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# MEDELANDEN FRÅN SOCIALHÖG- SKOLAN



*The man in sexual  
commerce*

*Sven-Axel Månsson*

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**Report from**

LUND UNIVERSITY  
**School of SOCIAL WORK**  
Research Division

**THE MAN IN SEXUAL COMMERCE**

**by**

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**November 1987**



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## INTRODUCTION

This paper deals with heterosexual commercial sex and its different parties: the female prostitute and the male customer. The emphasis, however, is on the analysis of the man. The main questions asked are: Who is this man that seeks out prostitutes, what are his motives, what does he purchase and what occurs when he meets a prostitute? In recent years, international research on prostitution has begun to systematically show interest in these questions. This increased interest in men's role in the sex trade can - at least in certain cases - be considered as a decisive shift in perspective. For whenever one begins to pose questions about the men, earlier hidden aspects of the phenomenon become unveiled. And although the man occasionally has been visible, it was only peripherally; both in conceptualization - and definition it was the female party that was the subject of research. Research questions have more often dealt with how and why women enter prostitution. To talk about how a demand can be met, cannot, however, illuminate this societal phenomenon in its completeness.

One of the central questions for understanding this phenomenon must deal with what is purchased, that is to say, in the case of heterosexual commercial sex, it must deal with men's motives and need for sexuality. The answer to this question does not deal foremost with female prostitutes but with the inter-human relations between men and women and the sexuality of men.

When the national Swedish commission on prostitution (in which I participated as research expert) began its work in 1977 a considerable part of the initial work dealt with just those questions, that is to say, on the significance of the choice of perspective. It was clear very early on that depending on the way the questions were posed, different answers would emerge. Above all: by posing only certain questions, certain aspects of the phenomenon would be rendered "invisible". The initial definitional work resulted in the research gradually coming together behind an outlook that implied that sexual commerce must necessarily be understood and analyzed in relation to gender roles and sexual patterns which exist in certain societies, in our case Swedish society. To put it in another way, one could say that the commission chose a sexual political



angle of approach to the phenomenon. This perspective has now become the model for the relatively comprehensive Scandinavian research done in this area. During the recent ten year period, an important feature in this research has been to attempt to uncover the socio-sexual implications in meetings between the prostitute and her customer and to relate these implications to the general mechanisms which exist in "normal relations" between men and women in society. In this work, the man and woman have consistently been considered as equally important parties. Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that the research on the man in commercial sex has not yet reached the same depth and extent as the research on prostitutes. The work has begun, but much remains to be done.

From an international comparative perspective it must be stressed that Scandinavian research primarily concerns the relationships in the Scandinavian countries. The socio-cultural context for the Scandinavian sex trade analysis (including the text presented here) is consequently the modern late capitalist "welfare society". Poverty, destitution and starvation, have for centuries comprised the most pressing factors in why both women and men began prostituting themselves. In Sweden and in the rest of Scandinavia today, these factors don't have the same meaning as in several other countries, such as in the Third World. However, in the Scandinavian welfare society there are still large groups who socially and economically are in a weak position; it is from these groups that many prostitutes are recruited. Among other things, this means that research which directs its interests towards society's class inequalities and their consequences for women's (and men's) opportunities to support themselves and their social and economic problems, is still of central importance both in Sweden and in most of the other places in the world. Commercial sex as a societal phenomenon has its roots in both class and gender inequality.

This paper is an attempt to synthesize some of the important results of Swedish research on sexual commerce during the past years. The text is not organized as a loosely put-together enumeration of results from other studies and research but as a free-standing and hopefully coherent analysis that builds upon some of the most extensive Swedish research in this area.

One such work is the report from the national commission's expert group entitled, "Prostitution - description, analysis and recommended measures" (1981; 650 pp). The emphasis of this report is on a qualitative analysis of



heterosexual sexual commerce, it demonstrates how this is an extension of the tensions which are found in traditional sex-role patterns. The analysis also deals with the physical violence which is connected with sexual commerce and also the implications of procuring, especially the relationship between the pimp and the prostitute.

Parallelling the work of the commission, a relatively unique trial-run was in progress in Malmö at the same time (1977--1981), the third largest city in Sweden, which was aimed at seeking out prostitutes to offer them social work assistance. The purpose of this pilot project was to induce the women to cease and desist their activities with the help of social and curative efforts. Directly coupled to the social-curative work was a sociological research investigation on the causes, implications and resulting effects of commercial sex on the women who were involved in it. From 1980 onwards, a number of books were published which give an account of the experience from the project with regard both to the social work and to the research. Two of these books, my own, are included as the basic foundation for the present text. The first - "The Promoters and Profeteers of Sexual Commerce" (1981) - deals especially with the relationship between the pimp and prostitute; the second - "Sexuality without a Face" (1981) deals with the man in sexual commerce, that is, the sex consumer.

This paper was originally written (in the fall of 1987) at the request of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (UNESCO) in Paris. The rationale behind their request was to get an introduction to the results from the recent and rather extensive Scandinavian public investigation and research work in the field of sexual commerce, with special emphasis on the prostitutes' clients. The text starts off with some definition issues, it continues with an analysis of the socio-cultural meanings and social-psychological mechanisms that permeate and mark the encounter between the parties in the sex trade and, finally, it treats men's motives behind their visits to prostitutes.



#### WHAT IS PROSTITUTION AND WHAT DOES IT IMPLY?

There are few societal phenomena that are and have been so surrounded by myths and false notions than prostitution. In official definitions and analyses of the phenomenon, the interest has almost entirely focussed upon the woman. Consciously or unconsciously it is foremost the woman one talks about when one defines prostitution in society. Prostitution is synonymous with the woman as prostitute. By placing this societal phenomenon on an equal footing with prostitutes, interest is most often directed towards the socially down-and-out women while men's/the consumers' participation is not made visible, or even less, considered to be a problem. However, in the literature on prostitution there are a few exceptions to this unwillingness to involve the consumer in the definition. One such exception is the definition that stems from the work of the aforementioned Swedish commission (1981):

Prostitution, as both form and content is imprinted upon by the existing societal relationships, occurs when at least two transacting parties under market-like conditions buy and sell, respectively, physical admittance to the body and to other sexual acts.

I concur with this view of prostitution as an existing societal phenomenon with two transacting parties, seller and buyer. They presuppose one another. If both do not occur, prostitution, likewise, cannot occur. But, in order to avoid confusing the seller (prostitute) with the entire societal phenomenon I prefer to use the term sexual commerce (instead of prostitution) in order to designate the societal phenomenon as such.

#### SEXUAL COMMERCE

Someone could possibly object that the term sexual commerce embraces much more than I intend. This objection in one respect is entirely correct. The entire comprehensive "sex industry" in our society (with the selling of porno publications, films, equipment, etc) can be said to comprise a part of sexual commerce in a wide sense of the term. On the other hand, the sex industry should not be considered as a direct form of sexual commerce but as an indirect form of it. The consumer doesn't purchase physical admittance to any living person's body or sexual organ, I therefore limit the term sexual commerce to characterize in a strict sense the societal phenomenon, which involves at least two transacting



parties who respectively buy and sell admittance to the body or other sexual acts. The sex industry's advocates and interests can, instead, be said to belong to the promoters of sexual commerce, i.e., people who by their activities promote the distribution and extent of commercial sex. More on this later.

In this connection, it is of extreme importance to call attention to the public character of sexual commerce. Thereby, one can separate it from private relationships between men and women whose sexual life together can also presuppose economic compensation. With a definition of sexual commerce connected to intercourse in exchange for economical compensation, all married women, for example, who receive gifts from their husbands, risk being characterized as prostitutes. With such conceptualization we would end up in a situation impossible to survey. Sexual commerce is a public societal phenomenon and should be examined as such.

The concept sexual commerce can thus be defined in the following manner:

Sexual commerce is the designation of the public societal phenomenon which involves at least two transacting parties, a seller and a buyer. The commodity transacted is different sexual acts. The transaction is usually completed when money has changed hands, but even other means of payment can be used.

To say that sexual commerce is a societal phenomenon is to also imply that it has its societal causes and history. Its scope, manifestations and meanings are marked by the existing societal relations at each historic occasion. The gender roles and sexual patterns which different societies have produced and are producing belong to the most fundamental among these relations. A society's class inequality has been and still is a pre-requisite for the continual recruitment of women and men to the rank and file of sexual commerce.

In several respects the history of sexual commerce is synonymous with the history of poverty, destitution, and starvation. Besides these more fundamental relationships, there are other factors which have influenced the extent and forms of expression for commercial sex during different historical epochs: venereal diseases, religious and political ideologies, legislation, etc.



The assertion in the definition that sexuality is a commodity perhaps requires a closer explanation. As we know, a commodity is normally an external object, a thing. Nevertheless, phenomena that in themselves are non-objects - for example, conscience, honor, work and sexuality - can be sold by their owner and acquire a price on the market in the form of commodities. In sexual commerce this occurs and thereby sexuality takes the form of a commodity in this special case. It is precisely this commodity-like character of sexuality which marks the bond and sets the boundaries in relation to other types of sexual relations between people. It doesn't deal with a mutual or emotional encounter, but a one-sided sexual relation, where as a matter of fact it is the customer who is the sexual party. The prostitute symbolizes and represents sexuality. She can be considered as merely an actress; in herself, she is non-sexual as a rule. In this respect, it involves a subject/object relationship where the buyer is the subject and the seller is the object. A fundamental implication in being the object is being there for someone else's purpose, where the important thing is not to express feelings and thoughts towards someone out of one's own needs but merely to respond to the other's perceived needs.

#### SEXUAL COMMERCE IN PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY

The incomparably most common type of sexual commerce in our society is heterosexual, where the man performs as the buyer and the woman as the seller. The fact that sex trade with females as buyers occurs in such a small degree says something about the dissimilar sexual patterns and rules that have existed and still exist for women and men in a society like ours, which is a patriarchal society.

Patriarchal society is built upon the man's right to rule, with a starting-point based in his gender. The dependency and subordination of women to men in such a society is also reflected in the domineering heterosexual commercial sex bond. This can be viewed as an extreme expression of the meaning of traditional gender roles.

The fundamental idea of sexual trade, throughout time, has been that a group of women shall be accessible for men's sexual purposes; she is there for the man's lust. A characteristic of sexual commerce is also that it is the woman who is morally punished for a sexuality that is not her own. "The whore" as an expression of the darker side of men's image of femininity is connected with enticement but also with contempt and disgust.



