

**A Critical Analysis of Men's Constructions of Paying for Sex:
Doing Gender, Doing Race in the Interview Context**

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ABSTRACT

Men from all walks of life pay for sex in various contexts every day, yet we know very little about the ways in which men make meaning of their paid sexual encounters, particularly in South Africa, where sex work is both illegal and highly stigmatised. South Africa's apartheid and colonial past, as well as contemporary concerns about HIV/AIDS, further complicates and impacts on the social meanings of sex work. This study explores the ways in which men make meaning of paying for sex, and how they negotiate their client identities in relation to their various intersecting social identities, such as their gender, sexuality, race, and class. In-depth interviews were conducted with 43 men who identified as clients of sex workers, through face-to-face, Skype video call or instant messenger interviews. This study is designed to contribute methodologically to knowledge on cross-gender interviews. It employs a critical and intersectional form of reflexivity to the analysis of its particular interview-participant dynamic, where a woman researcher interviewed men about their sexualities. I argue that men's motivations for participating in these interviews—such as gaining a sense of libidinal excitement or thrill, the desire to confess their engagement in a sexual taboo, the assumption that the interview encounter was transactional, to engage in a power struggle, and the desire to have their emotional needs met—also provided insights into both what motivates men to pay for sex and how they relate to sex workers. The study highlights the importance of employing an intersectional approach to understanding men's constructions of paying for sex. It argues that, in order to manage the stigma that is associated with paying for sex, men drew on dominant racist discourses, tropes stemming from the colonial era, about the black body as dirty and diseased and the white body as respectable and clean, to negotiate desirable client identities. Moreover, it argues that men valued the client-sex worker encounter as a “safe space” where sex workers, whom they constructed as their experienced teachers, would teach them the sexual skills that they (felt they) needed to better approximate idealised versions of masculinity outside of the paid encounter. However, for some men, paid sex was not only a place where dominant discourses of gender and sexuality were reproduced; it was also a safe space where they could secretly explore and experiment with their sexuality, highlighting how paid sexual encounters might offer opportunities for resisting and queering the strict boundaries of normative heterosexuality. Finally, based on the overall findings of this study, I put forward suggestions for legislative approaches to sex work that respond specifically to the South African context and address the stigma attached to sex work.

DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy to the Department of Psychology at the University of Cape Town, Cape Town. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other University.

Signature: Date:

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CHAPTER 1: SETTING THE SCENE, AN INTRODUCTION TO SEX WORK IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

It is quite common to talk glibly of prostitution as the world's oldest profession, existing universally across time and place (Alexander, 1987b). Such talk obscures the differences in the social and cultural context – differences in economic organization, normative sexual practices, and the relationship between sexual practices and identity, between economic practices and identity, and so on – that shape the significance and structure of prostitution within any particular historical space. (Zatz, 1997, p. 278)

Men who pay for sex in South Africa do so in the context of a violent and unequal society. South Africa's history of colonisation and apartheid has produced a context where social relations are shaped by both violence and racial and gendered inequalities (Vetten & Ratele, 2013). South Africa has one of the highest rates of both gender-based violence and homicide in the world (George & Finberg, 2001; UNFPA, 2014; Wechsberg, Luseno, & Lam, 2005). The South African Police Service (2017) reported 19,016 murders (34.1 per 100,000 people) and 49,660 sexual offenses¹ for the year 2016/17. Sex work in South Africa, particularly the client-sex worker power relationship, is complicated by high levels of unemployment, crippling poverty, and an HIV/AIDS epidemic (South African Law Reform Commission, 2017). Because sex work has been associated with both the spread of sexually transmitted disease and moral degeneration since the colonial era, those involved in sex work remain stigmatised to varying degrees throughout the world (Levine, 2003; Sanders, 2017; Weitzer, 2017). This is particularly true in South Africa, where legal and academic discourses continue to construct sex workers as responsible for the spread HIV/AIDS, thereby exacerbating public panic and disgust in relation to sex work. The stigmatisation of women who sell sex in South Africa is also intersected with, and exacerbated by, racist and colonialist constructions of the racialised and sexualised Other (Mgbako, 2016).

¹ Actual incidences of sexual violence are always much higher than recorded rates due to under-reporting

Largely due to the apartheid legacy, South Africa remains one of the most economically unequal societies in the world, spatially segregated along the lines of race and class. Although the structure of South African society has seen some change since the abolition of apartheid and the establishment of democracy in 1994, the white minority in South Africa, particularly white men, still primarily occupy the most privileged class positions in society. Conversely, the black majority, particularly black women, continue to be over-represented among the lower working classes, and continue to face multiple intersecting oppressions. It is within this complex context that men in South Africa pay for sex.

1.1 Sex Work: Definitions, Discourses, and Debates

I define sex work according to Zatz's (1997, p. 279) definition, as "attending to the sexual desires of a particular individual (or individuals) with bodily acts in exchange for payment of money".² The focus of this study is on men who have identified themselves as clients of woman sex workers. Across the world the majority of sex workers are cisgender women and their clients are most often cisgender men (Amnesty International, 2016). However, it is important to be aware of how our work might reproduce discourses that construct women as the only imaginable sellers of these sexual services, and men as the only patrons. The client-sex worker configuration could and does consist of all sorts of combinations of bodies that challenge these heteronormative male-female binaries.

The definition of sex work, along with its moral and legal status, remains contested, and is an issue around which feminists are vehemently divided (Sloan & Wahab, 2000; Zatz, 1997). Even the language feminists use to talk about selling sex is contested, for instance, radical feminists use the term "prostitution" and define it as exploitation, while liberal

² I would like to make a distinction between sex work as it is defined here, which is the subject of this study, and sex trafficking, as the two should not be conflated (Mgbako, 2016). In sex work, sexual services are negotiated between the buyer and the seller, who are deemed consenting adults, whereas sex trafficking is explicitly non-consensual. I do, however, acknowledge that in reality such distinctions between consent and non-consent are not always as clear-cut.

feminists tend to use the term “sex work” to define selling sex as legitimate work (Outshoorn, 2005).³ The exploitation discourse employed by radical feminists assumes that, by its very nature, sex work both stems from and reproduces harmful patriarchal gender relations where women are constructed as men’s sexual servants and where men are constructed as having a right to access and dominate women’s bodies (Jeffreys, 2009; Shrage, 1989; Sullivan, 1995; Zatz, 1997). Within this discourse, the sex worker, who is always understood as entering sex work out of constraint, is constructed as the passive victim, while the client is constructed as the exploiter and the perpetrator of violence (Dalla, 2000; Jeffreys, 2009; Miller, 2002; Outshoorn, 2005).

Marxist feminists also define sex work as exploitation. They understand this exploitation to be rooted in capitalism, a social system where certain people are forced to perform wage labour in order to survive, and are dehumanised and alienated as a result (Sloan & Wahab, 2000). Marxist feminists equate commodified sexuality with labour, arguing that both sex workers and workers are exploited within capitalism because both become commodified objects, their value as people reduced to the market price (Sloan & Wahab, 2000).

Conversely, the sex-as-work discourse taken up by liberal feminists constructs sex work as a legitimate form of work and a vocational choice. Liberal feminists argue that within a patriarchal society men enjoy an assumed sex right to women’s bodies for no payment at all. Therefore, when a woman chooses to sell sex on her terms she is exercising the right to self-determination and agency over her own body and sexuality (Niemi, 2010; Sullivan, 1995).

Contrary to these essentialist approaches, third wave feminists problematize the victim-agent dichotomy and call for an interpretation that acknowledges sex work as a complicated matter and seeks to understand the intersections of choice and constraint within the lives of

³ The language available to us to talk about paying for sex is by no means neutral, but rather is tied up in moral, legal, and political debates. For the purpose of this thesis I use the term “sex work” rather than “prostitute”. However, I would argue that neither of these terms, which are associated with positions that tend to essentialise the nature of sex work, could fully capture all the dynamics and power relations at play in the client-sex worker relationship in the many varying contexts within which it may exist.

women who sell sex (Brewis & Linstead, 2000; Weatherall & Priestley, 2001). This more nuanced approach to sex work, with which the aims of this project are aligned, is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

1.2 Legislative Approaches to Sex Work in South Africa

With each discourse on the definition and nature of sex work comes a corresponding position on how sex work should be legislated within a given society. Those who understand sex work as exploitation generally advocate legislation that is aimed at the abolition of sex work, while those informed by a sex-as-work approach argue for legislation that acknowledges sex work as legitimate work and protects the rights of sex workers (Niemi, 2010). These legislative approaches to sex work continue to be an issue of controversy and debate across the world. South Africa, which follows a model of total criminalisation, is no exception. *The Sexual Offences Act 23* of 1957 criminalised only the selling of sex, and not the purchasing of sexual services in South Africa. However, the *2007 Sexual Offences and Related Matters Amendment Act 32*, now criminalises all persons (buyer, seller, and third parties) engaged in sex work (Gardner, 2009).

The question of the legalisation of sex work has been hotly debated in South Africa in public, legislative, and academic spheres over the past decade. The four main legal frameworks around which these debates are framed are *criminalisation*, *partial criminalisation*, *legalisation*, and *decriminalisation*. These debates are of direct relevance to the lived experiences of those involved in the sex work industry because legislative policies have a deep impact on how a social issue or practice is either normalised or stigmatised within a given society (Sanders, 2017; Weitzer, 2017). During the preparations for the FIFA Soccer World Cup, held in South Africa in 2010, the legalisation debate attracted a great deal of public attention (R. Bird & Donaldson, 2009; Halland, 2010). Jackie Selebi, the South

African Chief of Police at the time, advised the National Assembly's Safety and Security Committee to implement a special temporary concession to legalise sex work during the tournament, when there would be an influx of tourists, arguing that it would allow for better control of the industry (R. Bird & Donaldson, 2009; Halland, 2010). However, because sex work is still so stigmatised within South African society, the suggestion was met with resistance, with the public voicing concerns that legalising sex work would not only encourage the growth of the sex work industry, but also compromise the moral fabric of the country and threaten "the family unit" (R. Bird & Donaldson, 2009; Gardner, 2009; Halland, 2010). Consequently, no temporary concession was made.

Lobbying and advocacy for legal reform around sex work and its related activities in South Africa has largely been led by two non-profit organisations that provide support services for sex workers, SWEAT (Sex Worker Education and Advocacy Taskforce) and Embrace Dignity. SWEAT and Sisonke (SWEAT'S affiliated national sex-worker led movement) are informed by a sex-as-work approach. SWEAT argues that the prevailing criminalisation of sex work maintains the marginalisation and stigmatisation of sex workers, stripping them of any labour rights. SWEAT's vision is to achieve full decriminalisation of sex work in South Africa in the same way that it has been achieved in countries like New Zealand, where the *Prostitution Reform Act* was passed in 2003.⁴ Within a full decriminalisation framework sex work is treated like any other form of work, and sex workers are afforded the same rights as other workers.

The legalisation of sex work, which is the legislative approach that has been adopted in Germany and the Netherlands, creates a system where sex work is legal but heavily controlled by the state. Within this framework, sex workers are subject to specific and strict laws and regulations as determined by the state (Armstrong, 2017). SWEAT argues that sex

⁴ See Armstrong (2017) for an in-depth discussion on the impact of this legislative change in New Zealand.

workers, rather than the state, should make decisions with regards to their own bodies. They suggest that full decriminalisation, rather than legalisation, would give women more autonomy, better legal protection, and reduce the stigma attached to sex work (SWEAT, 2017).

Conversely, Embrace Dignity is informed by a radical feminist approach. They advocate law reform that recognises sex work as an exploitation of, and form of violence against, women, and they work towards the abolition of sex work (Embrace Dignity, 2017). Embrace Dignity advocate for the *Nordic Model* or the *Swedish Model* (see Ekberg, 2004), a form of partial criminalisation. This model criminalises the buying of sex, but not the selling. This model, adopted by the Swedish government in 1999 (and later by France, Iceland, Northern Ireland, and Norway), is based on the premise that criminalising the buyer but not the seller might reduce the demand for sex work without criminalising those who sell sex.

In May 2017 the South African Law Reform Commission published their much-awaited recommendations for law reform in the *Report on Sexual Offences: Adult Prostitution*, a report that the Commission had been working on for almost a decade (South African Law Reform Commission, 2017). The aim of this report is to review the current legislative framework and to identify alternative policies and legislation for sex work in South Africa. Despite strong recommendations by organisational bodies such as The Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) (see Commission for Gender Equality, 2013), Sonke Gender Justice, SWEAT, and POWA (People Opposed To Woman Abuse) that sex work in South Africa be decriminalised, and despite Amnesty International (2016) releasing their policy endorsing the decriminalisation of sex work as a means of decreasing victimisation and marginalisation of sex workers internationally, the South African Law Reform Commission's report identifies full criminalisation of sex work as their preferred model for South Africa.

The report recommends that the current legal framework, as per the *Sexual Offences Amendment Act* (2007), remain the same but with the introduction of a “diversion” option. Those found guilty of selling sex should, upon “admittance of guilt and showing remorse”, be given the opportunity to enter a “diversion programme” that, if completed, would allow them to avoid jail time, fines, and a criminal record (South African Law Reform Commission, 2017, p. 222). According to the report, these diversion programmes could require sex workers to remain at residential centres for a period of time and include compulsory community service, attendance of life-skills courses, “responsibility training”, rehabilitation programmes, and “intensive therapy” (South African Law Reform Commission, 2017, p. 228).

The commission employs an exploitation discourse to motivate their recommendations.

An excerpt of the report reads:

The Commission is of the view that exploitation, particularly of women in prostitution, seems inherent in prostitution and depends on the external factors of gender violence, inequality and poverty and is not caused by the legislative framework in which it finds itself. (South African Law Reform Commission, 2017, p. ix)

Here the Commission explicitly dismisses the role that the law plays in constructing the context that constrains and produces the experiences of sex workers as well as their clients (Zatz, 1997). The report dismisses the ways in which criminalisation can directly influence people’s attitudes towards sex work, serving to stigmatise and socially ostracise those involved in the sex work industry. There is no acknowledgement of how constructing sex workers as being potentially in need of rehabilitation or “intensive therapy” may further pathologise and stigmatise them. Even though the report repeatedly reiterates how poor black women who enter sex work are amongst the most vulnerable in our society, it fails to acknowledge how this stigma may intersect with other forms of oppression to render these women even more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. The Commission maintains its position that a legislative framework cannot be responsible for causing violence or exploitation against sex workers, despite the fact that the report itself acknowledges, as

previous South African research (Gould & Fick, 2008; Hakala & Keller, 2011; Halland, 2010; Huysamen, 2011; Wojcicki & Malala, 2001) confirms, that police officers are among the key perpetrators of violence and abuse against street-based sex workers in South Africa.

The Commission, their understanding of sex work clearly laden with discourses linking sex work to moral decay, explicitly denounces sex work as a legitimate form of work. The report states that “prostitution does not fit comfortably into the international definition of ‘decent work’” and argues that sex work should not be considered a reasonable means of securing a living in South Africa (South African Law Reform Commission, 2017, p. xvii). The report further argues that the legalisation of sex work is likely to result in the normalisation of sex work, which will, they suggest, increase demand locally and also “erode” the country’s reputation or “brand value” by positioning it as a sex tourist destination (South African Law Reform Commission, 2017, p. xxvi).

In a manner similar to current South African legislation (which is informed by radical discourses of exploitation and abuse), state regulation of prostitution has historically denied it the status of work and suppressed sex workers’ efforts to articulate their practices as such (Zatz, 1997). In her archival case study of British colonial policies around prostitution and venereal disease before 1918, Levine argues that during the nineteenth century the prostitute was always constructed as a vagrant or non-worker, as someone who refused to earn an “honest” living (2003, p. 185). She argues that the construction of prostitution as work threatened Victorian ideals of the domesticated woman as operating for and within the private domain of the home in a society where work and earning money was deemed strictly the domain of the man. Constructing selling sex as illegitimate and as non-work served to maintain these gendered orders. It could be argued, as McClintock (1992, p. 73) does, that this resistance towards calling selling sex “work” reflects “deeply felt anxieties about women trespassing the dangerous boundaries between public and private”. Moreover, Levine (2003)

argues that race was inseparable from state regulation of sex work in colonial contexts, as stigmatised notions of sex workers and black bodies were merged into one category, serving to denigrate and control black colonial subjects. How sex work is controlled within a given context, Levine (2003) argues, tells us something about how race and gender is controlled. Therefore, I argue that questions around the legal reform of sex work policies in the South African context cannot be understood without acknowledging South Africa's current structural inequality and its legacy of colonising black bodies.

1.3 Towards Complex Definitions of Sex Work: Acknowledging Multiplicity and Heterogeneity within the Industry

The discussion above illustrates how sex work tends to be constructed within legal discourses in South Africa (as well as internationally) in two conflicting ways, either as legitimate work or as exploitation and abuse. Women who sell sex are constructed either as victims or as empowered agents, and men who pay for sex either as neutral customers or exploitative villains. But are such essentialist understandings of sex work helpful for making sense of sex work, particularly in a context as complex and varied as South Africa? Other, more critical, understandings of sex work have emerged within third wave feminist theorising, calling for definitions of sex work that acknowledge it as a dynamic (and often paradoxical) intersection between choice and constraint (Brewis & Linstead, 2000; Halland, 2010; J. Phoenix, 2000; Sanders, 2004; Weatherall & Priestley, 2001). This perspective problematizes the victim-agent dichotomy and assumes that even women who might enter sex work out of constraint could exercise some control and agency within client-sex worker relationships.

Zatz (1997) questions the helpfulness of a single privileged meaning or definition of sex work. He argues that sex work might hold different meanings and have different implications

for the power of each party. He puts forward the possibility that sex work might simultaneously be understood as the client using the sex worker's body for their own pleasure and the sex worker capitalising on the client's desire for their own profit. Moreover, Zatz (1997, p. 280) highlights the importance of acknowledging variations within sex work and the heterogeneity of people's experiences therein, suggesting that "an adequate understanding of prostitution requires understanding its multiplicity and the potential discontinuities in the experience of prostitution between participants in it, as well as between participants and dominant narratives of the culture at large". Indeed, sex work is, as Bernstein (1999, p. 91) suggests, "not a homogenous phenomenon". Sex workers do not all have unified experiences of selling sex, and clients do not all pay for sex for the same reasons (Zatz, 1997). Rather, research conducted in South Africa and other countries in the Global South illustrates how women's experiences of selling sex, as well as the nature of their client-sex worker power relationships, are highly dependent on culturally normative sexual practices and on structural factors such as the sex worker's social, cultural, economic, educational, and bodily resources (Gould & Fick, 2008; Hoang, 2010, 2011; Huang, Henderson, Pan, & Cohen, 2004). This in turn affects the venues from which the sex worker is likely to sell sex, the fee they can negotiate, the kind of client they are likely to attract, the kind of service likely to be demanded of them by the client, and the power that they may or may not wield within the encounter. In a social context as highly stratified and unequal as South Africa, these differences in sex workers' experiences and client-sex worker dynamics tend to be particularly pronounced.

