sex Workers and Emotional Management. *Feminism & Psychology*. 12(4), 561-566.
- Sanders, T. (2004). Controllable Laughter. Managing Sex Work Through Humour. *Sociology*. 38(2), 273-291.
- Sanders, T. (2005). "It's Just Acting": Sex Workers' Strategies for Capitalizing on Sexuality. *Gender, Work and Organization*. 12(4), 319-342.
- Sanders, T. (2006a) Sexing Up the Subject: Methodological Nuances in Researching the Female Sex Industry. *Sexualities*. 9(4), 449-468.
- Sanders, T. (2006b). Behind the Personal Ads: the Indoor Sex Markets in Britain. In R. Campbell, & M. O'Neil (Eds), *Sex Work Now* (pp.92-115). Cullompton, UK & Portland, USA: Willan Publishing.
- Sanders, T. (2008). Male Sexual Scripts: Intimacy, Sexuality and Pleasure in the Purchase of Commercial Sex. *Sociology*. 42(3), 400-417.
- Scambler, G. (2007). Sex Work Stigma: Opportunist Migrants in London. *Sociology*. 41(6), 1079-1096.
- Scott, J., Minichiello, V., Mariño, R., Harvey, G. P., Jamieson, M. & Browne, J. (2005). Understanding the New Context of the Male Sex Work Industry. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. 20(3), 320-342.
- Shaver, F. M. (2005). Sex Work Research: Methodological and Ethical Challenges. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. 20(3), 296-319.
- Shaver, F. M., Lewis, J., & Maticka-Tyndale, E. (2011). Rising to the Challenge: Addressing the Concerns of People Working in the Sex Industry. *Canadian Sociological Association*. 48(1), 47-65.
- Simmons, M. (1998). Theorizing Prostitution: The Question of Agency. *Sexuality & Culture*. 2, 125-148.
- Stridbeck, U., Kristiansen, O., Schei B., & Kölher-Olsen, J. (2004) *Purchasing sexual services in Sweden and the Netherlands; Legal Regulations and Experiences*. Netherlands: Ministry of the Justice and the Police.
- Tabet, P. (1987). Du Don au Tarif. Les Relations Sexuelles Impliquant une Compensation. In *Les temps modernes*. 409, 1-53.
- Tabet, P. (1991). Les Dents de la Prostituée. Échanges, Négociations, Choix dans les Rapports Économico-Sexuels. In M.-C. Hurtig, M. Kail and H. Rouch. *Sexe et genre. De la hiérarchie entre les sexes* (pp.227-243). Paris: Éditions du CNRS.

- Taylor, D. & Newton-West, A. (1994). *Gigolos. The Secret Lives of Men Who Service Women*. Boston: Mt. Yvy Press.
- Toupin, L. (2002). La scission politique du féminisme international sur la question du “trafic des femmes”: vers la “migration” d’un certain féminisme radical ? *Recherches féministes*. 15(2), 9-40.
- Toupin, L. (2006). Analyser autrement la “prostitution” et la “traite des femmes”. *Recherches féministes*. 19(1), 153-176.
- van der Meulen, E. (2010) Illegal Lives, Loves, and Work: How the Criminalization of Procuring Affects Sex Workers in Canada. *Wagadu*, 8(Fall), 289-311.
- van der Meulen, E. & Durisin, E. M. (2008) Why Decriminalize? How Canada’s Municipal and Federal Regulations Increase Sex Workers’ Vulnerability. *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law*. 2, 289-331
- Waltman, M. (2011) Sweden's prohibition of purchase of sex: The law's reasons, impact, and potential. [Women's Studies International Forum](#). 34, 449–474.
- Ward, H., S. Day, A. Green, K. Cooper and J. Weber (2004) Declining Prevalence of STI in the London Sex Industry, 1985 to 2002. *Sexually Transmitted Infections* 80: 374–8.
- Wardlow, H. (2004). Anger, Economy, and Female Agency: Problematizing 'Prostitution' and Sex Work' among the Huli of Papua New Guinea. *Signs*. 29(4), 1017-1040.
- Warr, D. J., & Pyett, P. M. (1999). Difficult Relations: Sex Work, Love and Intimacy. *Sociology of Health & Illness*. 21(3), 290-309.
- Weatherall, A., & Priestley, A. (2001). A Feminist Discourse Analysis of Sex Work. *Feminism & Psychology* 11(3), 323-340.
- Weitzer, R. (2005a). Flawed Theory and Method in Studies of Prostitution. *Violence Against Women*. 11(7), 934-949.
- Weitzer, R. (2005b). Rehashing Tired Claims About Prostitution. A Response to Farley and Raphael and Shapiro. *Violence Against Women*. 11(7), 971-977.
- Weitzer, R. (2007). The Social Construction of Sex Trafficking: Ideology and Institutionalization of a Moral Crusade. *Politics & Society*. 35(3), 447-475.

- Weitzer, R. (2010). The Mythology of Prostitution: Advocacy Research and Public Policy. *Sex Research Social Policy*. 7, 15-29.
- Welzer-Lang, D., Barbosa, O., & Mathieu, L. (1994). *Prostitution: les uns, les unes et les autres*. Paris: Éditions Métailié.
- Willis, E. (1992). *No More Nice Girls. Countercultural Essays*. Hanover & London: Wesleyan University Press.
- Wynter, S. (1998). WHISPER: Women hurt in systems of prostitution engaged in revolt. In Delacoste, F. & Alexander, P. (Eds.), *Sex work : Writings by women in the sex industry. Second Edition*. (pp. 266-270). Pittsburgh, PA: Cleis.
- Zatz, N. D. (1997). Sex Work/Sex Act: Law, Labor, and Desire in Constructions of Prostitution. *Signs*. 22(2), 277-308.