Around the man as consumer there are no such emotion-laden images. He's anonymous or entirely invisible. But for men in a patriarchal society, sexuality is made out to be something very important; it has great meaning for the man's identity. Intercourse offers, among other things, a corroboration of masculine identity. The woman is defined exclusively by her sexuality that can be purchased with money. The sexual meaning in the sexual transaction bond is best seen by the concept: "cleaning the pipes", an expression that is often used by men and women in connection with sexual trade. It involves a one-sided masculine form of sexuality close to a masturbation act handled by a woman.

The relationship between the public woman and the anonymous man is marked by the prerequisites of sexual trade. The system's commodity- and market-like character, as previously mentioned, set limitations. It involves a bond with more or less well masked coldness and, in a certain way, double exploitation. The antagonism lies right below the surface. Both parties rationalize their exploitation of each other from different starting-points. But both structurally and in most individual cases, it is the woman who finds herself in an exposed position and becomes the most exploited one. One of the woman's ways of "coping" with prostitution is by drawing distinctions between her man and the one who buys access to her sexual organs. The client buys himself away from responsibility and from his side, moral and human responsibility ceases in front of a woman who sells access to her sexual organs for the sake of money.

In the rest of this paper I intend to analyze in a more in-depth fashion, the socio-cultural meanings and social-psychological mechanisms that permeate and mark the encounter between the parties in the sex trade. Before that however it is important to show that the external premisses for this encounter is not only an affair between the prostitute and her customer. For on the side of, or above, the direct parties in this affair - buyer and seller - perform a line of indirect parties who without being directly involved in the acts that constitute the sexual trading relationship, influence, govern or control its prerequisites in important respects. These parties also often play a decisive role in the phenomenon's scope, spread and market-like organization. In certain cases they profit economically from the direct parties' commodity-like sexual relations.



Among them one can distinguish at least two groups who often coincide: promoters and profiteers. Promoters are people or groups in the society who through their activity in different ways can be said to promote the extent and spread of sexual commerce. Belonging to the promoters, are pimps, sex-club owners, apartment-house owners who rent apartments and facilities to prostitutes, hotel and restaurant owners, who offer meeting places to prostitutes and their customers, where they can strike deals, newspaper and magazine publishers who sell space for personal ads, travel-agencies who organize and sell sex-trips to foreign "exotic" countries, slave-traders who in an organized way recruit women in one place/country and transport them to another for the purpose of putting them out on the local commercial sex market, etc.

The list can be made longer. In certain cases, the majority perhaps, the promoters earn money directly on the sexual trade. In the cases in which they do, they can be called profiteers. All profiteers, by definition, promote sexual trade and should therefore be considered as a sub-group among the promoters.

#### THE WOMAN AND THE PIMP

From the woman's/prostitute's point of view, the promoters and profiteers can be divided up into two groups depending on her relationship to them. One group is made up of those with whom she mainly has an impersonal relationship. Included in this group are sex-club owners, apartment-house owners and newspaper publishers. The other group is characterized by the woman having a personal relationship with them. Pimps make up this latter group. The pimp is the promoter/profiteer with whom the woman has a personal and more a less strong emotional relationship. In this connection, the pimp's exploitation of the prostitute is very often a complex social-psychological phenomenon.

There are four aspects of the pimps's bond that can be considered relevant when one attempts to establish the character of his relationship to the woman and his exploitation of her. These aspects can be illustrated as scales with two opposite poles in each example. Economic exploitation represents only one of these scales.



## 1) "The Planning Stage" at the first encounter with the woman

Spontaneous liking  
arisesConscious strategies  
to ensnare her

## 2) The Relationship's emotional content

Mutual Lovingness

Extreme mental/  
physical violence

## 3) Economy

The man is self-  
supportingThe man lives off  
the woman

## 4) The number of women

The man has a  
relationship with  
one womanThe man has organized  
the exploitation of  
several women

The thinking behind these scales is to indicate the span and complexity in a pimping relationship. If a relationship should end up on the extreme left-hand side of all scales, it would hardly deal with a pimping relationship in the true meaning of the word. In commercial sex circles, such relationships are very unusual. Usually the relationships are mixtures which end up somewhere in the middle of the scales. The pimps who end up farthest to the right of all scales can be called "calculating" pimps. That involves men who consciously practice trading in women as commodities. Typical of the pimp as a promoter is that with different methods he sometimes directly influences the woman to start or to continue in prostitution. It sometimes happens that this influence has an element of physical/mental assault.<sup>1</sup>

But let us return to the encounter between the buyer and seller in the commercial sex relationship, the prostitute and the man. For the non-involved, sexual trade is an act where the actors perform their play on a stage which is located far away from an audience. The distance from the audience is con-



siderable. Everyone knows these roles from time immemorial. One thinks one knows what sexual trade and prostitution is and therefore often stays a safe distance from it. The stereotypical roles and masks are the only thing one sees and therefore one never comes close enough to the phenomenon to pose the following questions: What does commercial sex mean as a social phenomenon? What can it teach us about ourselves and the society we live in?

#### THE COMMERCIAL SEX BOND

The commercial sex bond is in certain respects the opposite of so-called normal relationships between men and women. It reveals a behavioural pattern in opposition to that which is usually socially acceptable, something which surely contributes to the mysteriousness which surrounds sexual commerce. The traditional picture of feminine sexuality as an expensive gift that is given to a selected man is met here by its most contrasting counter-image: the female prostitute who in symbolic or real meaning is accessible for all sexual purposes. And it is the accessibility which must be made public; something that happens in a situation where a physical being is found on a public street or allows herself to be procured through mass media advertisements or via a third party, the pimp.

A starting point for the encounter is that both parties are conscious about it involving a purchase, where the commodity's content and the duration of the encounter to a large extent is determined by the purchasing price. Many of the complications that are followed by the unpronounced expectations which exist in a usual human encounter are here stripped away. The men choose the women according to the picture which she gives of her capacity to be able to satisfy his desires. The man is first judged by the woman in his capacity to be able to pay.

Street-prostitution is the form of commercial sex where the woman in the most obvious manner publicly announces her sex. The contact occurs openly and the consumer and seller relationship between the sexes is exposed in a visible fashion. In other forms of prostitution it can be more covert. The higher up in the sex trade hierarchy one comes, the less clear and simply visible prostitution becomes. To the more "less evident" examples belongs the activity in mundane exclusive bar milieu, where a man can convince himself of having "conquered" a woman before it occurs to him that he was "accosted" by a person whose intention is to sell her sex and not to start a relationship.



A fundamental idea in commercial sex, that was mentioned earlier, is that a group of women is accessible to all men. Men who want to and can pay thereby don't put themselves in a situation where they risk being rejected, least of all, on emotional grounds. In the traditional male conquest, there is an element of insecurity. The man is expected to take the first step. Regardless of how much practise and skillfulness he has in reading the woman's signals, this step signifies a leap into darkness. He "knows" that she has the power to reject him. In commercial sex, this insecurity is done away with to a large extent. By virtue of the power of money, the man can be as good as sure about avoiding rejection and having his requests fulfilled.

The woman's/the prostitute's opportunity to be able to choose, often stands however, in direct proportion to how exposed she is and this can vary considerably. It is the most difficult for the women who are drug addicts and who need to get large sums of money together in one day's time.

To renounce one's own feelings and needs as a human being and only respond to the demands of someone else is in many respects an implication of the traditional female role. Sexual commerce thus follows the traditional bonds - not surprisingly - between economy and sexuality, for unequal sexes in a patriarchal society.

In Western patriarchal culture, the woman has been supported by the man. She thereby has had to live up to the man's traditionally formed sexuality and the similarly traditional demand to take care of the coming generation. Her own sexuality has been denied. Even outside of marriage, the man has been expected to be the one who "pays the piper", that is, he pays like a link in a game where he gradually gets the woman to pay back by accepting sexual togetherness on his terms. It is against these traditional and unequal images that the implications of the naked transacting in commercial sex clearly appear.

I have described some of the presumably most important and basic socio-sexual meanings in the sexual commerce relationship and also pointed out how they can be considered as an extreme expression for the sexual meanings in traditional gender roles. Intentionally, I have purified the lines so that the picture that appears is sharp. But naturally there are nuances and variations within the sharp contours, and in an analysis of the complicated reality of commercial sex



it is important that they be included. Such a nuance has to do with the subject-object relation in the bond.

I have said that the prostitute's "task" is to be an object for a man's lust. This means that she must deny her own needs to the benefit of someone else. "But no matter how much a living being may deny herself, she'll always remain a subject anyhow."<sup>2</sup>

So too in commercial sex. For although the woman lives up to that which she has agreed upon with the customer, there's still something that is not for sale. Paradoxically enough for an outsider, kissing is that which perhaps is most taboo. In its deepest meaning, it deals with a defense of one's own personal integrity. It deals with not permitting anything that has a personal meaning for the woman. She thereby makes a strong distinction between her private and public self.

This has its basis in the profound socio-cultural differences which are attached to both men and women's sexual learning in our culture. Men learn to be able to separate emotions and a personal relationship to the woman with whom he has a sexual relationship; something that makes commercial sex possible, among other things. The woman links emotions and sexuality together. She doesn't make love with somebody for whom she has no feelings. She saves her kisses for the one she loves.

The most important thing for women in prostitution is that through "splitting" herself into two selves, she preserves the most important, namely, the ability to be able to feel. Consequently, it also becomes important to stick to the unwritten rules; no kissing or other personal touching permitted. Only then is there the opportunity to separate the life as a prostitute from one's own personal life. This leads to, quite logically so, that for women with experiences in prostitution, it has very little - if even anything - to do with sexuality.

Most often, the role of a prostitute simply means playing falsely with emotions; everything from "learning the gab" to simulating having sexual feelings during an intercourse. In both cases it deals with increasing the man's chances to carry out the element of self-deception which is included in sexual commerce. Or, expressed otherwise, she tricks him and he believes it since he hardly



has any other choice. She pretends in order to sustain his image of himself as a man and lover. If he completely sees through the lies, he also must confront his own loneliness; that is, he will be forced to understand that what happens, happens in loneliness and not in twosomeness. To look at himself through the woman's eyes means seeing himself as one in a long line of others, not as a man with his own personality. And that is - as we'll see later on - difficult, at least for a number of men, to understand the factual meaning of being a "trick". Let alone that for many men it is precisely what the man is looking for, that is, a kind of desexualization with no claim or request attached - apart from money. But for those looking for something else, for those victimized and lonely men who are often cited as an argument for the necessity of sexual trade, it means that they, in a deeper sense, are "tricked".