In South Africa, like in many parts of the world, there are generally three broad contexts from which sex workers work.⁵ Women who sell sex can be divided into street-based sex

⁵ Although there are distinct differences between these three categories, there is also a great deal of variation within each of these categories. For instance, Bernstein (1999) noted that, in the context of San Francisco, where she conducted her ethnographic research, street-based sex workers could be sub-divided into three different categories or "classes" dependent on their race and body capital.

workers; those working at brothels, clubs, agencies, or massage parlours; and sex workers who operate independently, advertising through websites or print advertisements and working from their private homes, hotels, or travelling to their clients' homes. Research also suggests that men who buy sex from street-based sex workers are generally not the same men who pay for sex in indoor settings (Gould & Fick, 2008; Sanders, 2012).

Across the world, and particularly in the Global South, women who sell sex on the streets tend to be the most stigmatised, disenfranchised, and vulnerable of all sex workers (Armstrong, 2017; Gould & Fick, 2008; Huff, 2011; Weitzer, 2009). Street-based sex workers in South Africa are primarily poor black women living in impoverished conditions. In a previous study, (Huysamen, 2011) conducted with 15 poor black street-based sex workers wishing to exit sex work, I found that these women's experiences of selling sex on the street were intersected by multiple systems oppression, including their race, gender, and socio-economic status. Like many other poor black South African women, many of these women had been victims of gender violence, had poor access to education and other social resources, had very few employment opportunities, and were living in impoverished conditions. Moreover, these women were often stigmatised within their own communities because of their work. In agreement with other research on street-based sex workers in South Africa (Gould & Fick, 2008; Hakala & Keller, 2011, 2011; Halland, 2010; Huysamen, 2011; Wojcicki & Malala, 2001, 2001), the data from this study suggests that street-based sex workers in South Africa often enter sex work due to lack of alternative income-generating opportunities. They are often paid very little for their services and tend to have little negotiating power with their clients, particularly around issues such as condom use. Many of the women I interviewed had experienced physical, sexual, and emotional abuse at the hands of their clients. More common was abuse at the hands of police officers, who often exploited the power that the illegal status of sex work in South Africa afforded them. Similarly,

research conducted in Cambodia, China, Thailand, and Vietnam confirms that women selling sex on the street in these contexts also experience widespread violence at the hands of the police (Amnesty International, 2016; Busza, 2004; Csete & Dube, 2010). Many poor and older women who might not speak fluent English or Afrikaans, or lack the social or educational capital to engage with men in brothels or clubs, are unlikely to be desirable employees for such establishments. This limits their ability to participate in the indoor sex markets that tend to be safer and where women are likely to earn more even though they have to share part of their earnings with brothel owners (Hoang, 2011). However, not all South African street-based sex workers constructed their work purely in terms of constraint. Some of the street-based sex workers in another Cape Town-based study (Gould & Fick, 2008) said that they preferred soliciting from the street because they had more independence and did not have to split their earnings with brothel owners or abide by their rules and regulations.

These women's experiences of selling sex on the streets are likely to be very different to the experiences of the middle class and educated South African women who sell sex independently to tourists and rich local clients who can afford their higher fees. Similarly, Hoang (2010), in her comparison of "lower-tier", "middle-tier", and "upper-tier" sex work in Vietnam, argues that the women she defines as upper-tier sex workers—young, beautiful women who come from affluent backgrounds, are well educated, and have the financial resources to buy expensive clothing and pay for cosmetic procedures to further improve their appearance—are able to attract the most affluent, highest-paying clients. Because they do not need the money they earn from sex work to survive in the same way that poor street-based sex workers do, highly desirable upper-tier sex workers can choose their clients carefully and negotiate sexual interactions on their own terms. Because upper-tier sex workers often operate from their own apartments, they have more control over their interactions with their clients. The experiences and the client-sex worker relationships of middle class sex workers

working from indoor settings are likely to be far removed from those who work from the streets in South Africa.

1.4. Motivation and Aims of the Study

It clearly makes little sense to construct fixed definitions of sex work and make statements about client-sex worker positions and power relations as though it were a homogenous industry, particularly in a country as divided and diverse as South Africa. Thus, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the sex work industry in South Africa, particularly the ways in which various actors make meaning of their involvement in it, the mechanisms that maintain it, and the power dynamics at play within client-sex worker relations, it is necessary to conduct research that is sensitive to nuance and complexity. It is in response to the need for this kind of qualitative, context-specific research that this study, focused on the demand side of the sex work industry in South Africa, is born. Specifically, this study explores the ways in which men who identified as clients of woman sex workers make meaning of paying for sex, and how they construct their interactions with the women whom they pay. It explores how they negotiate their identities as men who pay for sex in relation to their various intersecting social identities, such as their gender, sexuality, race, and class, and, conversely, how men's paying for sex might influence the ways in which they are able to negotiate their various social identities.

1.5 Outline of Dissertation

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. This chapter contextualises research on men who pay for sex by providing an introduction to some of the key questions and debates around sex work in South Africa, and by introducing a legal policy framing of the issue. It highlights the importance of research that acknowledges the diverse experiences of those

involved in sex work, particularly in a country as socially and economically divided as South Africa. Chapter Two presents a review of the existing literature on men who pay for sex. I provide a brief review of the most common kinds of social research into sex work, such as quantitative research that attempts to profile clients according to individual characteristics and research that investigates clients' risk-taking behaviour in relation to HIV/AIDS. I then focus on qualitative research that explores the subjective experiences of men who pay for sex, linking men's narratives in these studies to dominant discourses of masculinity and heterosexuality. I argue for the importance of applying a discursive approach to researching men who pay for sex as a way of understanding the social structures that shape men's experiences and the meanings they make of paying for sex. Chapter Three begins with a discussion of feminist poststructuralism, the theoretical framework that underpins this research project, as a way of introducing and directing the research questions addressed in this study. I argue that the interview is a context where gendered identities are performed and produced, rather than merely a context where narratives are collected, therefore making the interviews conducted in this project, where a woman interviewed men about purchasing sexual services, an interesting context to analyse such performances. I then outline and critically reflect on the research design, including methods of participant recruitment, data collection, and data analysis.

Chapters Four, Five, and Six present the research findings of the study. Chapter Four attends to the question "why did men arrive for interviews about paying for sex?" as a way of putting myself as the researcher into the picture, reflecting critically and reflexively on the research process. I argue that exploring men's motivations for participating in interviews and paying attention to the complex dynamics of the interview relationship between participants and myself provides some insights into the meaning these men make of both paying for sex and their heterosexual interactions more generally. Chapter Five stresses the importance of

an intersectional approach to understanding sex work within the South African context. I argue that participants negotiated their identities as men who pay for sex not only in terms of gender and sexuality, but also in terms of race and class, drawing on colonial discourses of the black body as dirty and diseased. Chapter Six addresses questions around what it is that men pay for when they pay for sex. I argue that men constructed the client-sex worker encounter as a “safe space” where sex workers, whom they constructed as their experienced teachers, would teach them the sexual skills that they needed to better approximate idealised versions of masculinity outside of the paid encounter. However, I also discuss how some men, sometimes the same men, constructed the paid sexual encounter as space where they felt that they could exert their dominance and power over women during sex. Finally, I demonstrate how the client-sex worker relationship can provide a space where men feel they can explore and experiment with their sexuality, highlighting how paid sexual encounters might offer opportunities for resisting and queering the strict boundaries of normative heterosexuality. Chapter Seven synthesises the findings of each chapter and summarises the main contributions of the study. I reflect on the thesis’ unique contribution to the body of academic knowledge on men who pay for sex in the South African context as well as internationally. I reflect on the methodological challenges, difficulties, and conundrums that I encountered during this study as a female researcher interviewing men about their sexualities. I argue that this thesis contributes to the body of methodological knowledge on conducting research in the fields of gender and sexualities through the ways in which it accounts for and incorporates these complex interview-participant dynamics into its research design. Finally, I discuss how the findings of this study might inform legislation around sex work in the South African context, with potential relevance internationally.

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCHING MEN WHO PAY FOR SEX

There is a well-established and growing body of literature exploring various facets of sex work industries around the world, with South African researchers (e.g. Gough, 2001; Gould, 2014; Gould & Fick, 2008; Learmonth, Hakala, & Keller, 2015; Mgbako, 2016; Stadler & Delany, 2006; Trotter, 2008) also contributing to this body of knowledge. However, the majority of research on sex work focuses on women who sell sex. Much less has been published concerning male clients, who tend to be the primary consumers of commercial sex. Moreover, almost all of the published research on men who pay for commercial sex has been conducted outside of the South African context.

This chapter presents a review of international literature on men who pay for sex. Firstly, I provide a brief overview of the dominant research areas and the questions that are most frequently addressed within the scholarship on men who pay for sex. This includes research that attempts to characterise or profile men who pay for sex, research on the relationship between HIV/AIDS and men's health risk behaviours, and research that identifies the motivational factors associated with men paying for sex. I then narrow and intensify my focus to the comparatively smaller body of qualitative research that specifically explores men's individual constructions and subjective experiences of paying for sex. I argue for the importance of taking a discursive approach to understanding how men make meaning of paying for sex within the broader social context within which they exist. I situate existing research on sex work within the broader critical literature on men and masculinities and heterosexuality before going on to review the qualitative research on the subjective experiences of men who pay for sex. I simultaneously link these research findings back to dominant discourses of masculinity and heterosexuality, showing how these dominant discourses are inextricably tied up in the ways in which the men in these studies made

meaning of paying for sex. The chapter also provides an outline of the literature on men's constructions of their participation in sex tourism, and highlights the importance of considering the ways in which race and racist discourse may intersect men's narratives about paying for sex. Finally, I discuss the literature on men who pay transgender female sex workers for sex.

2.1 Men Who Pay for Sex: Dominant Research Areas and Frequently Asked Questions

The majority of the research on men who pay for sex is collected through the use of quantitative research methods and often attempts to identify statistically significant relationships between men's paying for sex and a variety of biological and social variables. These are the kinds of research studies that are likely to appear first and most often when conducting online searches for academic literature on men who pay for sex. They are also the kind of studies that are often drawn upon to inform both policy and media reporting around sex work.

2.1.1 Client characteristics. A large portion of research on men who pay for sex explores the associations between buying sex and psychological and socio-demographic variables including age, marital status, and class (Busch, Bell, Hotaling, & Monto, 2002; Das, Esmail, & Eargle, 2009; Della Giusta, Di Tommaso, Shima, & Strøm, 2009; Freund, Lee, & Leonard, 1991; Gibbens & Silberman, 1960; Milrod & Monto, 2012, 2016; Monto, 2001; Monto & Hotaling, 2001; Monto & McRee, 2005; Pitts, Smith, Grierson, O'Brien, & Misson, 2004; Pitts et al., 2004; Vanwesenbeeck, van Zessen, de Graaf, & Straver, 1994; Xantidis & McCabe, 2000). These studies endeavour to contribute towards creating a profile of the typical client. When considered collectively, however, these studies yield largely contradictory results. For example, Belza et al. (2008) and Monto and McRee (2005) found that clients of sex workers were significantly less likely to be married, and Monto and McRee

found that those who were married were less likely to be happily married than non-clients. Conversely, Pitts et al. (2004) found that marital status was not a significant discriminating variable between clients and non-clients. Belza et al. (2008) and Pitts et al. (2004) found that clients were significantly older than non-clients and were significantly less likely to have tertiary education, however Xantidis and McCabe (2000) found the variances in age and education levels between clients and non-clients were not significant. Thus, the contradictory nature of these findings suggests that men's involvement in buying sex is complex, and that men from various walks of life pay for sex and may do so for a variety of reasons that may change throughout their life (Huschke & Schubotz, 2016; Sanders, 2012). These studies, by their very design and through the questions they ask, have the potential to pathologise men who pay for sex. I argue that studies that attempt to identify specific personal characteristics associated with men who pay for sex serve to individualise their desire, and that attempting to identify a prototypical client implies that clients are intrinsically different to other men (Sanders, 2012).

2.1.2 HIV/AIDS and risk. Another way in which men who pay for sex are stigmatised is through the link between sex work and HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections that continues to be established and maintained within and through research on sex work. The bulk of the research on men who pay for sex is situated within a medical disease-prevention discourse, and is aimed at controlling clients' "risky" behaviours (Atchison & Burnett, 2016). Much of the research on the "safe sex" practices of men who pay for sex remains grounded in empirical and interpretative tendencies to overemphasise the causal link between socio-cultural or individual characteristics and men's sexual decision-making (Atchison & Burnett, 2016). This established body of research focuses on the relationship between factors such as clients' HIV/AIDS status, condom use, whether men go for regular HIV testing, the number of sexual partners, the frequency of paid sexual encounters, and

other “high-risk” behaviours such as drug taking and the excessive consumption of alcohol (Atchison & Burnett, 2016; Barnard, McKeganey, & Leyland, 1993; Day, Ward, & Perrotta, 1993; Faugier, 1995; Goldenberg et al., 2011; Morse, Simon, Osofsky, Balson, & Gaumer, 1991; Nadol et al., 2017; Varga, 1997; Voeten, Egesah, Ondiege, Varkevisser, & Habbema, 2002; Ward et al., 2005; Zhang et al., 2014). Again, findings vary greatly across these studies and contexts. For instance, while some studies (e.g. Barnard et al., 1993; Belza et al., 2008; Day et al., 1993; Plumridge, Chetwynd, & Reed, 1997) conclude that men who pay for sex are more likely to use condoms during paid sexual encounters than men in non-commercial sexual encounters, many other studies report that men who pay for sex engaged in risky unprotected sex with sex workers, and suggest that clients are key vectors of disease (Nadol et al., 2017; Voeten et al., 2002). This research does not seem to provide any conclusive insight into the sexual health behaviours of men who buy sex. This again suggests that men who pay for sex cannot be understood as a homogenous group.

There have also been attempts to explore, more qualitatively, the relationship between clients’ attitudes towards condom use, negotiation of safe sex practices, and clients’ perception of risk. From this literature, it appears that most men had positive attitudes towards condom use (Plumridge, Chetwynd, & Reed, 1997; Plumridge, Chetwynd, Reed, & Gifford, 1996; Vanwesenbeeck et al., 1994). These studies suggest that participants were aware of the risks that men faced by buying sex from sex workers. However, most men said they felt that they were at less of a risk than *other* clients because of the precautionary measures they took (Plumridge, Chetwynd, & Reed, 1997; Plumridge et al., 1996; Sanders, 2006, 2012). Nonetheless, some studies (Goldenberg et al., 2011; Regushevskaya & Tuormaa, 2014; Sanders, 2012) have found that some of their participants hold negative attitudes towards condom use and engaged in unprotected sex with sex workers. For example, Karandikar and Gezinski (2012a), in their qualitative interviews with Indian clients of sex

workers, found that many of these men were misinformed about HIV/AIDS and expressed preferences for unprotected sex with sex workers and other sexual partners. Kong's (2015) research in China suggests that men who sought intimate relationships with sex workers and became emotionally invested in the client-sex worker relationship were more likely to engage in unprotected sex than those who desired more impersonal or one-off sexual interactions with sex workers. Conversely, Hoang (2011) found that, although "upper tier" sex workers would offer their rich clients sex without condoms as part of providing an illusion of a relationship, most men chose to use condoms anyway.

2.1.3 Clients' motivations for buying sex. There is also a body of research that endeavours to identify and categorise the motivational factors associated with men's paying for sex (Holzman & Pines, 1982; Jordan, 1997; Joseph & Black, 2012; McKeganey, 1994; McKeganey & Barnard, 1996; Milrod & Monto, 2012; Pitts et al., 2004; Xantidis & McCabe, 2000). The following emerge as strong motivators for paying for sex across all of these studies: paid sex was less work or less complicated than other heterosexual relationships, it satisfied sexual urges, and it had an excitement or entertainment or value. Men also paid for sex due to the desire for variety of sexual partners and new sexual experiences, to avoid emotional involvement or the risk of establishing a committed relationship, and because they sought emotional connection or companionship.

Joseph and Black (2012) and Xantidis and McCabe (2000) propose corresponding binary models for categorising clients' motivations. They both identify two types of masculinities/men who pay for sex. On the one hand is the *consumer masculinity* (Joseph & Black, 2012) or the *high sensation seeking* group (Xantidis & McCabe, 2000). These men prefer paying for sex to having a relationship, as paid sex affords them variety, excitement, and pleasure. On the other hand is the *fragile masculinity* (Xantidis & McCabe, 2000) or the *low social-sexual effectiveness* (Joseph & Black, 2012) group. The need for intimacy and

connection motivates these men to pay for sex; they feel uncomfortable in, or intimidated by, conventional relationships and say that they are regularly rejected by women.

Sanders (2012) suggests that men's motivations could be understood as falling into "push" factors—areas in men's lives that are lacking that might be fulfilled though paying for sex—and "pull" factors—aspects of the sex work industry that are attractive or alluring. The push factors Sanders lists are "emotional needs", "stages of the life-course", "unsatisfactory sexual relationships", and "unease with conventional dating etiquette" (2012, p. 40). Pull factors include the fact that temporary relationships with highly attractive women can be purchased and the glamorous way in which paying for sex is presented by sex industry websites and brothels (See Brents & Hausbeck, 2007). The fact that paying for sex is still seen as deviant, risky, and taboo has also been shown to be an alluring pull factor or feature of the sex work industry for some men (Holzman & Pines, 1982; Huff, 2011; Sanders, 2012). Although these studies provide some insight into why men might pay for sex, most (save for Sanders, 2012) do not rely on in-depth accounts from men themselves, and thus fail to explore how individual men talk about their experiences.

As a whole, the kind of research that seeks to profile clients, explain or predict risk-taking behaviour that links paying for sex to HIV/AIDS, or aims to identify causal relationships between socio-economic variables and men's paying for sex, tends to take an essentialist and individualist view of men who pay for sex. I argue that these kinds of research questions may pathologise men who pay for sex, while telling us very little about their unique experiences, the complex ways in which they make meaning of their paying for sex, or how they negotiate their client identities in relation to broader social meaning around gender and sexuality.

2.2 Towards a Discursive Approach to Qualitative Research on Men Who Pay for Sex

This research project is motivated by the lack of South African (as well as international) research that focuses explicitly on how the meanings men make of paying for sex are discursively constituted and how they might be intersected by dominant discourses of gender and sexuality as well as race and class. In the remainder of this chapter I demonstrate how broader patriarchal heteronormative discourses can be identified within, and indeed flow through, men's narratives of paying for sex. In order to achieve this, I first provide an outline of the core literature around the dominant discourses around masculinity and heterosexuality that operate in society (both in South Africa and in the Global North), and discuss the various theories and debates that exist around these discourses within critical masculinities studies. I then review the body of qualitative research that explores men's subjective experiences of paying for sex, while simultaneously making links between these research findings and broader discourses of masculinity and heterosexuality in order to qualify the argument that they are inextricably linked.

2.2.1 Hegemonic masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity is perhaps one of the most widely used terms within critical studies on men and masculinities, and arguably one cannot embark on a study exploring the ways in which men's subjectivities are socially constituted without engaging with this discursive concept. The term, first coined in the Global North by Connell and collaborators in the late 1970s, can be said to denote a constellation of cultural ideals that both defines what an ideal or "real man" may look like in any given society and maintains men's dominance over women and other men (Carrigan, Connell, & Lee, 1985).⁶ The cultural ideals tied up in hegemonic masculinity create a hierarchy of access to power and status, because, although the criteria for hegemonic masculinity are generally

⁶ See Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), where the authors provide a detailed discussion of the history and application of hegemonic masculinity. They address the main shortcomings and criticisms of the theory, and attend to these by offering revisions to Connell's original theory.

unachievable, some men are better able to approximate it than others. Hegemonic masculinity thus determines the standards against which other masculinities are defined and subordinated.