#### THE MAN - THE SEX BUYER

If you ask a prostitute: "who are the men coming to you?"; she very often responds: "all kinds of men". Obviously she doesn't mean every man in the truest sense. She means that in principle there are all kinds of men among those whom she meets in her trade. She alludes to the men's economic and social background, that which can be seen of it in the men's appearance, behaviour, clothing, car, living quarters, age and marital status; what she sees of this and what the men themselves say. She alludes to their sexual desires, if they're normal or perverse. She means that most of them are normal but there is also an element of perversity.

The prostitute indicates, with other words, that the customers don't belong to any special social category; they therefore don't deviate from other men in any special way. Swedish researchers and social-workers who during recent years have been confronted with commercial sex from different angles of approach, are presumably of the same opinion as the prostitutes in most cases. Sexual commerce, one often says, is a collective masculine question.

All men are potential customers. The explanation for this lies in the masculine sexual upbringing which predisposes them for the role of consumer in sexual commerce. If that wasn't so, how could one otherwise explain the incontestable factual difference between the sexes which makes it principally so - now as well as earlier in history - that it is men who act as buyers in commercial sex?



The naked sexuality which the purchasing of sex implies is a one-sided sexuality and a sexuality without any claim or request (apart from money), whether the man desires it or not. The man buys himself an ejaculation and the woman doesn't make any personal demands. The payment makes the man feel free of guilt. The only obligation is money. He need not seduce, play games or feign feelings in order to get an intercourse. This is a pure picture of patriarchal sexuality's meaning, namely, that the one-sidedness deals with him as a man and not with an encounter between a man and a woman. The pure aspect of male sexuality in commercial sex can be seen as a consequence of the learning process in which the little boy is made into a man in our Western culture. In this sense, sexual commerce can consequently be considered as a collective masculine question.

However, precisely like the prostitute, we know that far from all men buy sex in the absolute sense. Certain ones do it, others don't. Kinsey said in his study (1948) of North American men's sexual behaviour, that the majority of all grown (white) men have had experiences of paid sexual encounters. He nevertheless emphasized that the number of men with repeated contacts in commercial sex are relatively few in number. Here already, we can distinguish two sub-groups among all sex-consumers: those who buy sex a single time in their lives and those who have repeated contacts with prostitutes. There are consequently men who never buy sex, men who do it once, and men who often or regularly turn to prostitutes.

In the following, I shall discuss in a more in-depth manner what we today know about the prostitute's customers, why men occasionally or regularly buy sex. I shall do this against the background of the research that has been carried out on sex customers in Sweden by myself and others. Let me point out from the very beginning, however, that this is a research area where the basis of knowledge is still relatively deficient compared with other aspects of sexual commerce. For example, today there is extensive knowledge about the history of international commercial sex, prostitutes' working conditions and also knowledge about the promoters and profiteers in commercial sex. On the contrary, knowledge about sex-consumers is distinctly more scarce, even if in recent times one has been able to notice a certain amount of increased interest in the question (which among other things is clear from Kathleen Barry's bibliography, "On Social and Cultural Causes of Prostitution in the United States and the United Kingdom", 1985).<sup>3</sup> The lack of knowledge about certain parts has to do with the



tendency to look at only one side of the phenomenon, something which has existed in present research and analysis of commercial sex, where focus has been directed at the women and the men's/consumers' participation has not been made visible or treated as a lesser problem. But the lack of knowledge also probably has to do with the practical methodological problems that the researcher encounters when he/she has ambitions to uncover secrecy regarding the buying party in commercial sex. The customer's anonymity goes hand in hand with his inaccessibility. There are no ready sources to scoop from.

The Swedish studies from which I begin are not based upon a more extensive empirical material, except that they have the first-hand character of preliminary qualitative analyses, with a concentration on rendering intelligible the men's role in the commercial sex relation. Above all, it involves two studies: one carried out at the end of the 1970's within the framework of the commission's nationwide prostitution study, the other conducted by myself in the beginning of the 1980's, within the framework of the prostitution project in Malmö. The latter study is the most in-depth. The cornerstone of this study are interviews with customers, carried out in cooperation with the Malmö General Hospital's polyclinic. It contains material such as interviews with 66 men who all had an experience or several experiences of a sexual nature with prostitutes for money. The research report from this study was published in 1984 under the title, "Sexuality without a Face".<sup>4</sup> Besides these interviews, the book contains other material including a number of in-depth interviews with customers with whom the prostitution project came in contact through the social-curative work (which however was primarily directed at prostitutes). I shall continually give accounts of some of the most important results and conclusions from this research and also use them as a starting point for a discussion about the social and cultural causes behind commercial sex. Without any knowledge of the men's motives and reasons for buying sex, we can't fully comprehend the mechanisms which sustain sexual commerce as societal phenomena.

But first, an abridged description of the extent of commercial sex in Sweden.

#### SEXUAL TRAFFICKING IN SWEDEN

No wholly reliable information about the extent of commercial sex in Sweden can be acquired. Although certain attempts have been made to estimate its degree. The most recent and ambitious attempt at estimating was conducted by the national commission on prostitution in the beginning of the eighties. This



estimation is largely based upon information from the police, social authorities, and also upon certain research data of an observational nature. At the actual timepoint (1981), the group of active prostitutes came to about 2 000. They were distributed throughout various different branches of sexual commerce. About 1 000 of them worked on the streets, about 600 were involved in "indoor" prostitution such as massage parlours, posing rooms and sex-clubs, while about 400 worked within hotel- and restaurant prostitution and the so called, call-girl prostitution. It should be pointed out that in practice there are no water-tight bulkheads between the different branches. Overlaps occur which naturally limit the reliability of estimating the sizes of the different groups.

At the same timepoint, attempts were also made to estimate the number of customers. Here the research team of the commission states that the number of customers per year lies around 100 000, that is, on the average of 50 different customers for each prostitute. This group of men corresponds to 3-4 % of the total Swedish male population. The share of men in the present total male population (nearly 4 000 000) who at some time have been to a prostitute, should according to the study be in the order of 10 %. This must nevertheless be considered as a very conservative estimate since the count is solely based upon men's paid encounters with prostitutes in Sweden. We also know that Swedish men have paid encounters with prostitutes abroad - an issue we'll come back to later on in a more detailed manner. If foreign encounters are, accordingly, put into the equation, we can assume that the total number of Swedish men who, during one year, have one or more encounters with prostitutes, in essence, exceeds 100 000.

Another way of counting is the number of relations between prostitutes and customers during one year. In a special study conducted for the nation-wide research effort regarding the extent of sexual commerce in Stockholm, the number of commercial sex relations was, accordingly, estimated to be about 200 000. Behind this figure are about 30 000 men who were customers sometime during the year. Several of them were consequently men who were returning customers. How the precise relationship between the number of returning and occasional customers was arrived at is unknown - the answer is not given in the research report. I'll return to this question later on in connection with the account of the data from my own study in Malmö.



## SOME BACKGROUND DATA ON SWEDISH SEX BUYERS

Due to reasons we earlier on went into (the activity occurs in secrecy because the men are careful about their anonymity), it has been shown to be difficult to gather reliable information on the prostitutes' customers with present research methods. In our attempt to get a picture of the sex-consumers demographic profile, a relatively unconventional observation study of street prostitution was conducted in both Stockholm and Malmö, whereby the researchers wrote down the license plate numbers of cars whose drivers picked up and dropped off street prostitutes on "the stroll". By checking with the registration of car numbers, the drivers/buyers could be identified and different data could be secured about the customers' distribution in different demographical variables, such as marital status, age, gross annual income, nationality and, possibly, previous criminality.

The array of data given below is, accordingly, one example of how the age distribution could appear in a selection of street prostitutes' customers at the beginning of the 1980's. The table's foundation is made up of customers in vehicles who were observed in Stockholm and in Malmö with prostitutes.

Table 1. The age distribution among the customers in street prostitution. The basis of this table is made up of car drivers who were observed in the company of prostitutes in Stockholm and in Malmö during 1978--1980.

Age-range intervals	Stockholm (percent)	Malmö (percent)
-19	1	3
20-29	18	22
30-39	37	41
40-49	22	16
50-59	11	12
60-69	11	4
70-79	-	2
Total	100 (n= 669)	100 (n = 423)

The table shows that the largest group (37 % and 41 %) was in the 30-39 year old range. Next came the 20-29 year olds and 40-49 year olds. Perhaps one could say that the figures in the table are a blow against one of the most common myths concerning sexual commerce, namely, that it is mainly older men who buy



sex. The table clearly shows that the prostitutes' customers (in Sweden) are young men or men in their younger middle age. This impression is re-inforced if one weighs in the results from the interview study which I conducted at the polyclinic in Malmö. Here it was revealed that 90 % of the men interviewed said they had their first encounter with prostitution prior to becoming 30 years of age.

Furthermore, one can state on the basis of the same observation material that nearly 30 % of the street prostitutes' customers were married men. This figure gives a powerful underestimation of the total share who live in a so-called steady relationship with a woman (both those who are married and those who are not married but live with a woman). My own interview study showed that 47 % of the men had a steady relationship with a woman, that is, they were either married or lived with a woman.

It can be mentioned within parenthesis that a realitively large number of customers were foreigners, that is, people living in Sweden but with foreign citizenship. The share was perhaps larger than anticipated and amounted to 20 % of the observed customers. The distribution of foreign customers followed to a large degree the make-up of the total foreign population presently in Swedish cities; possibly with a certain over-representation of customers from countries around the Mediterranean Sea.

In the studies information on the customers' criminality was also gathered. Nearly a fifth of them had a record with the police. In most cases this involved more or less trivial incidents, such as driving violations and the like. But there was also an obvious element of more qualified criminality, among other things, four percent of the men had served time. Among the felonies involved were robbery, assault and grand larceny (theft).

With these figures as background, it is important to show clearly that prostitution is far from a non-dangerous activity for women. It is true that physical violence or other cruelties do not occur in most commercial sex encounters. The majority of customers are probably "normal" men, for whom it would be strange to commit cruelties. But it is also true that violence in different forms and expressions runs like a red thread throughout the history of sexual commerce - a group of women have encountered men's contempt and hatred of women and have been degraded. Most known open violence occurs in conjunction with street



prostitution. The higher up in the hierarchy of sex trade, the more well-behaved the facade is. Almost all prostitutes - regardless of their position in the hierarchy - can give accounts of some experience of cruelty from a customer - from robbery to assault and attempted murder. A number of the perpetrators are known by the police, others are not.

Aside from this lesser - although important - group of criminally inclined men, the dominating impression is that the customers on the street closely resemble the make-up of a statistical selection of Swedish men in the younger middle ages, where social class affiliation varies a lot. This is strengthened by the studies carried out on the men's economic and professional backgrounds. Then, when it involves the customers of prostitutes working in restaurants and hotels and call-girls, the "highest" stratum in the sex trade pyramid, one can (based on the background of more unreliable data) say that the variations in social class affiliations are less. The average customer is some type of "business-man". There is also a whole lot of other high-paid men with professions such as advertisers, doctors in private practice, judges, etc.

#### WHERE ARE CONTACTS MADE?

In the interviewing I conducted at Malmö's General Hospital, 883 men were asked if they, on any occasion in their lives, had had sexual intercourse with a prostitute. Nearly 20 % (170) answered "yes". They were later asked where they had had their most recent contact with a prostitute. The following table presents the result.

Table 2. The distribution of the answers to the question about the locality of the most recent encounter with a prostitute.

Place	Number of men	Percentage
Sweden	35	21
Europe	48	28
Outside Europe	57	34
No answer	30	17
Total	170	100



Here, remarkably clear, a pattern stands out that perhaps one had no reason to expect. The majority of the customers in our study had gotten their sexual commerce experiences abroad.

That it remains this way is connected with different circumstances. One presumably has to do with the changed opportunity structure of sex trade. For a long time, sexual commerce has been an international phenomenon in the respect that different categories of "slave-traders" in an organized manner have recruited women in one country and transported them to another, for the purpose of putting them out on the international sex market. It is known that import of foreign women to the Swedish sex market has been occurring during the 1970's and 1980's, especially women from Poland and Southeast Asia, but also from other countries. The export of Swedish women has also occurred during the corresponding period: women who allowed themselves to be persuaded to sign "slave contracts" which bound them to work as hostesses at some bar or night-club in some new country for a long period of time.<sup>5</sup> The real purpose of this stay was that they would work as prostitutes. This trafficking in women between different countries is, as said, a phenomenon known for a long time. It goes way back to colonial times when colonizers regarded themselves as having a natural right to appropriate the colonies' women, in the same way in which they appropriated land and raw materials. At the bottom of all of this, is the same mentality which is noticed in today's industrial sex exploitation of Third World countries.

The new element in the international sex trade during recent years is the buyers who in a more or less organized fashion allow themselves to be transported from one country to another for the purpose of buying sex. This is obviously a side effect of charter tourism in a mass consumption society. During the seventies and eighties in Sweden, there has been a couple of travel bureaus specializing in organizing and selling so-called sex-trips to "exotic" places in developing countries, especially Thailand and the Philippines. The arrangers have marketed the trips through travel brochures whose texts and visual material can hardly be said to leave the potential customer in doubt about what the whole thing deals with.<sup>6</sup> But even in conjunction with regular charter-trips, business and official trips, the men in our study have come into contact with the international sex trade. Several of the countries and localities mentioned in the men's interviews are, to a great extent, well known



for their widespread sex trade activities; for example, Bangkok, Hamburg and certain cities in Poland - it can't be excluded that the men were in these places for just that reason.

Buying sex abroad gives an increased degree of anonymity to the buyer. Among our interviewees, there were those who emphasized that they could never imagine going to a prostitute in Sweden for just that reason. From a research point of view, this means that it is not at all sufficient to study the customers's role in Swedish sex trade if one wants to acquire knowledge about what meaning prostitution has for Swedish men. Many men only have commercial sex experiences abroad and are probably never going to be found as customers in the Swedish market. Not for the reason that buying sex in itself is a form of behaviour that is foreign to them, but because they are concerned about their anonymity. This also shows another thing, namely, the significance of international coordination of the forces that have the task of combatting international sex trade. It is not enough that one or a few countries by law prohibit the buying of sex. Such a law in Sweden would only have the character of a local ordinance against the background that the majority of Swedish customers have their prostitution affairs on the international sex market.

#### HOW OFTEN DO PROSTITUTION CONTACTS OCCUR?

With a point of departure taken from the more comprehensive interviews of 66 men included in the so called Malmö study, one can make a preliminary classification of the men in a number of analytical categories with regard to the frequency of prostitution relations in the individual case. These categories we have called:

- 1 occasional buyers, that is, men who have had any (maybe only one) or a few single experiences buying sex
- 2 regular buyers, that is, men who during long periods of their adult lives frequently visit prostitutes

In our case, we thought that men who had admitted to having more than twenty sexual encounters with prostitutes could be considered as belonging to the last category. We are aware that this categorization is not infallible. There presumably are other variations. In addition, the border between the two categories is somewhat vague and only gives an illusion of exactitude. One could just as easily place it at fifteen or twenty-five contacts as well as at



twenty. This, however, would have only marginally altered the proportions between the two major groups. The routine buyer most often had essentially more than twenty contacts and the occasional essentially fewer, far fewer than five.

Whenever it involves the routine buyers, another analytically motivated classification can be made between periodical regular customers on one side and on the other side - simply - regular customers. Periodical routine customers during time-limited periods of their lives devote themselves to regular and/or often recurring visits to prostitutes. This involves seamen, men who periodically travel a lot in their work, vacationers and also men who due to shorter or longer periods of loneliness or poorly functioning steady relationship have regular contacts with prostitutes.

The distribution among the men in our study indicates that the first mentioned category - the occasional buyers - are numerically largest. These buyers made up close to 70 % of our material. Nearly a third of them were men who had a single encounter with a prostitute. Both groups of regular buyers made up nearly 30 % of the material, whereby the periodical routine buyers were in the majority. In an interesting way our research data gives support to Kinsey's old observation that although many men have had some experience with commercial sex, the number of men with repeated or regular encounters are relatively few in number. Another interesting question is how big a share of the total number of prostitution encounters during - let us say - one year the different customer categories consume. As I earlier suggested, it is problematic, if not impossible, to find out the exact relationship between the different categories in this regard. The nationwide Swedish study assumed that a relatively large share of the nearly 200 000 prostitution contacts which annually occur in Stockholm, involve men who are regular customers. I find cause to concur with this assumption. The question simply is if the so called routine buyers, who only make up hardly a third of the total number of prostitution customers, don't consume at least as many or more contacts as the occasional buyers who are almost three times more in number. Brought to a head perhaps one could say that it is mostly the routine buyer who, so to speak, keeps the prostitutes busy.

The picture of knowledge which stands out here concerning the customers' "patterns of consumption" naturally has a meaning for the discussion about how the society shall handle the man in the sex trade. I will not go further into



such a discussion here except only to mention that depending upon which category of buyer one places the greatest emphasis on in the debate, the conclusions are presumably quite different regarding which social measure one wants to invest in. Coarsely viewed, one can say - with experience from the debate in Sweden - that those who bear in mind the one-time or occasional buyers tend to recommend repressive police inputs for the purposes of scaring away customers from prostitution. The main argument behind this strategy is that since the men only go to prostitutes some isolated time, this can't really be something the men need, therefore they can just as easily refrain from it. This group also seems to be very concerned about its anonymity, and therefore a legal prohibition of this conduct, accompanied by police control, would be an effective instrument for hindering the men's demand for prostitution. On the other hand, those who foremost pay attention to the regular buyers point out that behind their acting pattern not infrequently lies a complicated and personal social problem which should be paid attention to and remedied with social inputs - not with legal prohibitions.

But let's not go into the events in advance. The most interesting question remains. Which motives or reasons lie behind men's buying of sex? What do the men themselves say and what do the prostitutes say about the men's motives?

#### MEN'S MOTIVES FOR BUYING SEX

In the Malmö-study we made an attempt to classify the men's motives which lie behind buying sex. This classification is based on an analysis of the men's own statements in the interviews. The analysis demonstrated that on the whole, the interview responses revolved around three large complexes. It is these that we shall look a little closer at in the ongoing discussion. However, I would like to emphasize that the classification must be considered as preliminary, it is a first attempt to group in a more systematic way and to analyze men's motives for turning to prostitutes. Let me first briefly describe all three motive complexes in order to later discuss each of them in a more in-depth fashion.

#### **I Curiosity and sexual variation**

This complex consists of a number of motives, which have in common that they partly have a clear sexual meaning and partly touch upon the particularities of commercial sex; that is, motives which in different ways express a longing in the men to be able to experience an encounter with a prostitute; to be in the



commercial sex milieu or to experience the sexual discharge which is offered there. Partly these motives appear to have their origin in the extensive myth-building around commercial sex (which often flourishes in pornographic newspapers and magazines) and in widespread masculine conceptions about constantly accessible women who fulfill men's sexual needs and/or secret sexual fantasies.

## II Contact problems and loneliness

The motives in this complex have in common that they express a longing for contacts with women. However, it does not appear to be a longing firstly for female prostitutes, but for women on the whole. There appear to be difficulties in establishing normal sexual relations which lie behind these motives. The interviewees in this category dealt with things like shyness, fear, age, physical or mental handicaps, social isolation, etc. Most often it was single men who were included in this response group.

## III Co-existence-related problems

This motive complex touches on men's difficulties and problems in steady relationships with women. It deals foremost with the dissatisfactions in the sexual togetherness in marriage or a steady relationship. "She never wants to", "She won't get herself up to it", it goes. But it also involves certain men's difficulty functioning in "twosomeness" on the whole, that is, to be "referred" to one and the same partner. The man then seeks other women, including prostitutes, to only have an intercourse with.

Let us now look a little more closely at each of these motive complexes.