The term hegemonic masculinity is often used to denote how men enact or perform various “manhood acts” (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009) or “masculinising practices” (Connell, 2000) in order to signify themselves as desirable men. Hegemonic masculinity is thus not seen as a state of being, something that one is or has, but as a process, something that one becomes through performing certain acts and not others (Butler, 2008; Connell, 2000, 2005; Frank, 2003). Within critical masculinities studies it is generally accepted that what is hegemonic and dominant in a society is neither universal nor stable, but rather that it is complex and continuously shifting to adapt to the challenges of the time and context (Barker & Ricardo, 2005; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; A. Phoenix & Frosh, 2001). However, there are certain characteristics that tend to signify the ideal man or the ideal way of “doing” masculinity across many contexts, including South Africa. These include characteristics like being rational, dominant, financially stable, independent, unemotional, tough, competitive, authoritative, and powerful (Mooney-Somers & Ussher, 2010; A. Phoenix & Frosh, 2001; Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009). Moreover, in most cultural contexts, heterosexuality is one of the central features of hegemonic masculinity, and the two are inextricably linked (Carrigan et al., 1985; Mooney-Somers & Ussher, 2010; Shefer & Ruiters, 1998).

South African research on men and masculinities has grown considerably since the end of apartheid (Hearn & Morrell, 2012), and there is a body of academic research that explicitly explores South African masculinities and the specific implications of being a man in the South African context (Baker, Wilson, & Winebarger, 2004; Blackbeard, 2007; Morrell, 1994, 1998; Morrell, Jewkes, & Lindegger, 2012; Ratele, 2005, 2006, 2008). This research shows definite parallels between “hegemonic masculinity”, as defined by scholars in the Global North, and idealised masculinity in the South African context. However, the idea of a

single national hegemony is simply not applicable to the South African context, a highly complex, diverse and stratified society. Morrell and his colleagues highlight the multiplicity of masculinities in South Africa, and argue that these masculinities, due to the country's colonial and racist past, are structured according to race and class (Morrell, 1994, 1998; Morrell et al., 2012). Morrell (1998) identifies three dominant masculinities in South Africa: a white masculinity, founded upon the socio-political dominance of the white ruling class in apartheid and post-apartheid society; a rurally-based "African" masculinity, where dominance is maintained and perpetuated through customary laws and culture; and a "black urbanised" masculinity, emerging as a result of the geographically separate South African townships established during apartheid. Morrell theorises that each of these dominant masculinities has a distinctive set of behaviours and practices that signify dominance within its specific context. However, Ratele (2014) troubles the notion of a black African hegemonic masculinity. Although he acknowledges that black African men do subordinate some women and some other men, the very idea of hegemonic African masculinity is problematic and perhaps impossible "within the context of hegemonic capitalist patriarchal whiteness" (Ratele, 2014, p. 118). Ratele (2014) argues that:

African masculinities, in other words, are hegemonic and subordinate at the same time, a logical contradiction that is difficult to resolve. And it is particularly stark as it applies to black youth, who must seek to advance themselves within a global network of violent, capitalist, racist, patriarchal, homophobic ideological structures which, on the one hand, they are urged to support but which also, on the other hand, are the source of their own subjugation. (p. 118)

This highlights the complexity of constructions of masculinity in relation to power in the South African context.

Much South African research on masculinities explores the relationship and intersections between hegemonic or dominant masculinities, the high levels of violence in South Africa, and South Africa's turbulent political past (Barker & Ricardo, 2005; Boonzaier & Gordon, 2015; Campbell, 1992; Cock, 2001; Glaser, 1998; Hunter, 2005a; Mager, 1998; Morrell,

2001; van Niekerk & Boonzaier, 2016a, 2016b). Men's risk-taking behaviour, particularly risks related to sexual health and HIV/AIDS, has been another key focus in African masculinities studies (Morrell, Jewkes, Lindegger, & Hamlall, 2013; Wood & Jewkes, 1997). Collectively, this research paints a picture of a violent, dominant and risk-taking South African masculinity.

Although much research suggests traditional notions of hegemonic masculinity are idealised across diverse global contexts, there is evidence of the emergence, particularly in the Global North, of alternative masculinities as dominant and idealised (Hearn & Morrell, 2012). For example, research in Sweden shows that a discourse around the "new" type of gender-equal man has emerged as dominant (Johansson & Klinth, 2008). In Sweden, academic, legal, and public discourse relating to men and masculinities has been largely focused on active fatherhood as well as equal gender participation in the workplace (Hearn et al., 2012). Anderson developed the *Inclusive Masculinity Theory* in an attempt to account for changing patterns (or performances) of masculinity amongst men in the UK and US, arguing that showing acceptance towards homosexuality, more displays of emotional intimacy and physical closeness among male friends, and engaging in and with activities and artefacts traditionally constructed as feminine, are all indicators of the emergence of a new, more inclusive masculinity (Anderson, 2013; Anderson & McCormack, 2016).⁷ Similarly, Wetherell and Edley found that most of the men they interviewed in the UK did not identify with what they deem as a "heroic" or "macho" masculinity; rather they either distanced themselves from or actively criticised it. Many positioned themselves closer to "ordinary" masculinity, and constructed themselves as the "normal", "moderate", or "average" man. Wetherell and Edley (1999, p. 351) argue that, "paradoxically, one could say that sometimes

⁷ Inclusive Masculinity Theory has not gone uncontested. It is criticised particularly for the way in which its optimistic approach serves to deemphasise key issues of sexual politics (as well as race and class) and silence the more implicit ways in which power operates. See, for example, de Boise (2015) and O'Neill (1998).

one of the most effective ways of being hegemonic, or being a ‘man’, may be to demonstrate one’s distance from hegemonic masculinity”.

The link between “new” masculinity and hegemony has been explicitly made, as various studies show that middle class men are increasingly aligning themselves with more egalitarian heterosexual relationship ideals and distancing themselves from misogynistic, dominant, or hyper-masculine male identities as a way of negotiating desirable middle class identities for themselves (Cooper, 2000; Gerson, 2010; Laner & Ventrone, 1998; Pyke, 1996). Lamont (2015, p. 274), in her research with 31 college-educated men who identified as heterosexual, argues that men use these egalitarian discourses as identity work, positioning themselves as “good guys”—enlightened, progressive, emotional men—and thereby distancing themselves from the negative aspects associated with working class masculinities, such as being domineering and predatory. The message “I’m not like other men” ran strongly through participants’ narratives (Lamont, 2015, p. 281). Similarly, Dellinger (2004) found that men working as accountants at a pornographic publication aligned themselves with an egalitarian pro-feminist masculinity as a way of distancing themselves from what they believed to be the “sleazy” working class male readership of the magazine. However, Lamont (2015) argues that men’s egalitarian narratives did not always translate into egalitarian relationships. Rather, these egalitarian discourses allowed men to think of themselves as better than the average working class man without having to fully give up the privileges that come with gender inequality in relationships. This again points to the notion that the “new” kind of man is indeed a hegemonic form of masculinity in some contexts.

2.2.2 Heterosexuality. That heterosexuality is a defining feature of hegemonic masculinity is as true for the South African context as is for the Global North. Studies have found that some of the key criteria for achieving a desirable South African masculinity are an assertive and promiscuous heterosexual identity, financial independence, and control over

economic decisions within the nuclear family home (Barker & Ricardo, 2005; Mankayi, 2008; Ratele, 2001, 2006). However, both in South Africa and internationally, relatively few studies explore specifically how men who identify as heterosexual understand and make sense of their sexuality, and how they construct their day-to-day relations with women (Mooney-Somers & Ussher, 2010). Because heterosexuality is largely accepted as normative and naturalised (Mac an Ghail, 2000; Ratele, 2005), it is more or less taken for granted that adult heterosexual men do not go through a process of “coming out” or “becoming” heterosexual, they simply *are* heterosexual (Flood, 2008).

Hollway (2001) presents the most influential discursive framework for understanding how heterosexual subjectivity is constituted. Her model identifies three key discourses implicated in the construction of heterosexuality, each, she argues, make available different subject and object positions for men and women to take up in relation to one another. These are the male *sexual drive discourse*, the *have/hold discourse*, and the *permissive discourse*. Many studies have found that participants draw on these three discourses in making meaning of their heterosexual relationships (Gavey, McPhillips, & Braun, 1999; Mooney-Somers & Ussher, 2010; Seal & Ehrhardt, 2003). I will briefly outline each discourse and link them to relevant research on men’s constructions of their heterosexuality.

2.2.2.1 The male sexual drive discourse. The male sexual drive discourse is firmly entrenched in everyday common sense understandings of male sexuality. Within this discourse, male sexuality is constructed as urgent, powerful, largely uncontrollable, and biologically determined. This discourse positions women as the objects of men’s sex drive, and they are seen to perpetuate and elicit men’s natural sexual urges (Gilfoyle, Wilson, & Own, 1992; Hollway, 2001). The male sexual drive discourse feeds directly into notions of hegemonic masculinity, where men are constructed as always being ready and willing to have

sex, as sexually promiscuous and dominant, and as having little interest in the emotional aspects of sex.

Research into heterosexual subjectivities confirms that, of the three discourses, the most instrumental in shaping men's talk and construction of their (hetero)sexuality is the male sexual drive discourse. It unfailingly emerges, to varying degrees, in male participants' talk about their (hetero)sexual selves in both South African studies (Barker & Ricardo, 2005; Mankayi, 2008; Ratele, 2001, 2006; Shefer & Ruiters, 1998) and international studies on heterosexual masculinities (Crawford, Kippax, & Waldby, 1994; Gavey et al., 1999, 1999; Gilfoyle et al., 1992; Mooney-Somers & Ussher, 2010; Seal & Ehrhardt, 2003).

2.2.2.2 *The have/hold discourse.* The have/hold discourse coalesces around the ideals of monogamy, family, and partnership. This discourse is closely linked to Christian ideals, in particular the convention that sex should take place within a monogamous heterosexual relationship. Sex is understood to exist primarily for reproductive purposes, and as an expression of love and commitment. The traditional sexual script for female sexuality that feeds into this discourse is one where women are expected to be devoid of a sex drive and always more interested in the emotional aspects of heterosexual relations (Allen, 2003; Hamilton & Armstrong, 2009). Women are seen to engage in sex not for pleasure but as a way of acquiring or "catching" a man and then securing or "keeping" a husband who will provide them with emotional and/or financial security. In their analysis of popular women's magazines, Farvid and Braun (2006) argued that women were regularly constructed along the lines of the have/hold discourse, as being in constant pursuit of long-term committed relationships with men.

2.2.2.3 *The permissive discourse.* The third discourse set out by Hollway (2001) is the permissive discourse, which, in theory, is an alternative to the sexual drive and have/hold discourses. Within the framework of the permissive discourse both men and women are

constructed as sexually driven beings that have the right to experience sexual pleasure. Within this discourse it is assumed that sexual desire is natural and should not be repressed as long as it is consensual and no one is harmed in the process. However, research shows that, although the permissive discourse allows for some freedom of (hetero)sexual expression for men and women, it still supports the notion of a *coital imperative* (McPhillips, Braun, & Gavey, 2001). Numerous studies suggest that even when drawing on this discourse men still have a narrow definition of the act of sex, taking it to mean the penetration of the vagina by the erect penis (Gavey et al., 1999; M. Jackson, 1984; McPhillips et al., 2001; Potts, 2000b). This phallogentric understanding of sex leaves little room for other meanings of experiencing sexual pleasure, despite many women describing oral sex or masturbation as being as pleasurable and often more pleasurable than penetrative sex (Gavey et al., 1999).

2.2.4.4 Considering contradictions. When considering the sexual drive and have/hold discourses in relation to one another it is clear that they are in competition and recommend contradictory standards of behaviour. How then do men construct their (hetero)sexuality in the midst of the contradictory systems of meanings that are available to them? Within the literature it is evident that the contradictions between these discourses are resolved through the establishment of double standards for men and women's sexuality. Men's sexuality is largely understood through the sexual drive discourse. Within this discourse men are expected to actively pursue sex and take up multiple partners. Conversely, women's sexuality is understood through the have/hold discourse where they are expected to remain monogamous (Hollway, 2001; Mankayi, 2008).

Furthermore, research suggests that the dissonance between the competing discourses may be resolved through constructing women dualistically, splitting them into two types, the wife versus the mistress, or Madonna versus the whore (Bertone & Ferrero, 2009; Hollway, 2001; Seal & Ehrhardt, 2003). On the one hand, the whore or mistress type of woman is

promiscuous, and is valued only for her willingness to engage in casual sex. On the other hand, the second type of woman, the wife or Madonna, is sexually reserved, respectable, and pure. She is the kind of woman constructed as appropriate for forming a meaningful and intimate relationship with, and perhaps even to marry (Seal & Ehrhardt, 2003). Seal and Ehrhardt (2003) demonstrate how men split women according to this dichotomy: women who had sex with men too quickly after meeting were constructed as less deserving of respect and unsuitable as long-term partners. Similarly, Bhana and Pattman's (2011) study into constructions of love among South African township youths found that the black male youths regularly divided black girls into two categories, farm girls and township girls. Whilst farm girls were described as un-materialistic, pure, and virginal, township girls were constructed as image-conscious, money-hungry, and promiscuous. Consequently, farm girls were considered to be desirable marriage partners and township girls were deemed unfavourable.

Moreover, the literature suggests that with this dualistic construction of women comes the dualistic construction of sex (Crawford et al., 1994; Gavey et al., 1999; Mooney-Somers & Ussher, 2010). Across these studies men constructed sex in line with the sexual drive discourse, as "just sex": casual, devoid of intimacy and emotion, and free from commitment. On the other hand men, often the same men, constructed sex occurring in a relationship as being "more than just sex", as a means to express commitment and experience a deep connection with one's partner (Crawford et al., 1994; Gavey et al., 1999; Mooney-Somers & Ussher, 2010). Mooney-Somers and Ussher (2010) found that men stressed the importance of making it clear to the women with whom they had casual sexual encounters that it was "just sex" rather than something more. This was important for men to clarify because the obligation for commitment attached to the have/hold discourse meant that men risked having these "just sex" encounters mistaken by women as a promise of commitment.

2.2.2.5 Discourses of reciprocity. Although the three discourses in Hollway's framework clearly remain pertinent to how men make meaning of sexual relationships with women, other discourses have also been identified as dominant in relation to heterosexuality. For instance, in line with the permissive discourse, principles of reciprocity and mutuality are increasingly being constructed as the ideal or benchmark for ethical or "good" heterosexual sex (Braun, Gavey, & McPhillips, 2003; Gilfoyle et al., 1992). This discourse assumes that heterosexual sex is, or should be, egalitarian, respectful, and, most importantly, mutually pleasurable for both parties. Research suggests that both men and women understand "pleasure" to mean the presence of orgasm (Braun et al., 2003). According to this discourse, or the *orgasmic imperative* as Potts (2000) terms it, for sex to be deemed successful it must end in orgasm for both parties. Braun et al. (2003, p. 245) show how men constructed giving their partners an orgasm as being part of the "deal" and as a "fair exchange". They also show how some male participants understand their partners not having an orgasm as an indication that they had "failed in some way", arguing that these "failures" posed a threat to their masculine identities.

Gilfoyle et al. (1992) critique the reciprocal discourse, proposing that it is actually a *pseudo reciprocal gift discourse*. Instead of being to the mutual benefit of both men and women, they argue that the discourse of reciprocity mainly benefits men. Gilfoyle et al. (1992) suggest that this emphasis on female pleasure may be more about the man's ability to produce pleasure in the woman than it is about the woman's actual pleasure. Given that a core feature of successful hegemonic masculinity is that the man is sexually experienced and sexually skilled (Barker & Ricardo, 2005), men's ability to produce pleasure serves to bolster their identities as sexually competent men (Potts, 2000a). Gilfoyle et al. (1992) note that male participants seldom constructed women as instrumental to achieving their own pleasure, suggesting that men are positioned as active agents who take and provide pleasure, rather

than as women's equals. Conversely, they suggest that women are positioned as passive objects that surrender their bodies to men and have to be "given" orgasms.

2.2.2.6 Transactional discourses. Mooney-Somers and Ussher (2010) and Seal and Ehrhardt (2002) identify a transactional discourse within men's talk on heterosexual relationships. They show how men construct sex as a system of exchange whereby men do work to secure sex from their partners who, as gatekeepers, have the power to deny or allow men access to sex. Both studies found that men spoke in detail about the "work" they needed to do in exchange for sex from their partners; this work included heterosexual performances such as buying women drinks, flowers, and chocolates; making women feel secure and confident; expressing an intent for future emotional and relationship commitment; and supporting women financially and emotionally. Mooney-Somers and Ussher suggest that gaining access to sex was an indicator that men had mastered a set of practices and successfully performed sufficient work.

Mooney-Somers and Ussher (2010) and Seal and Ehrhardt (2003) also found that men constructed women as being in positions of power as gatekeepers, and that men expressed resentment, powerlessness, and dependence in relation to women as a result. Similarly, Gavey et al. (1999) show that men in their study expressed feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt when their attempts or "work" did not lead to penetrative sex with their partners. Men's positioning of themselves as powerless differs significantly to Gilfoyle et al.'s (1992) theory, in which women are constructed as purely passive objects within heterosexual encounters.

Men's employment of transactional discourses in making meaning of their sexual encounters with women is of relevance to how we understand the sex work industry. A common sense understanding of sex work is that the commodification of sex is a function of sex work. However, this body of research suggests that some men already construct sex as a commodity within other heterosexual interactions. Thus, the commodification of sex by men

may be a product of dominant discourses of heterosexuality in a patriarchal society, rather than stemming from the sex work industry alone.

2.3.2.7 Intimacy and emotionality. The question of men's understandings of, and desire for, intimacy and emotional connection within their relationships with women emerges regularly in the literature on heterosexual relationships (Mooney-Somers & Ussher, 2010; Seal & Ehrhardt, 2003). As Berlant and Warner (1998) and Sandberg (2011) contend, intimacy is not merely a neutral and natural concept; rather it is socially constructed and part of the cultural imagination of heterosexuality.

The literature suggests a relationship between men's age and their expression of a desire for intimacy. Bertone and Camoletto (2009), Lamont (2015), Mooney-Somers (2010), and Sandberg (2011, 2016) all found that men placed emphasis on how much they valued a sense of emotional connection in their sexual relationships with their long-term partners, particularly as they grew older. However, Gavey et al. (1999) explored the ways that young and middle-aged adults understood the relationship between sex and intimacy, and central to their findings was that younger men also communicated a desire and need to experience intimacy and a sense of closeness within their sexual relationships. Participants spoke about how, to their dismay, intimacy and a sense of emotional connection had dwindled in their relationships (which they often attributed to life events external to them, such as the birth of a child), and some of these men constructed sex as a means of regaining intimacy and connection with their partners (Gavey et al., 1999). Gavey et al. (1999, p. 52) suggest that "men's 'need' for emotional intimacy is possibly one of the open secrets of heterosexuality – something that cannot or will not be acknowledged within some representations of masculinity, or which must only be expressed in circumscribed ways".⁸

⁸ Although men's acknowledgement of their need for intimacy contradicts traditional constructions of the hegemonic male, it is more closely aligned with the "newer" notions of a desirable masculinity discussed earlier.