## I CURIOSITY AND SEXUAL VARIATION

Interestingly enough, there were only a few (about 10 %) of the men in our study who explicitly discussed their sexual need as the reason why they visited prostitutes. The same phenomena is pointed out by Charles Winick in his study of American sex buyers; the men remarkably seldom mention their own sexual urges in connection with sexual consumption. Winick offers the following interpretation of this apparently noteworthy relationship:

It seems possible that the emotional meanings and overtones in visiting a prostitute are much more salient for the man than a desire for a sexual experience. Another way of expressing this is that the desire for a sexual experience manifests itself and is translated to different ways of looking at the prostitute and himself - as the interviewees voice it.<sup>7</sup>



The interpretation is based upon constantly re-occurring statements from interviewees who say "the prostitute gives me what I want to have" and "I get something different out of the visit", statements that often are not accompanied by any closer precision. This lack of precision makes Winick draw the conclusion that the prostitute, as well as the visit in itself, has an important symbolic meaning for the men. This means that the actual content of the visit to a prostitute is sometimes of less importance than the meaning that it and the prostitute has in the men's fantasy, as a symbolic proof of manhood for example. This is, however, not the same as saying that it is usual that men have no sexual needs when they visit prostitutes. It only means that men often do not talk about their own sexuality when they discuss why they visit prostitutes. They talk about other things, however, through which this need expresses itself. They frequently talk about "curiosity", "excitement" or "variation".

The statements that deal with "curiosity" seem to reflect a desire in the men for being able to have a sexual experience which only in exceptional cases can be acquired in encounters with non-prostitute females. Not entirely unexpected, curiosity is a strong driving motive behind the first visit to a prostitute. This curiosity can involve different elements in commercial sex: the female prostitute, the milieu in which she's found, and the type of sexuality she's expected to offer.

**The prostitute/the "whore"** - The whore stands for the "sexual animal", for urges and sexual longing, a sexual longing that to a great extent is loaded with guilt. It represents one side of the split female image which men in patriarchal societies carry around: the madonna/mother versus the prostitute/whore. These counter-images of men's view of women guides their manner of relating to women in different situations. Both images objectify the woman, but while the madonna/mother is met with respect, the other is met with contempt. Not only contempt however, but also enticement. For the men, the whore is the most distant of the two types of women, but at the same time close as an, often secret, never-ending source of erotic dreams and fantasies. In all men, perhaps, there exists a curiosity to at some time come in contact with, to see, experience, and to be sexual, with a whore.

**The sex trade environment** - In the sex trade milieu, that is, the districts and places where sex trade occurs, there is a diffuse, but somehow apparent,



sexuality in the air. The milieu itself functions as an "invitation" to sex. This is underscored by the pornographic framework, that is, the sex-clubs and porn boutiques which, in many cases, border "the stroll" in the big cities. And, above all, the fact that live women openly offer themselves for sale. In no other place are such women found, who so entirely un-restrictedly offer their bodies for men's sexual purposes. Such an offer can be hard to refrain from, which is what a number of the interviewees pointed out. "She made herself available", it was sometimes said.

**The sexuality** - Curiosity can also involve the encounter with the sexually aggressive, as well as advanced and experienced, woman, such as she is found in the man's fantasy world. The sexual togetherness in sexual commerce is only sexual, all other feelings except the masculine sexual appetite have been stripped away. In this context, it can be important to stress that men often take a different more passive sexual role in their contacts with prostitutes in comparison with the ones they take in encounters with non-prostitute females. One could express it thusly, the man buys himself the right to be sexually passive and to be seduced by the sexually aggressive "whore". In a study made by the American sexologist Martha Stein on the customers of American call-girls, it appeared that the act most requested from the men was the so-called French massage or fellatio, i e, the penis being stimulated by the mouth. Many men expressed their displeasure about their wives/girlfriend's unwillingness to do French massage. It was also in this way that most of the men got their ejaculation. The popularity of this act was followed by the position with the woman sitting on top of the man. According to Stein, about half of the men assumed a passive role in the entire sexual ordeal; i e, they left it to the prostitute to lead the encounter and to take all the initiative. It therefore appears as though a number of the men, when possible, prefer to abandon their socially determined initiative-taking role and take a role which allows them to release control and ignore all demands concerning performance.<sup>8</sup>

Closely coupled with the curiosity motive are statements where the men talk about the "excitement" in sexual transactions. This experience of excitement is presumably caused by the contradictory character of sex trade, of being repugnant and attractive at the same time. It is repugnant because there is an element of self-contempt for one's forbidden "animalistic" sexuality. Simultaneously, there is the temptation of giving in to an uninhibited erotic lust sensation; not to be able to withstand. Simply put, it is exciting to say



"yes" to the temptation of the "darker" forces which unpermitted sexuality stand for.

As we already know, sexual commerce makes up a world of myth which builds upon distorted images of masculine and feminine sexuality as it is presented in pornography. The sex trade thereby gets advertising and marketing through an often sensational and spectacular portrayal of accessible, always willing females, ready to satisfy men's "hottest" desires. Such ideas surrounding commercial sex probably contribute to the feeling of excitement which is linked with the visit to the prostitute. It also stimulates the sexual fantasy in which prostitution and the sexually aggressive "whore" has a quite special meaning for the men.

Another phenomenon of crucial significance is the payment. This is naturally important to the prostitute. The economic compensation makes up the only reason for her to offer her services. But it is also important for the men, on a more symbolic level. The payment is the indulgence of sex trade. It provides freedom from guilt and emotional responsibility. The paid encounter with a prostitute means, for the man's part, that he may exclusively devote himself to sex and go right at it. No promises or sweet words are needed in the exchange for sexual accessibility; money is sufficient as compensation. The whole encounter is free of demands. There are no unpronounced expectations and therefore no hassles. It is this "no claims policy" which is reflected in the interview responses when the men talk about the visit to a prostitute as being "comfortable", "relaxing" and "pleasant". The man can concentrate entirely upon his own need to be satisfied, without being "disturbed" by demands for emotional involvement and mutual concern. For men who have steady relationships with women, prostitution is the most "simple" form of infidelity; a sexual act that the men often don't even interpret as infidelity. They have an ejaculation, without getting "involved" in any emotional way in a relationship which they afterwards can't deal with.

Another motive found in this group is "sexual variation". The desire for sexual variation can imply that the man has special sexual desires which he dares not, or cannot, express in the relationship with the woman he lives with. Earlier, we talked about men's desires to be sexually passive with a woman, something which the traditional masculine role "forbids". But there are also men who have sexual desires which from their own point of view, as well as from the surroun-



ding world, are looked upon as clearly deviant. This is not something that one likes to talk about, even in a confidential interview. In the interviewing conducted for the nationwide prostitution study, the prostitutes, however, told about their meetings with men who had "special sexual desires".

Here is one example:

The biggest group was men with families ... They wanted to do things which they would never dare to mention to their wives. Like wearing a petticoat, nylon stockings and other things. Or to be whipped or urinated upon. The masochists were almost the biggest group. They simply wanted to be beaten; there were many of them. I was very surprised about that because I believed that, on the whole, a very small percentage of people really wanted to get beaten.

The masochistic disposition, therefore, implies different things. The men want to be beaten with whips or flogged with a birch, be spat upon, trampled on, or in other ways degraded by the woman. The antipole to masochism is sadism. It is, however, rare that the prostitute will put up with both being beaten and in giving a beating. It is sometimes enough for her to carry out a symbolic act of sadism which can include her playing the role of a hard fosterer. This can, for example, take place with her appearing in black underwear and riding booths, ordering the man about, bullying him with commands and gestures. The social control and loss of prestige this act can seem to mean for the man is, however, only illusory. It is still he who controls the situation, foremost by virtue of the power of money. During a limited time and with well preserved anonymity, he has bought himself the right to be weak and submissive. The moment he leaves the prostitute, he re-enters his socially determined masculine role which doesn't leave room for feelings of weakness and dependency.

## II CONTACT PROBLEMS AND LONELINESS

The motives in this complex all have in common that they describe men's difficulties in approaching women, above all else, women as potential sex-partners. A number of men say: "there are no other women for me than prostitutes". In most cases this naturally does not mean, in an absolute sense, being without opportunities to establish contact with women. Instead, this expression covers up the men's subjective conception of what's available for them. The fact is that the conditions in the sex market - the social sphere where men and women establish sexual contacts with each other - can be hard enough in our



type of society, even for the men. Many of them can't get a place in this market and even more of them experience the feeling of not finding a place. This can be the case with men who are alone and shy or afraid, and feel that they lack the courage to make contacts with women other than just prostitutes. They feel rejected by women in "normal" social situations. Fear and shyness can also depend upon them not feeling sufficiently attractive. A man in his 40-ies recounts his attempts to establish contact with women:

I tried to get a hold of women and I have tried ever since I was about 16-17 years of age. First in a circle of friends and later at dances. But in my circle of friends it was a thing of honor not to try with the girls or to sexually take advantage of them. One should protect them instead. Later, at dances, it was like a wall of bricks that came up between me and the girl if I tried to get close. But I don't think that is the only reason. I just couldn't dance, not one step. The girls I tried to get close to were girls that danced and they surely noticed that. One also drank quite a lot, so it wasn't really strange that they didn't accept my invitations.

To constantly be rejected is a threat to self-esteem, which for many men rests upon the ability to conquer women. The woman's willingness to let herself be conquered - her sexual accessibility - becomes a direct measure of his manhood, that is, a "yes" from her means that he's okay, while a "no" means that he experiences himself as being insufficient, in the eyes of the woman.

The same man:

I have not exactly been the ideal. I have always been too fat and that is not the thing to be. One should look in a special way and dress in the latest clothes and think like others. You have to be "with it". Myself, I've been "out" almost all my life.

Another man:

The way I have understood it in most cases, is as if I just didn't do, my looks were just not good enough. The girls often complain about guys looking them over. But I have experienced, many times, how girls look you up and down and then just sneer at you. I think it is because I am short, skinny, and perhaps not aggressive enough.

Both of the men cited here have a low self-confidence. They see their appearance as a considerable hindrance for successfully participating in the usual sex-market games. They have difficulties living up to the expectations and



rules in effect there and their entire appearance and attempts to establish contacts are marked by insecurity.

The threat of being rejected by the woman is closely and apparently felt. For these men, access to sexually accessible women in the sex trade, naturally can be felt as a liberation. However, on good grounds, one can assume that the driving force itself behind a visit to a prostitute is far more complex than a longing for sexual satisfaction. In the long run, the occasional encounters with the prostitute consequently have no chance to fill the emotional vacuum which the lack of normal relations with women can create. One of the men said:

I've cut down my visits to prostitutes. In earlier times, I paid for sex up to 30 times a year. But nowadays I don't get anything out of going to a prostitute, not even sexually. I pay but I get nothing out of it. I simply no longer function this way. On the whole, it's a question if I at all can function sexually any longer. It's precisely as if I don't have any needs on that plane. Maybe it's that I'm repressing the whole thing. I've understood that prostitution is no longer going to be a solution to my problem making contacts.

Men who live under pronounced unisexual relationships during long periods also belong to this category. It can involve prison inmates or sailors, who feel unaccustomed to associating with women under normal circumstances. Furthermore, the combination of social isolation and advanced age for certain men can be felt so heavily that it seems like an almost insurmountable difficulty creating new contacts in our so youth fixated society. It can also involve men who during the greater part of their adult lives have been married or have had a steady relationship with one woman, or who in the autumn of their lives have been left alone. These men can experience considerable problems in filling the vacuum which the wife has left behind and as an alternative can feel reduced to visiting prostitutes as the only opportunity for making human contact.

The physically and mentally handicapped in our society, to a great extent, are hindered from participating on equal terms in the work-experience as well as in taking part in social life. This can bring about special difficulties when it involves establishing contacts between the sexes. This particular group is often used by the spokesmen for sex trade as an argument for the need for prostitution in society. However, experience from both Swedish and inter-



national research show (see for example Gibbens, 1963) that the number of sex buyers with physical or other defects is very low, if not negligible. Unanimous interviews of Swedish prostitutes demonstrate that they consider it to be both repulsive and entirely too troublesome - from a practical point of view - to service handicapped customers. The prostitutes' argument for this deviating position is - not especially surprisingly - that prostitution is a businesslike activity and not social-curative work.

In any event, here we have talked about lonely, fearful, old and shy men, or, in other words, men who experience that they cannot live up to the criteria valid for success on the regular sex-market. The most important criterion in commercial sex is the man's buying power, his ability to pay, and not his sexual or social attractiveness. For many men this is apparently relaxing, like a liberating solution, surmounting the obstacles with a relatively simple economic transaction, even if only an occasional "relief" for deeper problems that are both individual and in the deepest sense, societal.

### III CO-EXISTENCE-RELATED PROBLEMS

I don't like being married. In the beginning it felt painful to have to go out and look for something that I believed I should have been able to do together with my wife at home. But I have contented myself with her being as she is and I try not to make any comparisons between her and the women with whom I have contact in my occasional relations. I only enjoy them; including prostitutes.

The quotation is taken from the Hite-report on men (1982). The words could have just as easily been said by several of the men in our study. The man quoted expresses a usual problem that can arise when a man and a woman try to function in a couple-relationship. Their sexual expectations sometimes are wide apart. It can be that the wife doesn't want to, that she doesn't want to as often as her husband, or doesn't want to try the same things he does. He has "learnt" to look after his own sexuality, above all; the woman's pleasure will automatically follow his sexual acting. If she doesn't enjoy herself, if she's not satisfied, but mostly just "does it" because he invites her to, it can seem to him that she's not interested at all in sex, and that this gives him "the right" to seek other contacts. He can even look at it as doing her a favour.



Now I want you to know that I'm married. Married to a wonderful and fine little person who is very sweet, cuddly and good as can be in every possible way. But she has, according to my understanding, less sexual needs than I have. And I don't want to force a sexual intercourse on her when she doesn't feel like having one. I think that's wrong. And I therefore don't do it. Instead I sneak away, so to say, and find someone who can help me out of this dilemma. And I have no guilty feelings about that, neither towards my family nor towards the prostitute.

The act is here put forward as a simple rational solution to a problem which the man hardly conceives of as a problem, since the solution is so simple. The man doesn't want to consider his visits to a prostitute as the result of a poorly functioning life with his wife, but rather as a necessary consequence of his own strong sexual urges. His wife's possible problems don't affect him directly, and he neither feels complicity nor responsibility. It is therefore not he who is at fault. This phenomenon of attributing deficiencies in the mutual relationship to the woman is presumably a re-occurring masculine way of relating, which safeguards against doubting one's own sexual ability.

Another man sees his wife's "deficiencies" as demands that are difficult to handle:

It is her who chases me every night and wants to have intercourse, and I have to find excuses, one after the other. It is difficult, but she doesn't do a thing to turn me on, she only tells me that she wants to ... she just lays herself down and waits for me to do the rest.

Instead, the man regularly visits prostitutes, that is, women who will listen to his desires and make no demands of their own. Then, the man functions and feels satisfied. But from his description of contacts with prostitutes, it is clear that he is not only looking for a non-demanding sex-partner.

I'm looking for a new face. A face that could be seen at the place where I work. I would be able to introduce her to my parents. That is because I was never able to meet anyone in dancing places, so now I feel that here I have someone that I can introduce to others.



The man is married but experiences the marriage as unsatisfactory, not only sexually. Among the prostitutes he looks for the woman whom he would be able to show off to the people he works with, perhaps first of all to his fellow workers, and who would be able to give him that longed for corroboration of his manhood. Whether or not it's possible in reality is presumably not as important. The important thing is the feeling of her being such a woman. This man is one of the very many who often return to the sex trade milieu, to the street, where the prostitutes line up; not only to buy, but to look, dream and fantasize.

Another man describes another regularly recurring problem in a steady relationship, namely, that sexual life has partially or entirely ceased; in this case, in conjunction with the birth of a child:

It was like being born again, that is, the first intercourse I had with my wife. To both be so sweaty that the sheets were soaked. I had no idea about that and that an intercourse could last a whole night. But in any case, we got our daughter as a part of the bargain. My wife was almost 40 years old when she gave birth. Later all sexual contacts between us declined. All at once. I have no explanation why. It just happened. And that was in connection with my daughter, our daughter, being born.

Prior to his first sexual contact with his wife, the man had experienced sex almost exclusively with prostitutes, which can explain his feeling of "being born again" when he met his bride-to-be. As an alternative to the later non-existent sex-life with his wife, the man had chosen to resume his contacts with prostitutes, but he could not really forget the sexual togetherness he once had with his wife:

I can lie down and fantasize about her. Idiotic dreams that never will come true.

The man talked about the couple's attempt to talk about their problems:

... during our 20 years of marriage we have had a sexual life together for totally four years. If we talk about it, it leads to an argument. She blames and accuses me and can't hold a discussion



about the matter. Always quarrels and never any result from the conversation. But it's clear that one misses the sexual togetherness.

The man's problem consists of the wife "not wanting to". It is on her that the fault lies and it is therefore her feelings that must be altered. He has no sexual problems himself - or so he perceives it - and against this background it's perhaps logical that all attempts to communicate about the problem are doomed to fail.

This situation is characteristic of the lack of symmetry which can exist in sexual contexts between men and women. This deficiency makes up a sexual basis for men's experienced "rational" motives for using prostitutes. Many men probably think along patterns like this: "We don't understand each other. There's no reason in trying any longer. I'd prefer going to a whore". The problems can then be experienced as an expression of the difficulties in communicating between the parties. Presumably, however, they also have other deeper reasons. One such reason can be the confrontation between the man's "sexual fixation" and the woman's "need for tenderness". At the same time neither is this the whole truth. For if one closely reflects upon what many men themselves have to say about the sexual purchase, it is permeated by an obvious contradiction. Many men seek a female sex-object and find it in sexual commerce, but don't think, when it comes down to it, that the sexual encounter with the object is satisfying. What is missing is the female response; the feminine affection that the men can only find in a relationship with a non-prostitute female who nevertheless can simultaneously be perceived as demanding and troublesome, whereupon the men choose to go to a prostitute instead.

#### ACQUIRED BEHAVIOURAL PATTERN OF MEN

This analysis of the motives gives a complex picture of why men go to prostitutes. The complexity is, however, apparent in one important respect. The different motives only make up different expressions for the patriarchally-colored sexuality in our society. The naked sexuality which prostitution implies, and as described in both the men's and women's stories, is a one-sided sexuality with no demands or claims, whether the men desire it to be or not. This one-sidedness, that it deals with him as a man and not an encounter between a man and a woman, is the most extreme and pure expression of the meaning of patriarchal sexuality.



The most pure form of masculine sexuality in sex trade can be seen as a consequence of the socio-sexual learning process, in which boys are converted to men in our society. During this learning process, the woman is transformed into Sex itself.

Or, expressed otherwise: the boy/man develops an impersonal sexuality; impersonal in the sense that, to a large extent, the man can be together with whatever woman he wants to be with. Women are interchangeable. This "generalized" woman is a sexual object and not an individual in the first place. She is - if one desires it - a tool that men use to confirm their masculinity. What she gives is her body, breast, thighs; a craving for sexuality in order to make him potent. In such a perspective, the masculine consumption of pornography and prostitution becomes understandable; in this, the utmost expression of these manly strivings is crystallized.

The origin of this is the sexual corroboration's central meaning for masculine identity in patriarchal societies. On this point men and women differ. In an historical perspective, women's identity has not been coupled to sexuality in the same way, except to be selected as a woman by a man instead. For women to answer to or act out their sexuality has neither been accepted nor recognized, instead it has been despised and counteracted.

To prove one's manhood through sexual conquests is something that is built upon ancient ideas about the man as the always potent one. These images and myths about masculinity and potency in our society have been strengthened by the commercialization of sexuality, as it is expressed in mass-produced pornography and widespread international commercial sex.

#### POWER AND CONTROL

If we look at traditional male-role sexuality from another perspective, the entire masculine learning process contributes to a defense against a true encounter with a woman; an encounter with intimacy and closeness. The man's traditional role fills two functions in any contact with the opposite sex: a demonstration of power - the mark of superiority - and the maintenance of control. The functions are closely intertwined with each other.

In their sexual upbringing, boys learn early on to dominate and control sexual relations with the opposite sex. To not have control is the same as "dropping



your guard", and leaving room for feelings of dependency and weakness; feelings which can transform advantage to disadvantage. Control of emotions, strength and unambiguity are fundamental components in the education which our society supplies to men. A consequence of this is that in the deepest sense the individual man's human longing for closeness to a woman is many times lost in the prospect of being responded to or recognized. And, consequently, this dream of closeness can never be realized in sexual commerce. The phenomenon's commodity-like and market-like character sets decisive limits in that respect. Commercial sex is drained of mutual emotions because the buying contract neither includes personal nor emotional involvement from the seller, the prostitute.