2.3.2.8 Homosociality. Male friendships, or *homosociality* as it is referred to in the literature, is another context where men's performance of their sexuality and masculinity can be scrutinised, making it an area of interest for critical masculinities studies. Broadly, homosociality refers to same-sex friendships or social relations (S. R. Bird, 1996; Flood, 2008). Although some research has focused on the ways in which men's friendships challenge or deviate from common sense assumptions and dominant discourses about men and masculinity (e.g. Anderson, 2013; Houston, 2012; Maqubela, 2012), much research has highlighted the ways in which hegemonic masculinity is largely enacted within, or is perpetuated by, homosociality (S. R. Bird, 1996; Flood, 2008; Gough, 2001; Martino, 1999; Muir & Seitz, 2004).

Bird (1996) and Flood (2008) both found that men told one another detailed stories of their heterosexual sexual encounters, and that the telling of these stories served as both an opportunity for male bonding and a means by which men could perform and reinforce their positions as successful hegemonic men. Both Bird (1996) and Flood (2008) found that there was great competition among men in homosocial groups for the status of the most sexually experienced man. This competitiveness amongst men played out through the telling and comparing of detailed accounts of their sexual exploits. The men in these studies were able to achieve higher status or respect amongst their peers through reporting back on various sexual "achievements" (S. R. Bird, 1996, p. 129). Thus, in the context of this storytelling culture, the heterosexual encounter is performed with an imaginary male audience in mind, and it is performed with the knowledge that the sexual encounter will be transformed into a story, a story which would ultimately influence how the man comes to construct and negotiate his gendered identity. This storytelling culture, and the significance that retelling sexual stories has for identity negotiation, is relevant to research on online forums for men who pay for sex, which is discussed next.

2.3 Men's Subjective Experiences of Paying for Sex

In this section, I review the body of literature that draws on men's in-depth accounts of paying for sex in order to explore how they make meaning of their client identities. Most of this qualitative research is based on findings collected through in-depth interviews (e.g. Bernstein, 2001; Chen, 2005; Huff, 2011; Huschke & Schubotz, 2016; Huysamen, 2013, 2016; Huysamen & Boonzaier, 2015; Jordan, 1997; Kong, 2015; Plumridge, Chetwynd, Reed, & Gifford, 1997; Sanders, 2008, 2012; Seabrook, 2001). Although these studies have been conducted in various contexts (Australia, China, New Zealand, South Africa, Taiwan, the United Kingdom, the USA, and Vietnam), I demonstrate that there are striking parallels between their findings.

There is also a body of work (e.g. Blevins & Holt, 2009; Earle & Sharpe, 2008a, 2008b; Holt & Blevins, 2007; Horswill & Weitzer, 2016; Katsulis, 2010; Milrod & Weitzer, 2012; Pettinger, 2011; Sanders, 2012) that explores men's qualitative accounts of paying for sex through analysing their participation in online forums or websites designed for clients of the sex work industry. Men use these websites and forums as a way of both providing and obtaining recommendations, advice, and information on soliciting sex from sex workers in particular geographical areas. Men post reviews or "field reports" (Sanders, 2012) of their experiences with individual sex workers, providing details about the physical appearance of the sex worker, her attitude, the kinds of services she is willing to provide, the location or venue from which she operates, and the fees she charges for her services. As with the homosocial groups described by Flood (2008), a clear storytelling culture exists amongst the men on these forums, as they provide extensive descriptions of their interactions with sex workers from the first moment of contact until the end of the encounter. Sanders (2012, p. 62) describes the websites as "a meeting place for men to express and form their sexual and personal identities". What makes men's online accounts of paying for sex distinct from those

collected through face-to-face interviews is that they are for a different audience. Instead of being for the researcher, men's performances of masculinity, sexuality, and heterosexuality are largely for other men who pay for sex. A strong sense of community amongst the men who participate in these forums has been noted; they provide a context where men can talk freely about their experiences of paying for sex without the risk of feeling stigmatised for doing so (Hammond, 2015; Milrod & Weitzer, 2012; Sanders, 2012).

Despite the methodological differences, many of the findings from online research corresponds with the findings of traditional face-to-face interviews, and, therefore, I discuss the key themes that emerged from both online research and face-to-face interviews collectively, as one body of qualitative research. Across all of these studies (both online and offline), men enlisted dominant discourses of gender and (hetero)sexuality to negotiate their identities in relation to their paying for sex and to make meaning of their paid sexual encounters. Both Hoang (2010) and Sanders (2011) suggest that men's reliance on dominant heterosexual discourses in talking about paying for sex is evidence that the dichotomy between commercial and non-commercial relationships is a false one, and that the lines between the two can be blurred or are unclear.

2.3.1 “No strings attached” sex. In discussing the allure of paid sex the notion of “no strings attached” sex or “sex without responsibility” dominated men's narratives across numerous studies (Chen, 2005, p. 14; Huysamen, 2013; Huysamen & Boonzaier, 2015; Plumridge, Chetwynd, Reed, et al., 1997). I argue that this theme can be understood in terms of both the sexual drive discourse and the have/hold discourse (Hollway, 2001). Across all of the qualitative studies reviewed, men clearly described themselves according to the sexual drive discourse, as having an innate and urgent need for sex. At the same time, as was noted in the interviews I conducted with men who pay for sex in South Africa (Huysamen, 2013; Huysamen & Boonzaier, 2015), men constructed women according to the have/hold

discourse (Hollway, 2001), describing them as emotionally needy and as using sex as a way to “catch” or “hook” men, thereby forcing them into committed relationships. Men said paid sex was desirable because it allowed them to fulfil their “need” for sex, while (they believed) the monetary exchange absolved them from any of the obligations, responsibilities, or negative aspects commonly associated with women in heterosexual relationships.

2.3.2 Intimacy and emotionality within the client-sex worker encounter. Often the same men who drew upon the “no strings attached” discourse also expressed a strong desire for intimacy and an emotional connection within the client-sex worker relationship (Bernstein, 2001; Chen, 2005; Earle & Sharpe, 2008a, 2008b; Holzman & Pines, 1982; Huff, 2011; Huschke & Schubotz, 2016; Huysamen & Boonzaier, 2015; Jordan, 1997; Katsulis, 2010; Kong, 2015; Milrod & Weitzer, 2012; Plumridge, Chetwynd, Reed, et al., 1997; Sanders, 2008, 2012; Seabrook, 2001). Indeed, men’s accounts of their desire for and experiences of intimacy, connection and emotionality within the client-sex worker relationship is one of the most central themes to emerge from the qualitative literature on clients. In face-to-face interviews, many men said that they paid for sex due to the desire for closeness and intimacy, something they often lacked in their marriages or relationships (Huschke & Schubotz, 2016; Huysamen & Boonzaier, 2015; Sanders, 2008, 2012). Earle and Sharpe (2008a, 2008b, p. 262), who conducted what they describe as “covert cyber-ethnography” of a British website (www.PunterNet.com), and Milrod and Weitzer (2012), who conducted a content analysis of an American forum (www.TheEroticReview.com), both focus the discussion of their findings on men’s desire for intimacy and emotion within their paid sexual encounters. Men’s expressed desire for intimacy within paid encounters is perhaps not surprising, given that studies on heterosexual men highlight men’s desires for intimacy and emotionality. It could be argued that as the “new”, more sensitive versions of masculinity discussed earlier become more dominant, discourses of emotionality might

become more and more available for men to take up, and are then likely to filter through into men's narratives about their expectations for the client-sex worker encounter.

But how then can one make sense of clients' seemingly contradictory desire to purchase "no strings attached" sex and their desire for intimacy and emotionality? In attending to this question, Bernstein (2001) developed the term *bounded authenticity*. She argues that paying for sex is appealing to men because it provides them with the intimacy of a genuine relationship, but within boundaries that insulate them from the obligations associated with heterosexual relationships. Thus, it could be argued that paying for sex might in fact be a way in which men are able to accommodate the contradictory social standards of behaviour that they have/hold and the sexual drive discourses prescribe for men in society.

Of course, Bernstein's idea of bounded authenticity places emphasis on the notion of authenticity. But what allows for this authentic encounter? For many clients, the more the client-sex worker interaction resembled a real romantic encounter, the more satisfactory it was deemed to be (Bernstein, 2007a; Chen, 2005; Holzman & Pines, 1982; Katsulis, 2010; Milrod & Monto, 2012; Sanders, 2008, p. 407). Within the sex work industry this kind of "authenticity" is often referred to as the "girlfriend experience". The girlfriend experience is a sexual service in which the client-sex worker sexual encounter closely mirrors conventional heterosexual scripts, blurring the boundaries between the commercial exchange and a romantic relationship.⁹ For many men, the act of kissing (often prohibited by sex workers) was an essential part of the girlfriend experience (Sanders, 2012). Some clients described bringing gifts for sex workers or taking them to dinner and a movie before progressing to having sex (Katsulis, 2010).

It can be argued that, just as sex without commitment is one product or service attached to paid sex, so intimacy and authenticity are other services that many men demand from the

⁹ See Huff (2011) and Milrod and Monto (2012), where the experiences of men who pay for the "girlfriend experience" services are explored specifically.

client-sex worker encounter. In putting this argument forward, Sanders (2008, p. 413) suggests that “the sex industry is not simply about selling sex and sexual fantasies”; rather it is also about attending to the emotional needs of male clients. Hochschild’s (2003, 2012) theory of emotional labour has been used to understand these emotional aspects of the client-sex worker relationship (Bernstein, 2001; Earle & Sharpe, 2008a; Hoang, 2010), and is useful for informing theorising around what it is men pay for when they pay for sex. Hochschild’s work addresses the North American working class’ increasing consumption of personal intimate services provided by those working as, amongst others, nannies, carers, personal trainers, and life coaches. Hochschild (2012) argues that emotions become commodities and intimacy a marketable service. She argues that providing the emotional labour that is required by their jobs involves people evoking, shaping, or suppressing various emotions within themselves and often changing their thoughts, behaviours, and expressive gestures (Hoang, 2010; Hochschild, 2003). Pruitt and Krull (2010), who analysed online adverts placed by female sex workers, found that the “girlfriend experience” was the most common service listed by female sex workers. This suggests that these women actively capitalise upon men’s desire for this kind of emotional service. In their content analysis of sex tourism websites, Gezinski, Karandikar, Levitt, and Ghaffarian (2016, p. 792) also demonstrate how sex tourist websites use fabricated courtship scenarios and promises of romance and emotional connection that allow men to “imagine themselves as seen, chosen, and desired” to market their sex tours to potential clients.

Across the qualitative studies under review, the presence of a sense of mutuality and reciprocity was constructed as an essential element of “good sex” within the context of paid sex. Rather than having sex with women who were clock-watching and seemed indifferent and disinterested, men wanted to feel that women were engaged for the duration of the paid interaction (Bernstein, 2007a; Chen, 2005; Holzman & Pines, 1982; Milrod & Monto, 2012;

Sanders, 2008). Earle and Sharpe (2008a) and Milrod and Weitzer (2012) found that men tended to post positive online reviews and recommendations for sex workers who had a positive attitude towards having sex with them, and for those who seemed genuine and displayed signs of experiencing pleasure (ideally an orgasm) during sex. Collectively, these studies show how feeling that pleasure was mutual (and, ideally, the presence of the sex worker's orgasm) was a necessary condition for men's *own* arousal, sexual pleasure, and overall enjoyment of the paid sexual encounter (Chen, 2005; Huff, 2011; Huysamen, 2013; Plumridge, Chetwynd, Reed, et al., 1997). I argue that this expectation for mutuality and reciprocity within the client-sex worker relationship could be linked to the dominant heterosexual discourses of permissiveness and reciprocity, which are based on the discursive imperative that heterosexual sex is, or should be, egalitarian and, most importantly, mutually pleasurable for both parties (Gilfoyle et al., 1992).

Milrod and Weitzer (2012), in their study of men's participation in online forums, noted that some men described how they found themselves developing feelings for sex workers to varying degrees. On these forums men shared with one another their experiences of establishing long-term client-sex worker arrangements, with some having patronised the same sex worker for several years. Some research has also found that men claim that sex workers experienced an unbounded intimacy and genuine pleasure in their encounters with them (Kong, 2015; Sanders, 2008). However, in other studies most men described the intimacy between client and sex worker as a counterfeit or fake intimacy. I argue elsewhere that most of the men I interviewed were aware that the emotion, and indeed pleasure, expressed by sex workers was not genuine, but that they merely wanted sex workers to relate to them in such a way that they were able to *feel* like the experience was authentic, intimate, and pleasurable in that moment (Huysamen, 2013; Huysamen & Boonzaier, 2015). Moreover, drawing on literature around men's constructions of heterosexual relationships

(Braun et al., 2003; Gilfoyle et al., 1992), it can be argued that part of what men want from the paid sexual encounter is to feel that they have pleased the women they pay for sex, as this is as a way that men can affirm their sexual skill and thus bolster their masculinity (Huysamen & Boonzaier, 2015; Plumridge, Chetwynd, Reed, et al., 1997). Thus, as well as the task of making the client feel a certain way, sex workers are also required to appear as though their clients make *them* feel a certain way (Bernstein, 2007a; Huysamen & Boonzaier, 2015). As Bernstein (Bernstein, 2007a) suggests, the manufacturing of authenticity in order to simulate or even produce a sense of genuine desire, pleasure, and erotic interest for their clients is part of the emotional labour sex workers have to perform.

Sanders (2012) suggests that there are distinctive differences between repeat or “regular” clients who build up relationships with sex workers as a result of the desire for emotional intimacy and a sense of belonging, and those men who visit numerous sex workers on a “one-off” basis. Kong (2015), for instance, provides a typology of clients based on their differing demands from the client-sex worker relationship, which he suggests exist on a continuum. At the one end of the continuum are the men who seek the “no strings attached” impersonal sex, and at the other end are those who desire unbounded intimacy and a genuine emotional relationship. Between these two poles are those men who seek the bounded authenticity as put forward by Bernstein (2001). Hoang (2010, 2011), in her classed analysis that compares relationships between sex workers and their clients in what she terms “low end”, “mid-tier” and “high-end” sex work sectors in Vietnam, also proposes distinctive differences in the client-sex worker relations and the kinds of services and levels of emotional labour men pay for in the three sectors. Hoang argues that in some cases the boundaries in the relations between sex workers and their clients are more permeable and blurred than is proposed by Bernstein’s notion of bounded authenticity, complicating our dichotomous understanding of sex as being either relational or economic. Hoang (2010) provides an analysis of the

relationship between high-end Vietnamese sex workers (who use their economic, cultural, and social capital to attract rich Vietnamese men who work abroad but return to Vietnam for their holidays) and their clients. She found that high-end sex workers disguise the nature of their relationship with their clients, functioning as their girlfriends for the duration of the clients' holiday. These men pay for more than just sex; they pay for beautiful and desirable women to spend time talking to them and accompanying them to bars and restaurants. Here women employ a great deal of emotional labour, evoking feelings of comfort, care, fantasy, and desire, and clients compensate women with expensive gifts. Any cash given to these women is framed as a gift rather than a payment. Hoang also explored the client-sex worker relationship between mid-tier sex workers, who come from relatively poor backgrounds and operate from bars and nightclubs, and their clients, who are white foreign men back-packing through Vietnam. Although these women initially negotiate a fee for a specific sex act with a client, Hoang shows how, over time, these women also employ a great deal of emotional labour to evoke feelings of love and sympathy in clients and to capitalise on men's desire to feel needed in order to foster long-term relationships with them. This results in their clients sending them money for subsistence and sometimes marrying them. Hoang found, in line with other research on client's justifications for paying for sex (Garrick, 2005; Huysamen & Boonzaier, 2015; Karandikar & Gezinski, 2012b; Yokota, 2006), that men constructed sex workers as needing them for the money they provided in exchange for sex, with many men constructing themselves as the charitable financial providers and even chivalrous rescuers of poor female sex workers. Finally, Hoang shows how poor Vietnamese women, who come from impoverished backgrounds and service local poor working class Vietnamese men, provide a brief, time-limited service that is purely sexual. Bernstein (2007b) suggests that poor street-based sex workers engage only in physical labour as their clients are not interested in purchasing anything more than sex. However, Hoang (2010) argues that these women

engage in *repressive* emotional labour, as they often have to repress negative feelings towards their clients.

2.3.3 Transactional and market-related discourses. Both face-to-face research (Chen, 2005; Gilfoyle et al., 1992; Holzman & Pines, 1982; Huysamen & Boonzaier, 2015; Jordan, 1997; Mooney-Somers & Ussher, 2010; O'Connell Davidson, 2000) and online studies (Garrick, 2005; Katsulis, 2010) show that participants justified their preference for paid sex over other forms of casual sex through an economic discourse. They employed a cost-benefit analysis in justifying paying for sex, explaining that it was “cheaper” to buy sex from sex workers than it was to obtain sex from women by following usual courting scripts. This finding can be linked directly to the transactional discourse employed by men to talk about (hetero)sex in general. As outlined earlier, within this dominant heterosexual discourse, access to sex is constructed as something that needs to be “earned” by a man through various courtship acts (Braun et al., 2003; Gilfoyle et al., 1992). Men constructed paid sex as cheaper than casual sex because payments to sex workers were seen as less expensive or taxing than the “work” or various courtship acts men felt they had to perform in order to have sex with a woman. Women were constructed, according to dominant heterosexual discourses, as “expensive” or “high maintenance”, and relationships were constructed as costly in time, effort, and money. Moreover, participants explained that in non-commercial dating there is no guarantee that the time, effort, and money spent flirting with or courting a woman would translate into a successful sexual encounter; however, in paid interactions sex was usually guaranteed (Holzman & Pines, 1982; Huysamen, 2013; Jordan, 1997).

Men drew on consumerist discourses to explain that paid sex was alluring because as the customer they “had the right to choose” which women they wanted to have sex with and which sexual acts they wanted to engage in, as well as the right to change their minds at any point if they were unsatisfied with the “product” on offer (Chen, 2005, p. 7; Huysamen, 2013;

Huysamen & Boonzaier, 2015). Pettinger (2011) suggests that it is hardly surprising that men in the context of online forums would draw particularly strongly on market discourses, as the nature of these forums further promotes discourses of commerce and consumerism. Pettinger (2011) likens men's reviews on these forums to other kinds of online customer service reviews, such as those that might be made of a hotel or restaurant. She posits that men draw on ideas of both masculinity and customer sovereignty to make sense of commercial sex and construct themselves in relation to it. Katsulis (2010, p. 218), in her research on a sex tourism website, summarises this eloquently, suggesting that "within this landscape these men position themselves as informed consumers, able to select the right kind of goods (e.g., women), while avoiding others. Their experience as savvy consumers frames their involvement in paid sex activities as symbolic of their status and power". Thus, I argue that paying for sex and then enlisting commercial discourses in reviewing these sexual services online can become a set of interconnected masculinising practices (Connell, 2000).

2.3.4 Sex tourism and the exotic Other. Thus far the issue of race has not been raised in the review of qualitative literature on clients. Questions around how discourses on race intersect men's constructions of paid sex are, I argue, relevant to any research into the subjectivities of men who pay for sex, but specifically in the post-apartheid South African context. Nevertheless, very little critical qualitative research, both in South Africa and internationally, explicitly address questions about how race informs men's constructions of paying for sex. However, research on male sex tourists is one area where the questions around race and how racism, white supremacy, and imperialism are upheld and perpetuated within and through the sex work industry, is both acknowledged and explored (Garrick, 2005; Gezinski et al., 2016).

Sex tourists are typically (but not exclusively) white men from the Global North (often from Australia, Europe, and North America) who travel to holiday destinations in developing countries or the Global South to have sex with local “native” women (e.g. Brennan, 2001; Garrick, 2005; Hoang, 2010; Katsulis, 2010; O’Connell Davidson, 2000, 2001; Seabrook, 2001).¹⁰ The notion that men pay for sex in pursuit of difference and variety is not new to research on clients of sex workers (Gould & Fick, 2008; Holzman & Pines, 1982; Huysamen & Boonzaier, 2015; Joseph & Black, 2012). However, the explicit eroticisation of the exotic cultural Other is far more prevalent, pronounced, and overt in the accounts of men who participate in sex tourism (Brennan, 2001; Garrick, 2005; Katsulis, 2010; O’Connell Davidson, 2000) than it is in the accounts of men who pay for sex locally. Brennan (2001) conducted a study in the Dominican Republic on the relationships between Afro-Caribbean sex workers and their German clients. By analysing men’s posts and participation on websites for male sex tourists in the area, she shows how racism and white supremacy were central to how white German sex tourists understood and framed their preferences when paying for sex. She demonstrates how sex tourism allowed men to purchase racialised “dark” native bodies at “reduced prices”; or, as one man on a sex tourist’s website put it, travelling to the Dominican Republic allowed him to purchase “dirt cheap colored girls” while on holiday (Brennan, 2001, p. 643).

A striking similarity between all these studies (conducted in various contexts, including the Dominican Republic, Thailand, and Vietnam) is that they all demonstrate the ways in which men constructed the “native” women selling sex in these holiday destinations as intrinsically different to Western women (e.g. Brennan, 2001; Garrick, 2005; Hoang, 2010; Katsulis, 2010; O’Connell Davidson, 2000, 2001; Seabrook, 2001). All of these studies found

¹⁰ Scholars have discussed and debated the intricate relationships between sex tourism and gendered power relations, racial inequalities, and exploitation. However, engaging meaningfully in these important debates around sex tourism is beyond the scope of a thesis that focuses on men who primarily pay for sex in their own country.

that men used racist stereotyping to construct native “Third World” women as hyper-sexual and sexually uninhibited. They were constructed as more desirable because they were more likely to embody traditional notions of femininity than Western women, to be submissive as well as more willing to serve, pleasure, nurture, and “take care” of men during their time with them on holiday (Garrick, 2005; Hoang, 2010, 2015; Katsulis, 2010; Seabrook, 2001). Conversely, women from Western countries were often constructed negatively as being too independent and empowered. Katsulis, for instance, found that men routinely devalued North American women in an extremely derogatory fashion. They were described as “uppity”, overly empowered, demanding, self-serving, greedy, and conniving (2010, p. 218). Men’s tendency, discussed in the literature on heterosexuality, to construct women dualistically, splitting them in this case into “good” and “bad” or desirable and undesirable women, can again be noted.

What are the implications for these findings for the South African context, with its deeply racist colonial past? South Africa remains one of the most economically unequal societies in the world, largely spatially segregated along the lines of race and class. This therefore allows for the imagined racial and cultural Other to exist in closer geographical proximity than it might do in more homogenous societies. Despite the importance of race(ist) relations in shaping South African society, no existing research explores explicitly the ways in which race and racism filter through men’s constructions of paying for sex. This certainly points to a very important knowledge gap, one that should be addressed in research on men who pay for sex in South Africa.

It is noteworthy that the explicit and overt misogyny and racism expressed by men on sex tourism websites has generally not been reported in research into men’s participation on websites and forums catering for local sex industries in the Global North (Hammond, 2015; Horswill & Weitzer, 2016; Huschke & Schubotz, 2016; Milrod & Monto, 2012; Sanders,

2012). It is likely that men might also communicate differently on forums where sex workers are also allowed to participate than in forums that have strict “punters only” rules. In her analysis of British online forums geared at the local sex work industry, Sanders (2012) describes a largely respectful culture within these forums, showing how clients and sex workers often interact and cooperate with one another to establish and maintain good client etiquette, health and safety standards, and codes of conduct for sexual transactions. Thus, discourses and power relations pertaining to race might operate in more prominent or explicit ways in some sex work contexts than others.

2.3.5 Men who pay transsexual women for sex. Men who pay transsexual women for sex are often forgotten in research into male clients of woman sex workers. Male to female transsexual women may alter their bodies to become more feminised to varying degrees, with those who undergo hormone therapies, body modifications, and various surgeries that allow them to completely pass as genetic women on the one end of the spectrum, and those who choose not to undergo any surgery occupying the other end. Although men may pay all kinds of transsexual women for sex, there is one kind of transsexual body that is highly desired and highly visible within the broader sex industry; these women are commonly referred to (and often advertise themselves) as “shemales”, “chicks with dicks”, or “ladyboys”.¹¹ These terms are not usually used to denote a gender identity, but rather are employed as labels or descriptors within the sex industry (Käng, 2016). To be successful in the sex industry, transsexual women should appear extremely feminised in their features, usually having breasts and other distinctive, traditionally attractive feminine characteristics, but they must retain their penis (Kulick, 1997; Lim, 2015; Weinberg & Williams, 2010).

¹¹ These terms tend to be neutral descriptors within the sex work industry, however they are considered offensive to some trans women because of their association with the sex industry (Käng, 2016). I use the term “shemale” to discuss trans women who sell sex in this thesis because it is the language used by my participants. However, I acknowledge that this might be an offensive term to some people both within and outside of the sex work industry.

Despite the fact that sex industry websites and forums across the world, including South Africa, are filled with discussions about, and advertisements for, “shemales”, the research around transsexual women in the sex industry tends to be based in Southeast Asia (e.g. P. Jackson & Sullivan, 1999; Totman, 2011). Perhaps it is not surprising that, when the broader body of literature on sex work is taken into consideration, the majority of this research focuses on the relationship between the spread of HIV (Bao et al., 2016; Gallagher, 2005; Poteat et al., 2015).

The little research that does focus on the meaning that men make of their paying transsexual women for sex shows that the typical client identifies as heterosexual, although some men identify as bisexual (Kulick, 1997; Reback & Larkins, 2006; Weinberg & Williams, 2010; Winter & King, 2011). These studies suggest that men manage their heterosexual identities in relation to paying transsexual women for sex in various ways. Kulick (1997), drawing on his ethnographic work in Brazil, and Winter and King (2011), drawing on their work in South and East Asia, show how, in both these contexts, a man’s gender and sexuality is generally not defined according to his anatomy, but rather by what he does with that anatomy. Unlike in many Western cultures, where a rigid heterosexual-homosexual dichotomy exists, it is the act of penetration that makes someone masculine regardless of whether the body they penetrate is male or female. Thus, rather than simply having sex with another man, it is only through being penetrated by a man that a person would be understood as homosexual or as not being a man. Transsexual sex workers who are regularly penetrated by their clients are thus, by definition, “not men”, and the act of penetrating a transsexual sex worker would not be deemed a homosexual act. Both studies found that penetrating transsexual women could actually bolster men’s identities as heterosexual men, rather than call it into question (Kulick, 1997). In the United States, Weinberg and Williams (2010) found that men who identified as heterosexual could pay for sex with a transsexual woman

without it having implications for their heterosexual self-identity as long as they did not engage with, or express desire for, the transgender women's penis, but rather emphasised their desire for her breasts and feminine features.

This body of work on men who pay transsexual women for sex shows how the sex work industry opens up possibilities for pushing or resisting the boundaries of heterosexuality. However, while the men in these studies “deconstruct” patriarchal understandings of sexuality and desire, they simultaneously “also put it back together again” in the ways in which male sexuality is defined phallogcentrically through penetration and by valorising feminine bodies that best approximate cultural ideals of feminine beauty (Weinberg & Williams, 2010, p. 381). This very limited body of work on men who pay for transsexual women for sex highlights how client-sex worker contexts can be important sites for investigating the ways in which some men may negotiate and navigate more fluid (hetero)sexual identities.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter has presented a review of the body of international literature on men who pay for sex. A brief review of the most dominant research areas in the field suggest that, rather than asking men to speak for themselves, researchers have primarily been concerned with predicting, explaining, quantifying, and problematising men's paying for sex; understanding male client's behaviour in terms of the spread of HIV/AIDS; and categorising men who pay for sex according to socio-demographic variables. I have argued that, collectively, the kinds of questions asked by this body of work could stigmatise men who pay for sex while telling us very little about the nuanced ways in which they make meaning of paying for sex and how they negotiate their identities in relation to paying for sex.

The review then narrowed its focus specifically to the comparatively smaller body of published qualitative research exploring men's personal accounts of paying for sex, of which almost none has been conducted within the South African context. The review of qualitative research on clients reveals unmistakable parallels between men's constructions of their paid sexual encounters and the broader dominant discourses on masculinity and heterosexuality that have also been outlined in this chapter. In reviewing the qualitative literature on clients, I have simultaneously highlighted how men drew on dominant discourses around masculinity (such as the male sexual drive discourse) and femininity (such as the have/hold discourse that constructs women as asexual, emotional, and needy) in justifying their paying for sex. Moreover, I have shown how men applied dominant understandings and socially-constructed expectations for heterosexual relations (such as discourses of reciprocity, commerce, permissiveness, and emotionality) to the meanings they made of their paid sexual encounters. This complicates our dichotomous understanding of heterosexual sex as being either relational or economic, suggesting that the boundaries between the two may be more permeable than is commonly understood (Hoang, 2010; Sanders, 2012). This chapter thus elucidates the relevance of conducting context-specific South African research that employs a discursive lens to explore how the meanings men make of paying for sex are socially constituted.

I have also identified the silences surrounding race within critical qualitative research on men who pay for sex. While some research on sex tourism has highlighted the ways in which racist, imperialist discourses run through men's narratives, it is seldom addressed in research about men who pay for sex within their own countries. There is no published South African research that specifically explores the ways in which racial discourses intersect the meanings men make of paying for sex or impact the ways in which they negotiate their identities as clients. Considering the centrality of race in the South African context, attending to this gap

in the research should be a priority in any research investigating the subjectivities of men who pay for sex in South Africa.

Finally, I have argued that research on men who pay female transsexual sex workers for sex could potentially provide insights into how paid sexual encounters not only provide contexts where dominant discourses are performed, produced, and perpetuated, but how they have the potential to provide contexts that allow for the imagining of more fluid, less bounded notions of (hetero)sexuality. Further research that explicitly explores men's constructions of paying for sex with the aim of identifying opportunities for resistance and change will meaningfully contribute to the body of knowledge on men who pay for sex.

In light of the insights gained from the review of this literature, and the gaps in the knowledge on qualitative men who pay for sex it has revealed, this study explores the ways in which men's experiences of paying for sex, and the ways in which they make meaning of their client identities, are discursively constituted. It explores how men negotiate and make meaning of paying for sex in relation to their various intersecting gendered, raced, and classed identities, and in turn how paying for sex impacts upon the ways in which men are able to position themselves within dominant discourses of masculinity and male sexuality. A secondary aim of this study is to contribute to methodological knowledge on qualitative cross-gender research through reflecting on the impact of the interviewer-participant relationship on the knowledge that is produced in interviews. The chapter that follows provides a detailed description of this study, designed specifically to address these research aims.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK, RESEARCH DESIGN, AND METHODS

The ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning our research inevitably shape the kinds of research questions we ask. Our conception of reality and truth will determine what we want to know about our research topic as well as how we believe we can come to know it (Willig, 2001). Theory and method should thus be hard to extricate from one another. This chapter functions as more than simply a chapter on methods, but rather addresses and grapples with how theory and method are, in the context of my research at least, in constant conversation with one another. The chapter begins with a discussion of feminist poststructuralism, the theoretical framework that underpins this research project, as a way of leading up to, introducing, and motivating the research questions. I focus on the feminist poststructuralist understanding of gender as something that is “done” or performed, drawing heavily on Butler’s (2008) understanding of gender as performative. I outline the ways in which discursive and intersectional approaches inform and supplement the feminist poststructuralist understanding of gender and sexuality in this study. I then reflect on what these principles mean specifically for this study on men who pay for sex, arguing that the interview is not simply a means of extracting data, but also one context in which various intersecting social identities are performed and, therefore, produced. I then go on to describe and reflect on the research design of this study. Firstly, I outline and critically reflect on the online methods utilised for recruiting participants for the study. Secondly, I describe the data collection process in detail, reflecting on some of the challenges and strengths of both the online instant messenger (IM) and face-to-face interview methods employed in this project. Finally, I discuss the data analysis process, describing and motivating for an eclectic

approach to data analysis and outlining the various theories and approaches that inspired the analytical process.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

3.1.1 Feminist poststructuralism. A feminist poststructuralist epistemological framework has informed this research. Broadly, poststructuralist thought is concerned with deconstructing and destabilising existing social categories such as race, class, gender, sex, and sexuality (Boonzaier, 2006). Rather than accepting such categories as natural and essential, poststructuralists unpack these norms, showing how they only have meaning in the social context within which they exist (Gavey, 2011). Feminist poststructuralism, which draws on poststructuralist thinking to inform a particular feminist agenda, was first introduced by Weedon in 1987. Feminist poststructuralism is an interrogative mode of enquiry that is more concerned with the work of challenging and contesting taken for granted gender norms and categories than it is with resolving gender-related problems and prescribing solutions (Lloyd, 2007). As Gavey (1989) states, “rather than ‘discovering’ reality, ‘revealing’ truth or ‘uncovering’ the facts, feminist poststructuralism would, instead, be concerned with disrupting and displacing dominant (oppressive) knowledges” (p. 436). Two of the central aims or interests of feminist poststructuralism are understanding or acknowledging the existing gendered power relations of everyday life and identifying areas and opportunities for resistance or change (Weedon, 1987). In this chapter, I further elaborate on both of these aims in relation to the current study.

The idea that knowledge is socially constituted is not unique to feminist poststructuralist thinking, but forms part of the broader social constructionist school of thought of which feminist poststructuralism is a variant (Gavey, 1989). It thus shares with other social constructionist approaches (such as narrative and discursive approaches) some of the core ontological and epistemological assumptions about language and the nature of reality and

how we can come know about it. Perhaps one of the central ontological assumptions underpinning social constructionism is the premise that knowledge is not and cannot be fixed, static, and essential; rather, it is always multiple, ever-changing, inherently unstable, very often contradictory, and always subject to change (Gavey, 1989; Lloyd, 2007; Weedon, 1987). As Wetherell (2008, p. 393) states, “meaning can never be finally fixed; it is always in flux, unstable and precarious”.

Feminist poststructuralism diverges from mainstream psychology in how it views subjectivity and the self (Gavey, 1989). Traditional psychology focuses heavily on the individual, and assumes that each person has a unified, coherent and rational self from where unique and authentic individual experiences and subjectivities emerge (Gavey, 1989). Conversely, poststructuralism rejects the notion that there is a stable and unified subject that can come to be known and understood with certainty. Unlike traditional psychology, it assumes a subject that is contradictory, inconsistent and fragmented (Gavey, 1989). It calls for the decentring of the subject, shifting its focus away from the individual and rather understanding subjectivity as socially constructed (Wetherell, 2008).

3.1.2 A discursive approach. My approach is also informed by poststructuralist theory of discourse, power, and resistance (Weedon, 1987). A discursive approach is useful to this particular project as it aids an understanding of how patriarchal forms of power are produced and reproduced both institutionally and for individual men and women, such as my participants and myself (Weedon, 1987). The term “discourse” as I use it here is not limited only to language or text, but any signs or symbols that people use to represent themselves to one other (Parker, 2004). Discourse provides a system of meaning for understanding, experiencing, and acting in the world. Thus, how people come to talk about, make meaning of, and perceive any experience is filtered through the discourses that are available in that particular time and context. Thus, when exploring participants’ gendered experiences, a

feminist poststructuralist approach is not necessarily interested in looking at participants' narratives as an authentic account of truth or reality, but is instead concerned with asking questions about how people negotiate their identities and make sense of their lives using the discourses available to them at any given moment in time (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013).

Drawing on Foucauldian theories of discourse, a feminist poststructuralist view accepts that discourses construct and make available an array of subject positions for individuals to take up. Weedon (1987, p. 119) contends that "to speak is to assume a subject position within discourse and to become subjected to the power and regulation of the discourse". Discourse regulates behaviour, stipulates how ideas about certain subjects are put into practice, and establishes rules that restrict alternative ways of talking about or conducting ourselves (Foucault, 1995; Hall, 2001a). Moreover, discourse and power is always relational (Foucault, 1981; Weedon, 1987). Thus, these subject positions are always taken up in relation to other people, allowing those who take them up to exercise varying degrees of power in relation to them (Gavey, 1989; Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn, & Walkerdine, 2002; Willig, 2001). Each subject position makes available corresponding object positions. In various dominant discourses around heterosexuality men and women are placed in relation to one another, occupying different positions of power within these discourses.

A discursive approach brings to the forefront the relationship between power and knowledge (Henriques et al., 2002). Foucault (1981) suggests that these power relations are not as simple as a uni-directional relationship between the powerful and the powerless. Instead, these relationships of power are more complicated, intricate, often contradictory, and are organised differently in different societies through relations of race, class, gender, religion, or age (Weedon, 1987). Henriques and colleagues (2002) argue that power and discourse are mutually constitutive; making the point that power is not only an effect of discourse, but also discourse an effect of power. Weedon highlights the multiplicity of power

relations specifically focused on sexuality, and warns that a failure to understand or acknowledge this multiplicity in a feminist analysis will render the analysis incapable of identifying the potential points of resistance. Foucault (1981, p. 124) poignantly argues that “sexuality is an especially dense transfer point for relations of power: between men and women, young people and old people, parents and offspring, teachers and students, priests and laity, an administration and a population”. Given the assumption that sexuality is a primary locus of power (Foucault, 1981), I would argue that the current research project, that explores constructions of gender and sexuality in a context where a woman interviews men about paying for sex, represents a very important site for the analysis of this complex notion of power (Weedon, 1987).

Discourses vary in the level of authority that they wield. Dominant discourses, such as those around gender and heterosexuality (reviewed in the previous chapter), are often so entrenched that they are viewed as natural: they invoke appeals to common sense understandings of the world, and are accepted as simply being “the way things are” rather than being viewed as particular versions of knowledge. It is in this way that dominant, taken for granted discourses privilege versions of being that legitimate and maintain existing power relations between men and women (Gavey, 1989; Willig, 2001). As it has been discussed earlier in this chapter, feminist poststructuralism is concerned with the deconstructing and destabilising of these taken for granted social categories and discourses. But if dominant discourses operate in such a way that they mechanically maintain both themselves and certain positions of power, what really is the point of identifying or deconstructing them? If discursive regulatory regimes (Foucault, 1995) determine how sexuality can take shape and can be experienced, what good is there in identifying these regulatory discourses in the first place?