Nonetheless, it seems that at least certain customers seek emotional responses from a prostitute. Prostitutes have recounted a longing for closeness, tenderness and solidarity in certain consumers which at times take on a very strong expression. Some of the women interviewed in our studies pointed out the men's vulnerability. They had seen how inadequate feelings of identity, also sexual ones, sought to be compensated for through external things or conditions like money, status objects, position in society. Peeled of these outer societal "clothing", the man was naked and vulnerable in relation to a woman. In interviews with the men, this longing and vulnerability sometimes appears, above all, in the so-called regular consumers, the men who routinely go back to prostitutes. These men expect, to different degrees, that the prostitute will respond to their longings. At the same time, they seem to be aware that her possible response will be faked, but they can or will of course not fully accept and understand that what happens is happening in loneliness and not in twosomeness. Loneliness for the man becomes easier to bear if the woman supplies corroboration - even if pretended - that he has some value as a man. In this sense, one can thus maintain that the prostitute exercises a certain amount of power over the consumer. For, his manhood lies in her hands which makes him vulnerable in his contact with her.

Perhaps in this context, one can also interpret certain men's wish for sexual submission in commercial sex as an expression of longing to be able to give in to certain "feminine" qualities within himself, that is, a longing for being able to leave room for feelings of weakness, victimization and dependency. But because it happens in sexual commerce, "the risks" for the man are strongly reduced. He still controls the situation by virtue of the power which his money



gives him. The woman is rendered harmless in her role as the commodity/object, and the man avoids the threatening closeness to himself and to the woman.

All this means that, that which for the man stands out as an insisting sexual urge, although he doesn't talk about it in such terms, really deals with needs and emotions on an entirely different level. This relation is not obvious to most sex buyers, especially not for those who constantly return. For if it were obvious, many, perhaps most of them, would cease paying for sex.

#### MALE INABILITY

The duty of the prostitute is to "make" the man potent, to get him to feel like a man. In his inner world of illusions, the man simply transfers his possibility to become potent over to her. This is one of the keys to his vulnerability, but also to his potential dangerousness. That he transfers the opportunity to become potent on to the prostitute, also means that he projects his possible impotence on her. In the prostitution study interviews a consciousness was intimated, in various degrees, about how a prostitute should act if the man has problems with impotence. It involves taking an understanding and supportive position; a position that won't offend the man or arouse his aggressiveness. She has to calm him down. A man who can't get an erection can become a dangerous man. The same thing can affect a man who gets an erection, but no ejaculation. The prostitute thus supports the man's inadequate self-feeling with an insight that most women have. Most often this is done in order to quickly be available for the next customer; sometimes with genuine sympathy for the customers's problem. But, as said, here also lies the power of the woman. She has the opportunity to reject the man and thereby shut him out not only from the sexual act, but also in a deeper sense, from experiencing himself as potent and feeling alive. It is she, so to speak, who rules over life and death. That's a dangerous position of power. The man/buyer can't always realize or admit that the impotence primarily has to do with himself. In such cases, there is a close connection between sexual inadequacy and violence. The man can seek revenge because she "refuses" him the right to potency. The mental and physical violence which sometimes comes to the surface in sexual trade clearly demonstrates that.



## VIOLENCE IN SEXUAL COMMERCE

In principle, one can talk about two kinds of violent manifestations in sexual commerce. On one hand, the violent elements that are included in the consumer's sexual desires, e g, wanting to be beaten or to beat, that is, the violence that is a part of the business transaction itself; on the other hand, the violent cruelties which lie outside the business transaction and deal with men assaulting, raping, and murdering prostitutes. Sometimes the boundaries between the two violent elements drift from one side to the other. The paid-for violence can slowly or on a moment's notice be transformed to senseless violence which culminates in felonious assault, homicide or murder.

Violence is an everyday occurrence in the commercial sex milieu, but is perhaps most pronounced and known in conjunction with street prostitution. The prostitutes "learn" to live with the constant threat of violence and manage to build in more or less unconscious defence strategies in their way of relating to the consumers; it can be not going home with the men, not servicing someone who is under the influence of drugs, not going with someone who "looks strange", seeing to it that no weapons are within reach, etc.

Another strategy is to banalize the violence. At the interview sessions, the women often mentioned the violence in passing - "That's really nothing to talk about". And whenever they spoke about it, it was as if they were talking about something very ordinary. The abnormal became in a way normal. The thinking was, that since this is something that happens to all of them, there is nothing remarkable about it. Banalizing is a way to deny the importance of that which happens to one's own life. If one lives in a hard reality and doesn't see any possibilities of changing it, denial becomes part of a survival strategy.

In Sweden, there aren't any data compiled which have bearing upon violence against prostitutes with the exception of the most felonious cases, that is, when it involves murder. In the nationwide study, accounts are given of numerical data regarding murders committed on prostitutes during 1969--1979, a ten-year period. A total of ten prostitutes in the entire country were murdered during that period.

In the study's in-depth qualitative analysis of the motives behind violent deeds, the violence's symbolic meaning was underscored. To master an unknown prostitute with violence becomes a symbolic act, confirming masculine power and



control over the woman. The prostitute can stand as a symbol for The Woman. This involves emotions which have their roots in experiences that the man has had in his life, but which do not concern the specific woman he has murdered. The act has nothing to do with the prostitute as a human being, except that she is a woman upon whom he came to direct his hate and contempt; a hate that is coupled to the woman as a sexual being, to sexuality between man and woman. The impersonal woman - the woman without face but with genitalia.

As Erich Fromm has pointed out, sadism need not be coupled to sexuality. But whenever it is, it is primarily not sexuality in itself, but the coupling to breaking someone's will, to put someone in her place, establishing a master-slave relationship, where one party - at least on the surface - totally controls the situation; an advantage obtained by force and confirmed in the sexual act. It deals with punishing someone else for that which is found within oneself as a human being. Or, in other words, it deals with a imaginary inner change of impotence to an experience of omnipotence.<sup>9</sup>

Sexuality as a power game, like a sexual relationship between a master and a slave, is something which "normal" people don't really acknowledge easily. Our society is, however, full of images which depict the woman as an object for men's lust. The relation subject-object as a basic structure, as it comes into expression in the traditional sex game between men and women in our society, can be seen as a "more innocent" form of the pattern of oppression which is sometimes expressed in commercial sex. The sexual sadism in commercial sex is, in other words, carried by the same fundamental structure as that deciding the meanings in so-called normal relations between men and women in society. Men's violent actions against prostitutes can, therefore, not simply be brushed aside as isolated cases of "deviant behaviour". On the level of social significance, these actions have their roots in traditional gender-role patterns that characterize our society, that is, the pattern that makes up the prerequisite for the existence of sex trade.



## THE CONSEQUENCES OF SEXUAL COMMERCE

### **The Woman**

For the woman, the consequences of prostitution vary and are connected to several factors. To them belong the woman's whole situation in life; at what age she entered prostitution, how long she's been a prostitute and under what circumstances. Generally viewed, the prostitute is almost always more or less a victim of men's contempt of women.

Many, but not all, are seriously influenced in their relations with men outside the sex trade. The screening - seeing the man as a "customer" - can become a way of relating to men which the woman carries to most relationships with men. Feelings of contempt and distancing oneself from most men, as well as from her own body and sexuality, can make it impossible or hard to function in other relations. Many women talk about their "dirtiness" and then, not in physical but in mental terms.

Being active as a prostitute, in many cases, can be linked with different forms of cruelty which can lead to more or less serious physical or mental damage. If the woman has a relationship with a pimp, the chances are great that she'll be subjected to mental and physical violence.

Drug and alcohol abuse are constant elements in the sex trade. The connection between drug abuse and prostitution is obvious. The most frequently recurring pattern is that abuse-dependency precedes the step into sex trade. Drug-trafficking, thievery and prostitution belong to the most usual ways abusers make money. Those who "chose" prostitution often stay more or less continually in the sex trade milieu on the street. Long "working hours", late nights, many customers, poor compensation per completed intercourse, the drug-addicted prostitute, without a doubt, belongs to the bottom stratum of the sex business. They also belong to the group which exposes itself to the greatest risk in encounters with customers: rape, assault, venereal diseases. Why venereal diseases?

It is known that most prostitutes insist on the consumer using protection - condoms - during intercourse. This normally also goes for the addicted prostitute. Nevertheless, it is so that the addicted prostitute not so seldom finds herself desperately needing money. In such situations, it can happen that the issue of the customer wearing a condom becomes negotiable. In other words, it



happens that certain customers exploit the prostitute's difficult predicament, that with promises of a higher compensation or as a condition for the transaction to take place at all, they buy themselves a condom-free intercourse. Also in the case of the most principled prostitute this can happen so long as the compensation is "the right sum". It is therefore probably so, that most prostitutes sometime during their careers allowed themselves to be persuaded to have intercourse without a condom. It is not rare for customers who are under the influence of alcohol to "persuade" prostitutes to agree to this, by virtue of the power of money.

When it involves sexual trade as a sphere of infection for AIDS, the picture up to now still appears entirely different depending upon if we look at Sweden or at other countries inside or outside Europe. The known cases of HIV-infection among prostitutes active in Sweden has thus far limited itself to people who are IV-drug users. In the US, France, Greece, Italy and West Germany, the infection has, on the contrary, begun to spread among non-addicted prostitutes. In certain West African countries, research points out that between 60-90 % of prostitutes carry the virus (Kenya, for example). The infection is most widespread among street prostitutes.

Beyond running the risk of being infected by a fatal disease, living as a prostitute has consequences for the woman - especially in the long run. Prostitution can gradually lead to loneliness, social isolation and rejection, since relations to a possible family, relatives or friends have changed. Often, the woman tries to keep her prostitution activities secretive. If she has children, they become the objects of different kinds of stress. The longer she works, the more difficult it becomes to resume a normal lifestyle. She has gaps in her education and most often lacks professional experience and merits. In many cases, she feels insecure, so to speak, about how the society normally functions and she lacks a social network that can support her.

During her period of prostitution, her economic independence is illusory. In practice, she is wholly dependent upon men: customers, pimps, and other profiteers. The lack of meaningful relationships and experiences of emptiness are compensated by a pronounced "consumeristic" lifestyle. The money she earns often quickly disappears. A woman who wants to cease being a prostitute often has economic problems despite (in some cases) her, relatively speaking, considerable income.