In addressing the above question, Henriques et al. suggest that “power is always exercised in relation to resistance” (2002, p. 428). Similarly, Foucault (1981, p. 101) argues that “discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it”. Understanding these mechanisms of, and opportunities for, resistance and change is central to the feminist poststructuralist agenda. From a feminist poststructuralist perspective, people are seen as subjects able to reflect upon, and have some degree of agency over how they position themselves in relation to the various discursive options available to them (Gavey, 1989; Sandberg, 2011). However, this perspective also “appreciates the deceptiveness of the choice rhetoric” (Gavey, 2011, p. 185) and accommodates people’s complicity with dominant norms, as well as their resistance to them. Feminist poststructuralism expects conflicting motivations, desires, and actions (Gavey, 2011). In fact, through a feminist poststructuralist lens, possibilities for change and resistance emerge through contradictions, discrepancies, and diversions from norms. Henriques et al. theorise about this process of resistance and change:

Changes don’t automatically eradicate what went before – neither in structure nor in the way that practices, powers and meanings have been produced historically. Consciousness-changing is not accomplished by new discourses replacing old ones. It is accomplished as a result of the contradictions in our positionings, desires and practices – and thus in our subjectivities – which result from the co-existence of the old and new. Every relation and every practice to some extent articulates such contradictions and therefore is a site of potential change as much as it is a site of reproduction. (2002, pp. 430–431)

It is these contradictions, and the possibilities they hold for resistance, that are at the heart of a feminist poststructuralist approach (Gavey, 2011). Sandberg (2011, p. 43) draws on the Deluzian concept of *becoming* to understand possibilities for difference and rethinking gender. She suggests that “becoming represents possibilities of something other, while at the same time reiterating sameness, forcing things back onto the well-trodden paths”. The notion that there is a possibility for resistance and change through repeating old discourses in

different and contradictory ways ties in with the feminist poststructuralist understanding of gender as performative, and particularly with the work of queer theorist, Judith Butler.

3.1.3 Performance and performativity. I have, at all stages of the research process, been greatly influenced by the feminist poststructuralist understanding of gender as a performance, as something that is enacted or “done” (Butler, 1990; Pini, 2005). This approach suggests that, by taking up and performing various acts associated with discourses of masculinity and/or femininity in their everyday lives, men and women are understood to be continuously and actively engaged in creating and reproducing gendered identities (Pini, 2005). I draw specifically on Butler’s work (1988, 1999, 2008), which argues that gender is not only performed but that it is *performative*. That gender is performative is based on the assumption that it is not because we are male or female, for example, that we perform certain corresponding gendered acts, but rather that it is through repeatedly performing these often mundane, every-day acts that we become gendered. In this sense, the gendered subject is created through its actions, rather than these actions proceeding from a stable gendered identity (Butler, 1988). Through her concept of the *heterosexual matrix* Butler argues that gender is inextricably linked to sexuality, because to become intelligible as a man or a woman in a heteronormative society one must both desire and be desired by the opposite sex (Butler, 2008). Consequently, Butler argues that that it is impossible to understand sex as separate from gender, and that instead sex subsumes gender (Butler, 1988). She argues that the body itself is not only material or biological but a historical, socially constructed product (Butler, 1988). The body represents a “set of historic possibilities” (Butler, 1988, p. 521); what these possibilities for the body might be (in other words what we can do with our bodies) are constrained or made conceivable by the discourses available at any given time.

At the heart of Butler’s theory of performativity are the notions of repetition, citation, and mimicking (Butler, 1999, 2008). Butler challenges the rigid dichotomies of gender by

defining gender as “*a stylized repetition of acts*” (Butler, 1988, p. 519). She suggests that it is through the repetition of certain acts, which take place within highly gendered, rigid regulatory schemas, that we become gendered. Over time, the repetition of these acts produce the illusion of a coherent, natural, normal, or biologically gendered way of being (Butler, 2004). It is by means of repetition that this norm becomes imposed as natural. This normativity governs gender and is related to power. Heterosexuality is thus understood as a system of privilege (Sandberg, 2011). This coherent identification is constantly cultivated, policed, and enforced, often through punishment. Similarly, Foucault (1980) argues that sex is not merely a norm but also a regulatory practice that produces the very bodies it controls.

In her deconstruction of compulsory heterosexuality, Butler (1999) suggests that gender is merely an impersonation, and that all gender is in fact like drag. She purports that hegemonic heterosexuality is not some kind of original or organic way of being, but that it is inherently a copy of a copy, a constant effort to imitate and achieve idealised versions of itself. She suggests that people constantly fail to live up to these idealised versions of heterosexuality because they are radically uninhabitable and unachievable positions. In this sense, people are fundamentally unable to act fully in the way that is prescribed to them, which results in anxiety and punishment, often in the form of shame. Butler (1999) argues that pathologising social practices are set up to police bodies that perform their gender in ways that fall outside of dominant conventions of compulsory heterosexuality. For instance, homosexuality and transsexuality have been constructed as taboo by society and are punished, marginalised, and pathologised as being “unnatural”. According to Butler, the disciplining or policing of these deviating acts or bodies produces a false stabilisation and naturalisation of heterosexuality. This in turn conceals the fact there is often not a coherent flow from sex to gender to sexual desire, and hides the gender discontinuities that “run rampant” within heterosexual (as well as in lesbian, gay, and bisexual) contexts (Butler, 2008, p. 185).

I have also supplemented my understanding of Butler's work on performativity with Ahmed's (2006) notion of *orientation* and her focus on bodies and spatiality. Ahmed's theorising is valuable in light of this project's intersectional approach as it attends directly to questions of race, in addition to those of gender and sexuality. Like Butler, Ahmed is interested in the repetition of acts, arguing that our bodies get directed, they "become", as a result of the repetition of these acts over time. She argues that, "what bodies 'tend to do' are effects of histories rather than being ordinary" (Ahmed, 2006, p. 56). Ahmed argues that, just like something that becomes effortless through working hard at it, it is through repeating certain gendered and racialised acts, or occupying some spaces and not others, that these become naturalised and thus invisible. Ahmed uses the path as a metaphor to explain her understanding of heterosexuality as an orientation. She stresses the importance of understanding sexuality as a life-long process or a path that one walks. She suggests that sexuality is about being directed or orientated, and that in heteronormative societies our bodies are directed, from a young age and throughout our lives, towards the opposite sex. Therefore, through our actions, like choosing a partner of the opposite sex or of the same race, we are going down a path that we have already been directed towards. Ironically, it is by walking along that path that the path exists; thus, there is a reciprocal maintenance of dominant white heterosexuality.

Butler (1999), again using the ideas of repetition and mimicking, incorporates resistance and change into her theorising. She suggests that the very thing (repetition) that produces and maintains gender norms can serve to subvert them. Gender norms are subverted when they are repeated in a parodic fashion or in a context that defies expectation. For instance, a simple reading would suggest that, although drag obviously reproduces hegemonic versions of femininity, the fact that it is performed by a male body serves to destabilise or mock the assumption of natural coherence between sex and gender, thereby making it potentially

subversive. In this way these norms are both reproduced and resisted. In fact, Butler argues that for a copy or repetition to be subversive of heterosexual hegemony it must simultaneously both copy and displace its conventions. Butler (2008, p. 188) contends that, “although the gender meanings taken up in these parodic styles are clearly part of hegemonic misogynist culture, they are nevertheless denaturalised and mobilised through their parodic recontextualisation”. Thus, drawing both on the work of Henriques et al. (2002) and Butler, it can be suggested that it is through performing “bad” or “faulty” versions of gendered identities that resistance and change are made possible. Similarly, Ahmed (2006, p. 61) suggests that there are possibilities for “failed orientations”: bodies can take up spaces they are not intended to inhabit and follow lines other than those we have already taken, which can work towards the “reorientation” of bodies and spaces “where the ‘new’ is possible”.

Following Butler’s argument that the idealised versions of heterosexuality are largely unachievable and uninhabitable subject positions, it could then be suggested that at some point we all perform “faulty” versions of our gendered identities, and that these faulty repetitions could have the potential to be subversive. This feminist poststructuralist assumption that most people, to varying degrees, will at different moments perform versions of their gendered identities that are complicit with, or resistant to, dominant versions of compulsory hegemonic heterosexuality is central to this thesis.

3.1.4 Intersectionality. I also draw on theories of intersectionality (Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1991) to deepen my understanding of men’s constructions and performances of gender and sexuality within the interviews. Theories of intersectionality were originally put forward by second wave feminists to better understand the complexity of oppressions faced by black women in the Global North. Intersectionality theory is critical of the assumption that all women are affected in the same way by gender stratification, which has the effect of

silencing the other oppressions women face as a function of their raced, classed, and sexual identities (McCall, 2005).

Intersectionality theory suggests that people's gendered identities will always be intersected by their many other social identities, such as race, class, sexuality, religion, and age, in dynamic and complex ways. It suggests that these various social categories cannot be understood as separate from one another, but rather that they interact with one another and are inextricably linked to, and are defined through, one another (Wetherell, 2008). Systems of oppressions, such as race, class, and gender, are seen to be mutually constitutive, and work together to maintain the oppression of some people and the dominance of others (Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1991)

3.1.5 Feminist poststructuralism and the research process. Feminist poststructuralist understandings of knowledge and gender have implications for how we as researchers view our participants' narratives and how we understand the research process more generally. From a poststructuralist perspective, the author of a narrative (be it of a narrative in an interview, a therapeutic session, a book, or a movie) is not understood to be the creator of original thought, but rather as the reproducer of existing discourses that are available to them at that particular time. Thus, from a poststructuralist perspective, the researcher would be less concerned with the authenticity and accuracy with which facts or experiences are relayed by a particular text than with the discourses that are drawn upon within them. As Gavey (1989, p. 466) suggests, we "should approach the reports and accounts of those we research as discursive productions and not as reflections (accurate, distorted, or otherwise) of their 'true' experience". This has been particularly relevant to my research. One of the questions people often ask me when they hear that I have interviewed men about paying for sex is "but how do you know the men are telling the truth?", or "how do you know they aren't just making things up to make themselves look good?". To this, I usually reply, "I'm actually quite interested in

what kinds of stories men think would make them look good”. Of course, finding the “truth” was not on my agenda to begin with. Regardless of whether men’s narratives were true or not, coming from a feminist poststructuralist point of view, I am interested in which discourses participants drew on and performed in interviews and what these performances did for their identities.

From a feminist poststructuralist perspective, as researchers we acknowledge that our readings and analysis of our research data are also largely mediated by our own positioning in various discourses (Gavey, 1989). These assumptions of course point to the impossibility of neutrality and objectivity within in the research process. This approach rejects the possibility of finding an absolute truth and distances itself from the hegemonic research ideal of total objectivity. It again acknowledges that meaning is co-constructed by the researcher and the participant at every step of the research process. Feminist poststructuralist approaches not only contest the assumptions of researcher neutrality, objectivity, and detachedness prized by hegemonic research approaches, but also embrace the messiness of the research process and celebrate researchers’ acknowledgment and analysis of it (Huysamen, 2016).

The feminist poststructuralist idea of gender being both a performance and performative also has direct implications for how as researchers we come to understand the research process, especially how we are implicated in the knowledge that is (co-)produced as a result of it. If we accept the notion that we are all gendered subjects and that we are all constantly “doing” gender through our daily mundane activities and acts, then we must accept that our research interviews would in no way be immune to this doing of gender. We as researchers, as well as our participants, must constantly be doing gender in relation to one another in our interviews. Consequently, interviews become sites where subjectivities are not only explored, but where they are produced (Sandberg, 2011). They become not only contexts where participants’ narrative accounts are collected, but also sites in which both the participants and

the researcher perform, negotiate, resist, and construct gendered identities for themselves in relation to one another. For a researcher like myself who is specifically interested in exploring performances of gender and sexuality, what better place to find these performances than in cross-gender interviews with male participants talking about sex? As Presser (2005, p. 2071) suggests, “enactments of presentably male or female behaviour occur in all research. Cross-gender studies simply bring the processes of gender accomplishment into plain view”.¹² Given this understanding of the interview as a site where gender is actively reproduced and performed through interviewer–participant exchanges (Holmgren, 2011), interviews where the interviewer and participant have differing gender identities may provide particularly powerful examples of these gendered performances in action.

When applying intersectionality theory to understanding the performative nature of gender, it can be suggested that, if we are constantly doing gender and sexuality in our everyday lives, including in the research context, we must simultaneously be doing our other social identities like race and class all the time. Given this understanding, it is important to explore how men’s constructions and performances of their masculinity with the interview context are intersected, mediated, and legitimated by discourses such as race and class. Indeed, this question is central to this study.

Drawing on this kind of understanding of the research context, it is not only participants’ narratives that become the units of analysis, but rather all the interactions, acts, and performances between the participants and the researcher. It involves exploring the various kinds or versions of masculinities and sexualities participants chose, from a repertoire of available versions, to perform for me in response to how they might have perceived me, be it as the interviewer, as an academic, as a PhD student, as a woman, as a white person, as

¹² Although I use the term “cross-gender” throughout this thesis, I am aware of the ways in which the term might reinforce essentialised binary constructions of gender. Drawing on a queer understanding of gender, I use the term not to denote that I *am* a woman and my participants *are* men, but rather to signify the idea that we perform, present ourselves and identify as women or men in the interview.

someone younger than them, or the myriad of other intersecting identities that my body may have come to represent in the moment of the interview. This approach also involves exploring the various versions of femininity (as well as race, class, etc.) I enacted or resisted in relation to my participants. Weedon (1987, p. 87) suggests that, “in patriarchal societies we cannot escape the implications of femininity. Everything we do signifies compliance or resistance to dominant norms of what it is to be a woman”. Thus, part of the analysis will involve exploring how my performances of femininity and other intersecting identities may have shaped the kinds of narratives to emerge in the interviews.

It could be said that what I am arguing for here is a reflexive approach to the research process. However, this differs from the kind of reflexivity that is most commonly advocated in more traditional qualitative research processes, where the researcher, in a paragraph in the methods section, might append a few generic lines acknowledging that their race, class, and gender might impact the research process. In feminist research it is regarded as common practice for the researcher to acknowledge her positionality within the research and to reflexively explore how her research is produced (Sandberg, 2011). Reflexivity has been widely engaged by feminist researchers because it is epistemologically and ontologically connected with the feminist critique of knowledge and knowledge production (Pini, 2004). Like other critical feminist scholars who have explored the dilemmas and dynamics of interviewing in the field of masculinities (e.g. Arendell, 1997; Boonzaier, 2014; Broom, Hand, & Tovey, 2009; Gadd, 2004; Gottzén, 2013; Grenz, 2005; Pini, 2005; Presser, 2005; Sandberg, 2011; Winchester, 1996), in this project I place the interviewer-participant dynamics at the centre of my research focus. The type of reflexivity I am arguing for in this research project is not secondary to the main analysis, but is built into the very design of the research process. Building this kind of reflexivity into the research design also contributes to the rigor of this research project. Thus, I do not use this methods chapter to reflect on the

ways in which I was implicated in and shaped the meanings that emerged from the interviews, but rather I do so throughout the thesis.

3.2 Research Aims

The process of outlining and reflecting on the key theoretical underpinnings of this research has largely directed my research questions. Given this particular understanding of the research encounter, the aims of this study are two-fold.

Firstly, this study aims to contribute to the body of academic knowledge on sex work. Specifically, this study aims to qualitatively explore the ways in which men who identify as clients of female sex workers make meaning of paying for sex and how they construct their interactions with the women whom they pay. It seeks to explore how they negotiate their identities as men who pay for sex in terms of their various intersecting social identities, such as their gender, sexuality, race, and class, and, conversely, how men's paying for sex might influence the ways in which they are able to negotiate and experience their various social identities.

Secondly, this project aims to make a methodological contribution to the field of qualitative psychology by critically exploring this cross-gender participant-interviewer relationship as a site where information is not only collected but where identities are actively negotiated and produced by both the interviewer and participants.

3.2.1 Research questions. Thus, drawing on the interviewer-participant relationship as a context where meaning and identity are co-produced, my main research question is:

How do men negotiate, construct, and perform their identities through their talk on paying for sex in the context of cross-gendered interviews?

In attending to this research question and the broader research aims, the following sub-questions are explored:

1. How do men draw on and perform dominant discourses of gender and sexuality in constructing and negotiating their identities as men who pay for sex?

2. How do men resist or subvert dominant discourses of gender and sexuality through their narratives about paying for sex?
3. How, in their narratives about paying for sex, are men's constructions and performances of their masculinity intersected, mediated, and legitimated by dominant discourses about other socially constructed categories such as race and class?
4. How do participants and I (the researcher) reproduce and/or resist dominant versions of gender, sexuality, race, and class through our interactions with one another in the context of the interviewer-participant relationship?

In the sections that follow I outline and reflect upon the qualitative research methodologies I have employed in setting out to answer these research questions.

3.3 Recruitment

3.3.1 Recruiting participants. Participants were recruited into the project via online platforms. Advertisements were placed on two online classified websites, *Locanto.com* and *Gumtree.co.za*. *Locanto* is an online classified website with a well-established “personals” or “erotic” section. My advertisement stated that I was a post-graduate student from the University of Cape Town looking to interview men who had paid female sex workers for sex about their experiences and opinions on the topic. *Gumtree*, on the other hand, does not allow advertisements with explicit content on their website. I thus had to place my advertisement in the “community” section and word it more carefully, avoiding the use of terms such as “sex”, “prostitution”, or “sex work” (see Appendix D).

In these advertisements I provided an email address via which those who were interested in the project could make contact with me. Thus, all the men who participated in the project were self-selected and did so completely voluntarily. I provided no form of compensation for their participation, yet within the first few days of posting the advertisements I had a flood of emails from men wanting to hear more about the project. In Chapter Four I reflect on some of the possible reasons why the project attracted such great interest from the men involved.

Once men made contact with me via email, I answered any queries or concerns they had about the research process. Those who agreed to participate in the interviews could choose whether they wanted to conduct interviews face-to-face, via Skype video calls, or via online instant messenger (IM) platforms. Most of the participants who were from Cape Town chose face-to-face interviews, while those living in other provinces opted for online interviews. This strategy resulted in men from urban centres across the country being recruited into the study. I argue that the geographical reach of this study is one of its strengths.

3.3.2 The participants. As the table in Appendix A depicts, the sample consisted of 43 men who stated that they either currently paid for sex or had paid for sex in the past. In the section to follow, I will discuss and reflect critically upon some of the characteristics of the men who agreed to participate in this study.

3.3.2.1 Race. In South Africa there are a number of racial categories that are used to identify and name people according to their ethnic heritage. I asked participants to tell me about which racial category they identified with, however participants often provided me with this information unprompted, either in our initial email correspondence or during the interviews. Twenty-six participants identified themselves as white, 13 as Indian, three as black, and one participant identified as “coloured”.

These racial categories stem from the apartheid era, between 1948 and 1991, during which South African citizens were classified according to their skin “colour” as “native/black”, “coloured”, “Indian”, or “white”. “Coloured” was used as a category distinct from black African; a composite and diverse category that included the descendants of relationships between white and black people, the descendants of “Malay” slaves brought from South-East Asia, and the descendants of the indigenous Khoi and San tribes (Seekings, 2008). Despite the abolition of apartheid, this term remains in official use. It is also a term that is linked to a cultural heritage that many people themselves identify with in South Africa

today (Seekings, 2008). The term “Indian” has been used in this thesis is to denote South Africans who identify as being of Indian decent. Most Indian South Africans’ ancestors typically came to the country as indentured labourers between 1860 and 1911 (Landy, Maharaj, & Mainet-Valleix, 2004). The Indian identity and culture is still very strong in South Africa, particularly in the KwaZulu-Natal Province where most of the Indian participants I interviewed resided. However, it is important to note that the Indian identity is not homogenous, but rather is fragmented according to generation, religion, and socio-economic class (Landy et al., 2004).

These racial classifications, a product of South Africa’s racist and oppressive past, are still in use in contemporary South Africa. I acknowledge that using these terms in this thesis is problematic in the ways in which it reproduces this racism; this is an issue that many critical scholars in South Africa grapple with. Nonetheless, the issues of race and ethnicity are central to understanding my participants’ narratives, and these terms have continuing relevance in South Africa today because of the enduring legacy of apartheid. While acknowledging the problems with doing so, I chose to use these terms or categories because they were the ones that all participants used to self-identify in interviews.

3.3.2.2 *Income/class.* The participants ranged between the ages of 22 and 67 years of age, with a mean age of just over 41 years. Most participants defined themselves as financially well established or “comfortable”, and most described professional careers that would place them easily within middle to upper middle class income brackets. Many participants explicitly stated that they were rich or affluent.

3.3.2.3 *Producing our research participants.* While I chose to provide this profile of participants according to social characteristics such as age, race, and income/class at the outset of this thesis, I am simultaneously aware of the problematics behind categorising participants in this way. Sandberg (2011) reflects that, while this kind of profiling of our

participants is helpful, in some ways it is also precarious and may lead us to different conclusions about our participants than we may have otherwise come to. If one holds the poststructuralist assumption that people are not pre-existing entities but rather that they are produced entities, and if one understands the interview context as one site for such production, then we must be cautious of producing our research subjects before our research encounters have produced them. Although both the participants and I entered interviews with socially constructed identities, the interview context also invariably provided opportunities for “becoming” old or young, for becoming white or middle class, and for becoming a certain kind of man or woman in the moment of the interview, in relation to one another, and in relation to the topic at hand.

The category of heterosexuality is one example of how an identity can be taken for granted, and thus potentially limits the possibilities of what could be discovered in the interview context. I could have introduced the participant sample of this study as comprising of 43 heterosexual men. Indeed, the majority of participants stated that they were in long-term heterosexual relationships at the time of the interviews, with 21 being married and eight being in serious relationships with a woman at the time of the interviews. A further four participants were divorcees from heterosexual marriages. Moreover, during interviews it very quickly became clear that participants assumed that I understood them to be heterosexual. Participants did not usually explicitly explain to me that they were heterosexual; instead, it was always an unspoken assumption that they were. This could largely have been due to the way in which I designed this project, and particularly how I worded my recruitment advertisements to explicitly state that I was looking to interview men who have paid *female* sex workers for sex. However, the taken-for-grantedness of participants’ heterosexuality goes deeper than the research design, and speaks to the naturalisation of heterosexuality (Butler, 2008). Originally, when presenting my PhD proposal to the Ethics Board at my university, I

presented it as a study on heterosexual men. A gender scholar¹³ doing research on non-heterosexual youth at the time pointed out to me that I should not be so quick to assume participants' heterosexuality simply because men were answering an advert about paying women for sex. They reminded me that people's sexuality seldom conforms so neatly to the boxes society prescribes, and that I was likely to find that things were, for some participants, a little more complicated than an unequivocal desire for the opposite sex. Indeed, as discussed in Chapter Six, it became increasingly clear as the interviews progressed that the question of sexual desire was not always quite as straightforward for numerous men as I had originally assumed. This highlights the importance, as I have argued above, of not producing our research subjects before our research begins.

3.3.2.4 *Men as arrivals.* By looking at the characteristics of this sample, particularly the face-to-face participants, it is clear that the majority of participants enjoyed multiple intersecting privileges: many participants identified as white, male, middle-aged, middle class, and heterosexual. How these various and intersecting positions of power and privilege played out within the interview context, and how this impacted on the kinds of narratives collected, is a central concern of this thesis and is explored throughout. Moreover, when participants are self-selected into a research project, as they were in this case, there are various aspects around their participation in the study that need to be considered. Sandberg (2011), reflecting on this kind of recruitment process in her research with old men, constructs her participants as "arrivals":

The people participating in a study are often referred to as a "sample", a group carefully picked to respond to the needs of the researcher, often imagined to be representative of a particular social stratum or group. A more appropriate term for the men in this study would, however, be arrivals; more than me choosing them, they chose me, and arrived in this study for various reasons. (Sandberg, 2011, p. 70)

¹³ I would like to thank Jukka Lehtonen for this contribution

Understanding our participants as arrivals may lead us to ask the obvious question, “Why did men arrive?” (Huysamen, 2016). This is a question that I explore in detail in Chapter Four. But it also raises the question of who *didn't* arrive. By looking at the table in Appendix A, the answer to this question is clearly black and coloured men, poor men, and, more specifically, poor black and coloured men. This in turn raises questions about why they did not arrive and what the implications of these “non-arrivals” are for the findings of this research? Of course, I cannot account for all the reasons for non-arrivals. However, it is important to at least acknowledge them and be aware of some of the ways in which this might have impacted on the data collected.

Firstly, it could be argued that, because participants were recruited online, those men who were computer illiterate or did not have access to the Internet via their cellular phones, Internet cafés, or personal computers were excluded from participating in interviews. This meant that the most financially underprivileged segment of South African society, those who could not afford or did not have access to internet resources, were excluded. For this reason, I acknowledge that my research does not afford some of the most underprivileged men a voice in this particular project. In South Africa, where class is still largely stratified along racial lines, this largely equates to poor black men being excluded from my sample.

However, as I have argued elsewhere (Huysamen, 2016), my focus on privileged men should not necessarily be seen as a shortcoming of this research project. In South Africa social research is often conducted using samples drawn from underprivileged or marginalised populations. At the most practical level, this may be due to the fact that, amongst a number of other factors, poor and disempowered people are easily recruited into research projects in South Africa. Winchester (1996) makes similar observations about the recruitment of participants in the Global North. In South Africa poor people are more likely to be eligible recipients of government grants or services and are more likely to seek the services of Non-

Governmental Organisations than wealthy people, who tend to make use of the private sector for service delivery. Therefore researchers can quite easily gain access to samples through research collaborations with such organisations. Moreover, for those people living in extreme poverty, the small financial compensation often offered to research participants may act as an incentive to participate in research. It is unlikely that this compensation would work as a motivating factor for wealthier people to participate in research studies; making affluent, more empowered groups comparatively difficult to access as research participants. Whatever the explanation might be, the fact remains that privileged populations are under-researched in South Africa, and the poor and marginalised are very often over-represented.

As feminist researchers we need to ask questions about what our research, including our methodology, “does” more broadly at both a material and discursive level. Spronk (2014) attends to this question particularly powerfully in relation to her work with black men in Kenya. She shows how the concept of a unified “African man”, as it has been employed in academic discourse on global health issues, serves to construct black men as Other. She shows how this discourse is generative, arguing that its use in international scholarship on men and masculinities, particularly in relation to explanations of multiple sexual partnerships, (re)produces the discourse of the hyper-sexualised black man. Similarly, the invisibility of privileged groups and the over-representation of the poor and marginalised in research has resulted in social problems like violence being represented primarily as a problem of the poor and disadvantaged. Poor black men in particular have borne the brunt of these negative representations in work on masculinity and violence (Spronk, 2014). When researchers exclusively draw research samples from underprivileged groups for their studies of stigmatised social issues like HIV/AIDS, sex work, or violence, they risk further marginalising and stigmatising these already marginalised and stigmatised groups. Focusing research solely on underprivileged, disenfranchised populations associates them with the

stigmatised social issues under study, and may give the impression that the only types of people to be affected by these issues are the poor and marginalised, further perpetuating existing racist discourses. Thus, although it is important to acknowledge the voices that I have potentially silenced through my research, I purport that researching “privilege” in the context of a stigmatised issue such as paying for sex may in fact not be one of the downfalls of this project. By presenting a critical take on male middle class heterosexuality it also makes a valuable contribution to social research of this nature in South Africa.

3.4 Data Collection

3.4.1 Face-to-face interviews. Narrative interviews were utilised to collect the data for this study. Interviews are well suited to a feminist poststructuralist lens as they provide a useful way of exploring the complex and often contradictory ways in which people handle discourses that are available and at stake (Sandberg, 2011). The primary aims of narrative interviews are to invite participants to tell stories, to elicit long sections of talk, and for participants to guide the interview process as far as possible (Riessman, 2008). Thus, I aimed for interviews to be largely unstructured, allowing the participants to lead the interview and determine its pace, tone, and content. However, in reality the interviews varied along a continuum from being relatively unstructured to being semi-structured, depending on the ease with which individual participants conversed.

I conducted face-to-face interviews with 11 participants in Cape Town. Face-to-face interviews took place in coffee shops in areas that suited the participants. The duration of each interview was roughly between 1.5 and 3 hours. I began each interview asking participants to tell me a little bit about themselves (giving examples about what work they did, their family, hobbies, interests, and where they grew up) in as much or little detail as they felt comfortable as a way of inviting their narratives. From thereon, for those who were

comfortable to talk, I allowed them to lead the interviews. I steered the interviews by picking up on and asking participants to elaborate upon issues that I was interested in as they raised them. For those who were not as forthcoming with information, I had prepared a few key question areas that I hoped would facilitate participants' telling of narratives about paying for sex. These questions included:

- Tell me about the first time you paid for sex.
- Tell me about a particularly memorable or positive experience of paying for sex.
- Tell me about a negative experience you have had when paying for sex.
- What are your preferences or the criteria you use when choosing a woman to pay for sex?
- Why do you think women are in the sex work industry?
- Tell me about your experience of the client-sex worker relationship; are there any boundaries or rules from either side? Who do you think has the most power in the relationship?
- Did you/do you have a partner at the time of paying for sex? Do/did they know about your paying for sex?
- How is paid sex different to other kinds of sex you've had?

And in an effort to invite participants to reflect on their experience of the interview process, I asked:

- What made you decide to participate in this research project?
- How did you find the experience of doing this interview?

All face-to-face interview participants were given the option of participating in multiple interviews, although the majority chose to do just one interview. I conducted a total of three interviews with one participant (Stuart) and a total of two interviews with two participants (Richard and Johan). The rest of the face-to-face interview participants opted to do one interview. Where follow-up interviews were conducted, I explained to the participants that I would be listening to the interview recordings at home and making notes about issues I would

like to follow up on, or ask for clarification about, in the next interview. I encouraged participants to reflect upon the interviews and to bring any points of discussion they would like to make to the next interview, allowing them to set the agenda to some degree. The participants who opted for follow-up interviews did come to the interview with set issues they wanted to discuss, allowing for rich, in-depth data to be collected.

Conducting these interviews in public spaces meant that I did not have to consider the issues relating to my safety that I would have had to consider if I had interviewed participants in other locations, for instance their homes. Moreover, because of the illegal status of sex work in South Africa, I also had to carefully consider the venue I selected in relation to issues of anonymity. If I were to have conducted interviews at a private interview venue, such as my university, it would have been likely that colleagues who were aware of my research topic might have seen my participants coming and going from the interview venue, which could have automatically implicated participants in the illegal and stigmatised activity of paying for sex.

When arranging the interviews, some participants voiced concerns about privacy and worried that other people might hear them if they were to do the interviews in coffee shops. However, in practice these environments actually provided a very easy space to talk about such a “personal” or “intimate” topic. I selected busy coffee shops, allowing participants and I to chat freely and casually (like everyone else in the coffee shop) without anyone realising that we were doing a research interview. I argue that this relaxed setting provided a context that was actually less threatening and more conducive to having (possibly) difficult conversations than a private office at my university would have been. Finally, and possibly most importantly, conducting interviews in coffee shops provided a valuable context to explore my research interest around the “doing” of masculinity and femininity within the interview context. Conducting the interviews in coffee shops not only meant that the

participant and I just looked to others like a man and a woman having coffee, but that we, to some degree, also became just a man and woman having coffee. This provided interesting insights into how both the participants and I performed and negotiated masculinity and femininity in the interviews, and the complex ways in which this intersected the researcher-participant dynamics.

3.4.2 Online interviews. Those participants who lived in provinces outside of Cape Town, or did not want to meet face-to-face, were given the option of doing the interviews either via Skype video calls or via an instant messaging (IM) chat platform of their choice. I conducted two interviews via Skype video calls. While the video calls took on much the same pace and format as the face-to-face interviews, the online IM interviews differed in various ways.¹⁴

The IM chat applications allowed participants and I to have conversations via text, on a real time basis, by sending text messages back and forth to one another. I conducted 30 Interviews via IM platforms. The most popular platform was WhatsApp Messenger, followed by Google Chat, BBM messenger, and then Facebook Messenger. I included a recent passport-style photograph as my profile picture on each of the messenger platforms, thus providing men, from the outset, with a basic idea of my gender, race, and age.

IM interviews were conducted in real time, with participants and I responding to one another back and forth via text messages in a conversational manner. I used the same set of probing questions, where necessary, as I did with face-to-face interviews. As with the face-to-face and Skype interviews, how structured the interviews were depended on the individual participants. However, as a whole, IM interviews did tend to be more structured than the face-to-face and Skype interviews. Participants and I also tended to converse in shorter sentences, often using the simple or shortened vernacular that is characteristic of text

¹⁴ Skype interviews were conducted in private settings rather than in coffee shops.

messaging. Conversation often did not flow as naturally and comfortably over text as did when talking face-to-face or over Skype. I also found that online IM interviews were more disjointed than the face-to-face and Skype interviews as some (but not all) participants were inclined to pause interviews when they, for example, received a phone call or attended to a knock at the door.

In general, I found online IM interviews to yield data that was suited for a more thematic approach to analysis, with answers that were shorter, more to the point, and were very interesting at a content level. It was, in most cases, more difficult (but not impossible) to explore the subtler, taken for granted performances of gender that occurred in the interview in the same way I could with the face-to-face data. Participants and I also had more time to think about and construct our answers and questions before responding. Consequently, it is arguable that less was “given away” in the way it often is in face-to-face interviews, where a participant or interviewer may, for instance, begin a sentence one way and then correct themselves to sound more socially acceptable.

Conducting the online IM interviews tended to be a very slow process. This was particularly true for those participants who were not completely efficient with typing or those using touch screen cell phones. Due to the fact that the interviews tended to be a time-consuming process, interviews were generally broken up over a number of sessions and over a number of days or weeks. It usually took about three (but sometimes more) two-hour sessions to complete the interview process with one participant. Thus, in essence, multiple follow-up interviews were conducted with all IM online participants.¹⁵ As with the face-to-face follow-up interviews, both the participants and I would bring topics of discussion, questions, or thoughts to our follow-up interviews, again allowing for rich and interesting data to emerge.

¹⁵ With the exception of Jez, whose interview I ended early (see Chapter Four).

Online IM interviews also invited a level of disclosure that face-to-face interviews seldom did. For example, three online IM participants told me about their experiences of child sexual abuse, whereas none of my face-to-face participants disclosed anything of that nature. I also collected far more narratives that overtly challenged normative notions of heterosexuality (to be discussed in the following chapters) than I did in face-to-face interviews. Perhaps because the IM interviews were so time-consuming, and the interview relationship was cultivated over a longer period of time, that they allowed for trust and rapport to be established between the participants and I. Conversely, it could be argued that less trust and rapport might be needed online, and that, because of the relative anonymity the online text platforms provided, participants found it easier to disclose these kinds of details online than they would have if they had been sitting with me face-to-face.

Both face-to-face and online IM methods of data collection brought with them their own unique sets of advantages and limitations. Utilising the two approaches together afforded me the opportunity to collect vast, interesting, and diverse data.

3.4.3 Transcription. Audio recordings were made of the face-to-face and Skype video interviews and were transcribed verbatim. Because the interviewer-participant interactions and dynamics occurring in the interview were of interest in this project, when transcribing the face-to-face interview data, I paid careful attention to the small or subtle interpersonal communications such as pauses, body language, sighs, laughter, and repetitions (Wetherell, 1998).

Although the IM interviews were time consuming to conduct, they came with the benefit of being self-transcribing (Kazmer & Xie, 2008). The texts from the online instant messenger interviews were directly transferred into word processor documents that then functioned as the interview transcripts.¹⁶ Participants also automatically had copies of the interviews, which

¹⁶ Because IM interviews were copied and pasted directly into word processor documents, they have not been edited for spelling and language errors.

meant that they could read over them again before the next interview if they so wished. In online IM interviews there were less noticeable micro-communications, such as sighs, pauses, or body language, making the data less rich in this regard. However, because the interviews could be copy and pasted directly from the messenger application, they remained as they were during the interview, meaning that none of the data was changed or lost in the transcription process due to misinterpretation, negligence, or poor audibility of the interview recording, making these transcripts particularly interesting in this regard.

3.5 Research Journal

In keeping with the aim of building reflexivity into the design of the research project, I kept a research journal throughout the research process. The process of journaling was instrumental in allowing me to interrogate how my intersecting identities influenced the research process in various ways. Here I was able to reflect on my positionality within the research process and also explore and unpack my personal biases and the anxieties, frustrations, shame, anger, and amusement that I experienced at different moments in the research process. Although the research journal was primarily used for my personal reflection, small excerpts have occasionally been used to support the discussion of my findings.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Some basic ethical considerations apply to the treatment of participants in both qualitative and quantitative research (Willig, 2001). These will now be discussed.

3.6.1 Harm to subjects and confidentiality. Researchers have an ethical obligation to protect participants from harm (Willig, 2001). Harm is a multidimensional concept that includes, among other things, threats to personal safety, emotional distress, financial loss, or

damage to reputation (Corbin, 2003; Willig, 2001). All interviews were conducted either in public places or online at times and venues that were most convenient for participants. This arrangement meant that participants incurred the least possible inconvenience and travelling expense.

Because of the unstructured, conversational nature of the interviews, participants were in control of what information they wished to disclose to me during interviews. The questions could be answered in as little or as much detail as participants wished, and participants were made aware that they could refrain from answering any questions they did not feel comfortable talking about, which they did do. Thus, the likelihood that the interviews would elicit strong emotional responses was small. Moreover, I asked all participants to reflect on the research process at the end of each interview, which gave participants the opportunity to express any feelings of distress that they may have experienced as a result of their participation in the interviews.

Due to the stigma associated with sex work, threats to the reputation of participants are a pressing concern (Grenz, 2005). Many participants hid the fact that they paid for sex from their families, employers, and, sometimes, their friends. Thus, confidentiality and upholding participants' anonymity was of utmost concern.

Maintaining participants' anonymity was relatively easy as most men who responded to my advertisements already had aliases and anonymous email accounts set up which they used to make contact with sex workers and escort agencies. I did not ask participants to provide me with their real names, and where they did provide them I did not keep any record of them. All participants were assigned pseudonyms, regardless of whether they used aliases in communicating with me or not.

3.6.2 Informed consent and deception of respondents. Informed consent implies that participants are provided with all the possible relevant information about a research project's

purposes and procedures before data collection takes place (Corbin, 2003; Willig, 2001). Deception refers to the researcher intentionally misrepresenting information so that participants believe that which is not true (De Vos, 2002). Participants were not deceived during this research process, and were informed about the aims and aspects of the project before they agreed to participate in the interview. Any person who responded to my initial advertisement was sent an email in which I introduced myself and provided an outline of the project and what my interests and aims for the project were. Specifically, they were informed that I was a PhD student in the Psychology Department at the University of Cape Town, and that my area of research interest was in issues of gender and sexuality. I explained that I was interested in hearing about their experiences of paying for sex as well as their thoughts on their gender, relationships, and sexuality more broadly. Many participants had specific interests and concerns surrounding the research, and, in many cases, I fielded numerous questions over email, back and forth, before participants agreed to be interviewed.