### The Man

For a number of men, maybe most, the sex trade has no further effects. That concerns the men who some single time in their lives have been a customer. The motive for this can vary from being curious, to testing "manhood", to a personal crisis. The one-time buyer corroborates in a large extent a patriarchal view of sexuality and adds, in many cases, to his contempt for women. But that need not always be so, exceptions do exist.

For the frequent customer, sex trade experiences have far greater significance. The returning buyers are various "types" of men. The lonely man runs a big risk of remaining lonely. The prostitution purchase won't solve his problems. Men can be strongly directed towards buying sex, almost fixated on commercial sex, as the "solution" to their sexual and other problems concerning relationships with women. But the solution is not a genuine one, instead it contributes to further narrowing the man's views and visions. The fear of establishing other, normal, contacts with the opposite sex increases and is made more difficult. The man castrates himself and isn't able to express his needs in front of another human being. His view of women becomes contemptful and beneath the surface the antagonism and misogyny grows.

The customer who, on the other hand, has steady relationships, fortifies his double morality. The prostitute is the sexual object that can be consumed without further obligations. Commercial intercourse shall here substantiate masculine identity, which constantly must be corroborated in newly bought relations. The fixation on purchased and commercialized sexuality, conceals the views of both one's own needs and the needs of others, especially women's. Traditional masculinity is strengthened, everything can be bought, money is power, existence is divided into compartments, sexuality is limited to being the reduction of tension.

In addition, there is the great risk that experiences in the sex trade in a very direct way affects the woman with whom the man has a steady relationship. For without doubt, men's sexual purchases must be considered as especially risky from an infectious point of view concerning AIDS. Between 25-30 % of street prostitutes in Sweden use narcotics or alcohol. All abusers must be considered as potential infection-bearers. It is sometimes maintained that it's



easy for a buyer to avoid an abuser. "It shows on the outside", it is said. Sometimes this is true, but far from always.

Intercourse with prostitutes abroad is another risky behaviour. Indeed, we don't know much about Swedish customers' behaviour abroad. Neither do we know how "the condom culture" looks in different international sex trade milieux. From Africa and South East Asia, however, we know that the usage of condoms for different reasons is very irregular. In a newspaper interview, a Kenyan prostitute, for example, said: "If a European man doesn't want to use a condom, it's okay".<sup>10</sup> We also know that the so far known few Swedish cases of HIV-infection originating from sex trade contacts, involve men who have had such contacts abroad.



## CONCLUSION

Sexual commerce not only has consequences for the people directly involved but also for the whole society. It contributes to upholding a view of women where they are reduced to sexual objects that can be bought for money. This has negative consequences for women's chances in developing a recognized sexuality. The more extensive sex trade, the more confirmation of the male society's restricted view of the relationship between the sexes and sexuality.

Sex trade and the sex industry in its different forms of expression - pornography, sex-clubs, sex-trips, etc - can therefore be considered as the unequal patriarchal sexual system's blind alley. From these, no development in the direction towards a mutual sexuality is possible. Sex trade (and the sex industry) are, in other words, the counterpole to an equal, love relationship. It exposes and shows in a concentrated way traditional gender role's deeper structure, where the elements of inequality, double morality, sexual antagonism and anxiety-driven sexuality are prominent.

One conclusion that can be drawn from all of this is that sex trade is a societal phenomenon which is unacceptable. In other words, it should be counteracted, and society's measures should start from that. Although today or in the near future it isn't possible to eradicate sex trade through national or other measures, experience from Scandinavian countries - in the first hand, Sweden and Norway - demonstrate that the phenomenon as such is not unchangeable. There is a de facto line of relations that can influence its scope and different forms of expression. The argument that sex trade and prostitution have always existed and are always going to exist is, therefore, not valid as a reason for not taking any measures. The Swedish example can illustrate this.

The Swedish sex trade increased markedly in scope during the latter part of the sixties and the first part of the seventies, if one measures this increase in terms of the number of active prostitutes. The increase culminated in the mid-seventies. During the second half of the seventies, an obvious decrease in the number of prostitutes occurred, however. The national commission on prostitution which finished its work in 1981, stated that from the mid-seventies onwards street prostitution had decreased by 40 %, bordello prostitution by 60 %, and sex-club prostitution by 80 %. The explanation for this decrease, according to the commission, lay in the public attention which had been given to the question of sex trade at the end of the seventies. Different conditions



played a role in this and contributed to turning the trend. (1) During the 1970's, the general ideological discussion about sexuality and gender roles had deepened. Of importance here, were foremost questions about men's and women's roles which arose and were carried by the growing women's movement in- and outside established political parties. (2) Different authorities sharpened their positions towards sexual commerce. The measure taken by the police was of great importance, especially in the big cities. Strong police action was taken against sex-clubs as well as bordellos. In 1975, there were 91 sex-clubs in the country. In 1981 the figure was down to 20. Most of the club owners were sued for and convicted of procuring. Likewise, there was a growing awareness about the serious type of crime that is connected to pimping. Furthermore, the police gave sharper attention to apartment houseowners who more or less systematically and widely rented bordello premises to the prostitutes. (3) Of special importance, were the social projects which were set up in the big cities and which had the task of helping prostitutes to get out of the sex trade. The first project began in 1977 in Malmö. From 1977--1981, the number of prostitutes in the city diminished from 230 to 60, mainly due to the effects of the project's social-curative input. At the end of the 1970's, similar projects were set up in Stockholm, Gothenburg, Norrköping and in Oslo (Norway). For different reasons, the decrease in sex trade in these cities was not as obvious as in Malmö. However, one can say that the social curative input in these places hindered a continuous, uncontrolled increase of the phenomenon.

The conclusion that can be drawn from this is that commercial sex can be counteracted if not eradicated. In the work combatting the sex trade, this mainly involves political willingness and initiative power, and also finding appropriate and effective methods to work against and to restrict the market. At the same time, however, it is clear, as the analysis in this paper shows, that it isn't enough to just direct attention to the different parties acting in the market. If the purpose is to bring about long-run change, it involves influencing the very basis, the conditions, of sex trade. Earlier we stated that the phenomenon has deep roots, both historically and currently. It has structural causes, that is, it is a consequence of how an entire society - a sexually unequal society - has been and is organized. The parties in the sex trade are bearers of the more general gender role patterns of the society, patterns which are imprinted by male dominance and unfulfilled sexuality in both sexes. An important task, among many others, in long term alteration work, is to influence and change the social learning process in which boys "are made"



men and girls women in society. In concrete terms, this means that societal education work in gender-role and sexual matters must be intensified and deepened. Finally, it deals with influencing and changing the social and cultural structures which form the sexual superordinate and subordinate relations that make up the basis for sexual commerce.



## Footnotes

1 The characteristic of Scandinavian sexual commerce, above all during the 1970's, was the obvious feature of calculating pimps, especially in the big cities. During this period as well, pimping took on a strong international imprint. The involvement of foreigners acting as pimps in Scandinavia was very high among those suspected, and in certain cases convicted, of pimping. My own research from 1981 (Promoters and Profiteers of Sexual Commerce) which deals with the conditions in Malmö, the third biggest city in Sweden located in the South, shows that 40 different nationalities were represented among the 250 men suspected of pimping in Malmö (and in certain cases convicted of pimping) during that particular period. The conditions in the other two big cities, Gothenburg and Stockholm, were similar. This was something new for Sweden and Scandinavia. Earlier this scene had been dominated by men of domestic origin. It previously had involved unemployed, alcoholic and criminally inclined men who lived together with - and off - prostitutes, who had drug and alcohol abuse problems of their own. During the 1970's, however, a re-structuring of the sex trade occurred, which among other things involved an increasing internationalization of the business.

2 de Beauvoir, Simone: The Second Sex, Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1973, p 216.

3 Barry, Kathleen: Annotated Bibliography - On the Social and Cultural Causes of Prostitution in the United States and the United Kingdom. A paper presented at The International Meeting of Experts on the Social and Cultural Causes of Prostitution and Strategies for the Struggle against Procuring and Sexual Exploitation of Women, Madrid 1985 (UNESCO - SHS-85/CONF 608/5).

4 Månsson, Sven-Axel and Linders, Ann-Ulla: Sexuality without a Face. Stockholm: Carlssons, 1984.

5 See, for example, Månsson, Sven-Axel: Promoters and Profiteers of Sex Trade. Karlshamn: Doxa, 1984, 93-101 pp.

6 Ibid p 93.

7 Winick, Charles: "Prostitutes' Clients' Perception of the Prostitute and of Themselves". International Journal of Soc Psychiatry 8 (4) 1962.



**8** Stein, Martha: Lovers, Friends, Slaves ... New York: Berkeley Pub. Company and P.T. Putnam & Sons, 1974.

**9** Fromm, Erich: The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston Ltd, 1973.

**10** From a series of articles in Sydsvenska Dagbladet (The South Swedish Daily Newspaper). The quotation is taken from the article "Prostitutes Live Dangerously", 1987-02-10.



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Larsson, Stig: SEX TRADE - On the Prostitute's Conditions. Stockholm: Skeab, 1983, 226 pp. (One of the research reports from the prostitution project in Malmö. With a starting point from more than 200 women, it describes the sex trade, above all, from the prostitute's own perspective. It is a book about the prostitute's life circumstances and the motivating forces and circumstances which make them take the step into the sex trade.)

Månsson, Sven-Axel: PROMOTERS AND PROFITEERS OF SEXUAL COMMERCE - On the pimp/prostitute relationship. Lund: Doxa, 1981, 317 pp. (Another one of the research reports from the prostitution project in Malmö. The book is primarily a social psychological analysis of the relationship between the prostitute and her pimp; it also deals with other groups of promoters and profiteers who manage and control the sex trade market.)



Månsson, Sven-Axel and Larsson, Stig: Money off the Books - a study of clubs' and business' social meaning and structure. Malmö: Malmö Social Services Administration, 1976, 191 pp. (The work that began the wave of sex trade research which would come about in Sweden and in the rest of Scandinavia during the time period 1976--1987. The book deals foremost with more or less the organized criminality which comes from and is intimately coupled with restaurant-life in a Swedish big city, Malmö. One of the chapters in the book deals especially with sex trade in the city's sex-clubs, brothels and streets.)

Månsson, Sven-Axel and Linders, Ann-Ulla: SEXUALITY WITHOUT A FACE - The Sex Buyers. Stockholm: Carlssons, 1984, 179 pp. (Another research report which builds upon experiences from the prostitution project in Malmö. The book mainly deals with men's motives for buying sex.)



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