Before the interviews commenced participants were emailed a consent form (See Appendices C and D) that provided them with my details, the purpose of the research, data collection and analysis processes, and issues of confidentiality. Participants were made aware of their right to terminate interviews, without consequence, at any point in the interview process. Face-to-face participants signed a copy of this form at the start of the interview. Participants interviewed online were asked to reply to the email, with the attached consent form, stating that they had read and were satisfied with the contents of the form. After each interview I reminded the participants that they could, at any time, request that any part of the interview be omitted from my analysis and write-up; no participant requested that interview content, other than identifying details, be omitted.

Because all participants were self-selected and were not offered any form of compensation for their participation, I had no concerns about them being coerced or manipulated to participate in the project.

3.7 Data Analysis: An Eclectic Approach

An eclectic approach to data analysis has been employed in this study. The analysis has been partly influenced by discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is far from a coherent, unified approach for analysing data, and the term means different things to different people. Although there are some step-by-step models for doing discourse analysis (e.g. Parker, 1992), I aligned my analysis with those who understand discourse analysis to be more of a “sensitivity to language rather than as a ‘method’” (Parker, 2004, p. 310). Discourse analysis, as I apply it in this thesis, refers broadly to a set of methods that employ different theories of language with the aim of identifying discursive patterns of meaning as well as inconsistencies and contradictions in a text (Gavey, 1989). I see it as a process of naming the language people use to constitute their own and other’s identities (Gavey, 1989).

Broadly speaking, there are two main analytic frameworks for discourse analysis. The first is inspired by the work of Foucault and the poststructuralist thinking already delineated in the discussion on feminist poststructuralism earlier in this chapter. At its core, this approach focuses on the *kinds* of subjects and objects that are constructed through discourse. It focuses on the ways of being in and seeing the world that these discourses make available to subjects, and explores their relationships to power (Willig, 2001).

The second approach, often referred to as discursive psychology, is inspired by conversation analysis and ethnomethodology (Wetherell, 1998). Here the interest lies in *how* people use the discursive resources available to them to negotiate certain identities and achieve certain interpersonal aims within their immediate social interactions. It is the “talk-in-action”, as Wetherell (1998, p. 395) terms it, that is of interest. In other words, this

approach to discourse analysis is interested in what people “do” or accomplish with language, and places emphasis on the performative nature of discourse (Wetherell, 2008; Willig, 2001). Inspired by conversation analysis, this approach is more interested in the immediate social context within which the language occurs, rather than the broader social context that is the main interest of Foucauldian discourse analysis. For example, discursive psychology might be interested in how people, in social interactions such as interviews, employ discourses to justify or rationalise an action, attribute blame elsewhere, construct themselves desirably or distance themselves from an undesirable social identity. Data analysis from this perspective would pay careful attention to even the smallest interaction between the interviewer and participant, noting features such as pauses, turn-taking, intonations, and repetitions, and analysing how their responses to one another may serve to do things for their identity and achieve interpersonal objectives (Wetherell, 1998; Willig, 2001).

In psychology it is increasingly common to differentiate between the two kinds of discourse analysis, despite the overlap that exists between these approaches (Wetherell, 1998; Willig, 2001). However, Wetherell (1998) argues for a more integrated, eclectic approach which draws on both schools of thought: “if the problem with post-structuralist analysts is that they rarely focus on actual social interaction, then the problem with conversational analysts is that they rarely raise their eyes from the next turn in the conversation” (p. 402). In analysing the data from this study, I relied on an eclectic approach to analysing discursive patterns within the data. Drawing on the Foucauldian approach, I identified the various available discourses of gender and sexuality (as well as race, class, age etc.) that participants drew upon. But, due to my interest in how meaning was co-constructed within the interview, I also attended to the immediate interview context. I explored how these discourses were performed and utilised in the moment of the interview to achieve certain interpersonal objectives, for instance to justify behaviour, to make a participant feel comfortable, or to

establish or contest the other person's position of power in the interview. I identified the subject positions that these discourses offered participants and myself in the moment of the interview and explored the relative object positions that were constructed as a result. I questioned what implications these subject positions had for participants' ability to negotiate their identities and relative positions of power, both in the interviewer-participant context and in talking about and making sense of their lives more broadly. In line with my poststructuralist framework, I also identified paradoxes and contradictions in the discourses that participants and I drew upon (Sandberg, 2011). I looked at the ways in which these discourses, employed by participants and I, reproduced existing gender relations, as well as moments where they somehow offered possibilities for resistance or change (Gavey, 1989).

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the influence that narrative theory had on the analysis of my data. Narrative theory, like feminist poststructuralism, emerges from a broader social constructionist paradigm, and therefore shares many of the same epistemological assumptions about language and the nature of reality and meaning already discussed in this chapter. However, what sets narrative analysis apart from the discursive approaches to data analysis outlined above is its focus on the stories that people tell. From a narrative perspective, the researcher is not only concerned with identifying the discourses that are embedded in the stories participants tell, but also with how these discourses are communicated, conveyed, and performed *through* these stories. Thus, keeping these stories whole, rather than fragmenting them during the analysis process, is key to this approach (Riessman, 2008).

Personal narratives make for interesting units of analysis because they are not merely neutral and passive accounts of events. Instead, they are strategic and functional; in other words narratives *do* things (Riessman, 2002). Riessman suggests that narratives may be used by individuals to "remember, argue, justify, persuade, engage, entertain, and even mislead" their audience (2008, p. 8). One of the central functions of personal narratives is the

construction of selfhood and identity. According to narrative theory, it is through narratives that we create ourselves (Crossley, 2000). When an individual tells a story about their life, they are performing a *preferred* version of their identity, which they wish to convey to the *specific* audience (Parker, 2005; Riessman, 2002, 2008). Therefore, exploring what the narrative unit under analysis “does” or accomplishes is one of the core aims of the narrative analyst. The narrative analyst focuses on which stories participants choose to convey, how they portray these stories, and the identities that they consequently construct through the act of story telling.

It is the practice of keeping participant’s stories whole, and exploring how identity is performed through these stories, which has influenced my analytical process. This approach to our participants’ narratives can be linked to the concept of *Gestalt*, the understanding that the whole is more than or different to the sum of its parts. Hollway and Jefferson (2013) have interpreted and adapted the concept of *Gestalt* to provide practical techniques that researchers can apply to their interviewing techniques to elicit whole narratives, or the interview’s *Gestalt*. However, I suggest that it is also important to reflect on the impossibility of keeping narratives whole, particularly when analysing data and presenting research findings in traditional ways, such as in a dissertation. Although we prioritise our participants’ stories, to say that we as researchers keep our participants’ stories whole is to silence the ways in which we inevitably fragment their narratives through our research. Of course, we literally fragment our participants’ narratives by only quoting small sections of their talk in the discussion of our findings because of the word and page limits traditional academic mediums place upon us. However, as researchers we also select which stories to focus on in our analysis, and which stories to discard. We decide which parts of our participants’ talk constitute a whole story, and in doing so we inevitably isolate smaller stories from larger master narratives, sometimes without recognising them. So, although prioritising participants’

narratives in our analysis, and understanding participants' stories as mechanisms for constructing and negotiating their identities is a priority, I argue that it is important to at least acknowledge the impossibility of fully keeping our participants' narratives whole

To summarise my analytical approach, in analysing this data I did not employ a set step-by-step analytical framework. Instead, my approach to data analysis was eclectic. I understood the data from a feminist poststructuralist epistemological framework, specifically identifying the ways in which participants and I performed and negotiated our various intersecting identities within the moments of the interview. In identifying the discursive patterns in participants' talk, I relied on principles from both Foucauldian and discursive psychology approaches to discourse analysis. I identified which available broader social discourses participants drew on, and also analysed how they used these discourses in the immediate interview context to construct and negotiate various identities and subject positions for themselves. In doing so, I was further informed by a narrative approach, in the sense that I was careful to keep the narratives that participants told me intact where possible, viewing these stories as strategic and functional and as units of analysis. I also drew selectively from the works of other theorists, such as Hollway and Jefferson (2013) and Lacan (2013), where their approaches were relevant to particular parts of the interview data. I used this eclectic analytic approach to organise my data thematically: identifying themes and subthemes (pertaining to the content of the data and the nature of the interviewer-participant relationship) and retuning to, re-organising and refining these themes repeatedly until the final themes and chapters emerged.

I argue that this eclectic approach is well suited to a feminist poststructuralist agenda. Gavey (2011) carefully argues for the value of theoretical impurity; she warns how strict methods and theories tend to discipline our thinking and can become "boxes that limit and circumscribe research, rather than offering fluid pathways for creating inquiry" (Gavey, 2011,

p. 186). Gavey, like Wetherell (1998), argues for the value of transgressing borders of theoretical approaches through their careful adaptation and combination:

I would rarely choose to say ‘I do discourse analysis’ because I prefer to think about research as a process of asking theoretically informed questions - sometimes as much about unknowing as knowing - rather than as the application of a particular method. (Gavey, 2011, p. 187)

This notion of research being a process of “unknowing” is a powerful one. It fits into a feminist poststructuralist framework, outlined in this chapter, that is largely about doing the work of unknowing what we take for granted about our gendered selves. The idea of research being a process of unknowing also resonates with this particular research project. This project is partly about unknowing what hegemonic research traditions take for granted about the ideals of researcher objectivity and detachedness from the research process. Moreover, very often, as I navigated this research process (from conducting interviews, to writing my research journal, to engaging with the data), what I expected to find, how I expected I would relate to participants in interviews, or what I thought I already knew about the research topic and about my own positionality, was disrupted or turned on its head in some way. In many ways, engaging in this research process has raised as many new questions as it has answered about the research process, masculinity, male sexuality, and men who pay for sex. Thus, this study itself is partly a process of unknowing, a process that I reflect on in the chapters to follow.

3.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter has described and critically discussed this study’s research design and process. It has provided an introduction to feminist poststructuralism, as well as to theories surrounding discourse and power, intersectionality, and narrative that together comprise the theoretical framework that underpins and informs the entire research process. It has demonstrated how the ontological and epistemological standpoints of this framework shape

the study's main aims and research questions. The chapter has provided a description of the research design and process of the project. It has also presented a critical discussion of the methods of recruitment, the sample, the various methods of data collection, and the eclectic approach taken to data analysis. In the three subsequent chapters I present the findings that resulted from this research process.

CHAPTER 4: MEN'S REASONS FOR ARRIVING FOR INTERVIEWS

In Chapter Three I presented my participants as “arrivals” (Ahmed, 2006; Sandberg, 2011). After placing the advertisements online, I was inundated with emails from men interested in participating in the study.¹⁷ In a context in which paying for sex is illegal, and considering that most of the men I interviewed were married or in long-term committed relationships, agreeing to participate in the study not only seemed to offer no clear gains for participants, but also posed potential risks. This leads to the question, “Why did these men arrive?” (Huysamen, 2016; Sandberg, 2011). In this chapter I attend to this question by discussing four main themes. Firstly, I assess the interview as a context for the confessional. Secondly, I argue that participating in the interview was as an opportunity for *jouissance* or excitement. Thirdly, I explore how the interview became an erotic encounter. Finally, I explore men’s desires for emotional intimacy as a motivation for participating in the interview.

In discussing these themes, I argue that the interview context, particularly the interview dynamics between participants and I, can provide insight into both the meaning that men make of paying for sex and heterosexual relations more broadly. I also attempt to make a methodological contribution to feminist qualitative research by reflecting critically on the complex interpersonal dynamics involved in doing cross-gender interviews with men about topics around sexuality, investigating how these dynamics might impact on the data we collect in interviews.

¹⁷ Sanders (2012) also reflects upon men’s desire to participate in interviews concerning their paying for sex. She notes that, after putting out a call for participants during an interview on a BBC radio station, she received over 200 emails within 24 hours from men interested in participating in interviews about paying for sex.

4.1 The Interview as a Confessional

Missing from qualitative studies of men by women is a systematic investigation of how relations of power between interviewer and participant become part of interview data. (Presser, 2005, p. 2086)

In this section I explore the research interview as a context for the confessional and I discuss how this dynamic relates to the question of power within the interviewer-participant relationship. I asked all participants why they had decided to do the interviews with me. Although the data offered various insights into men's reasons for arriving, using the interview as an opportunity to tell someone their secrets about paying for sex was the most common reason men gave for arriving.

For most participants, that they paid for sex was a closely guarded secret, and many men said that I was the first person they had ever told about it. Men thus constructed interviews as an opportunity to "tell someone" about their paying for sex:

It's not something I can really speak about to people generally, so it's nice to be able to tell someone. (*Denis, 43, white: Instant messenger*)

You the first person I am sharing this with. I can't even talk to a friend of mine coz I have to protect my girlfriend. But I wanted someone to talk to and you just came. (*Jabu, 28, black: Instant messenger*)

I tell you what I think, we [Indian men] just don't have someone we can trust to tell our life stories to. A stranger might be our best bet. (*Kyle, 39, Indian: Instant messenger*)

It is hardly surprising that so many participants felt that they did not have anyone whom they could talk to about paying for sex, given that paying for sex is illegal in South Africa, and is still largely constructed as taboo (Gardner, 2009). However, it can be argued that the stigma attached to sex work can be understood through a broader discourse of secrecy and shame around the kinds of sex that occurs outside of normative heterosexual relationships. In fact, research suggests that the majority of men hide their paying for sex from their family and friends, regardless of the legal status of the sex industry (Huff, 2011). Foucault (1981), in his seminal work *History of Sexuality*, argues that historically we have understood sexuality in

terms of what he calls the *repressive hypothesis*. He argues that, from the seventeenth century onwards sex and sexuality have been repressed in Western society and constructed as something private and secret that should be confined to the four walls of the legitimate procreative married couple's home. Sex outside of the heterosexual marriage has been constructed as something particularly unspeakable and shameful, and, as Foucault (1981) suggests, has had imposed onto it puritanism's "triple edict of taboo, nonexistence, and silence" (p. 5). If we apply this repressive hypothesis to our understanding of sex work, we see how paying sex workers for sex could fall into a broader construction of an unspeakable kind of sex. This answers the question of why men felt they had no one they could talk to about paying for sex, because paying for sex is unspeakable. But it does not answer the question of why so many men *wanted* to talk about it, and why they chose to do so with me in these particular interviews.

It was the narrative of a participant named Steve that assisted me in answering this question, and in making links between men's arriving and Foucault's notion of the confessional:

Monique: Why do you think you decided to [do the interview]?

Steve: Well I'm a, I've been wondering about that. After I said yes to you which was kind of spur of the moment. Mmm, I thought there is an element of almost catharsis, confessional. And I think a lot about that because as I said I am an atheist. I think one of the unfortunate consequences of atheism is that we surrender some really good healthy institutions like the confessional, rituals, you know that we can't replace outside the context of religion... Anyway, so when I think of motive that came up. The other is curiosity. Who are you and why are you doing this? And I think just the opportunity to spend a couple of hours doing something out of the ordinary. That's always valuable. That's valuable to me. Adds spice to life.

(Steve, 57, white: Face-to-face)

Foucault (1981), even though he agrees with the notion that sex and sexuality was constructed as something shameful and “secretive”, argues for an understanding of sexuality that differs from the repressive hypothesis, one that speaks to the relationship between sexuality, knowledge, and power. He suggests that, since the rise of the Victorian bourgeoisie sex has in fact been talked about a great deal. However, this talking has just taken a very specific format, that of the “confessional”. When we think of the confessional we first think of the religious confessional. However, Foucault (1981, p. 59) argues that “Western man (sic) has become a confessing animal”, and that the confessional has made its way into psychiatry, where the patient freely confesses to the therapist with the hope of some kind of therapeutic change. It has also made its way into the justice system, medicine, education, family relationships, and many other aspects of everyday modern life. Foucault (1981) goes on to argue that the confessional is one of the main techniques that western society has come to rely upon for the production of knowledge and “facts” about sexuality. He suggests that “for us, it is in the confession that the truth and sex are joined, through the obligatory and exhaustive expression of an individual secret” (Foucault, 1981, p. 61).

When we consider Foucault’s understanding of a society largely centred on the confessional, it makes a great deal of sense that men might feel they need or want to find an avenue through which they can confess their secrets about their paying for sex. I argue that the interview thus became a context for the confessional, a space where men could legitimately engage in a discursive ritual that allowed them to speak about the unspeakable. Steve’s construction of the confessional as something beneficial, an opportunity for “catharsis”, reinforces Foucault’s (1981, 1995) assertion that the obligation to confess is so deeply ingrained in society that we do not perceive it as a form of power put in place to constrain us, but rather as liberating. It is exactly through this mechanism, he argues, that bodies are policed in contemporary society.

The excerpt from my interview with Sam below provides another example from the data of how the interview became a context for the confessional:

...because you have certain beliefs and doing things doesn't change your beliefs, it just knowing it's [paying for sex] against what you believe in, that is a lot of guilt, it sort of feels hypocritical and most people don't want to be hypocritical... that's the main guilt. It's also maybe that keeping quiet about it sort of feels deceitful. It's not nice to be deceitful, it's the same as lying. So that's also maybe one of the reasons why I responded to the ad, because it's a way of telling someone [laughs] you know what I'm saying?
(Sam, 40, white: Face-to-face)

Sam talks about the dissonance between his religious beliefs and his paying for sex. For Sam, it is not only paying for sex that makes him feel guilty, but specifically the “keeping quiet about it” that he equates with dishonesty. Again, paying for sex is constructed as a necessarily secretive action, but, in line with Foucault's theorising, it is simultaneously constructed as something that *should* be confessed. The opportunity to confess that the interview provided was important for Sam because, simply as a function of telling someone about paying for sex, he became a less deceitful person.

As Sam's narrative suggests, the confessor does not confess simply for the sake of confessing, but rather with the hope that these confessions will “do” something for them. Moreover, the confessional does not unfold in isolation, or in terms of the confessor alone; it only has meaning and purpose in as much as there is someone to bear witness or listen to the confession. Foucault (1981) reflects on the dynamics of this relationship:

The confession is... a ritual that unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console and reconcile; a ritual in which the truth is corroborated by the obstacles and resistances it has had to surmount in order to be formulated; and finally, a ritual in which the expression alone, independently of its external consequences, produces intrinsic modifications in the person who articulates it; it exonerates, redeems, and purifies him (sic); it unburdens him of his wrongs, liberates him, and promises him salvation. (pp. 161–162)

If one understands the interview as a confessional in the Foucauldian sense of the term, then it is important to acknowledge that participants' confessions were not only about them doing

the telling, but also about the interviewer bearing witness to these narratives. In the moment of the interview, I became not only the interviewer, but also the witness to men's confessions, confessions that the participants were making in the hope of experiencing some cathartic effect or, in Sam's case, in the hope of being unburdened from some of the anxiety he experienced around being "deceitful". Similarly, Unam (32), in an online instant messenger interview, said "I think I mentioned this is like therapy for me! Lol. Guess I also needed to share my secret with someone". This narrative reflects the way in which the confessional has been embedded within therapeutic discourse (Foucault, 1981). Gideon (53, *white: Instant messenger*), when I asked him why he had responded to my advertisement said, "I also thought it would help clear the guilt". And Christo (41, *white: Instant messenger*) said, "one do not get a lot of chances to talk about a taboo like that, so in a way it's very nice or even liberating". These examples again demonstrate how, although there may be no obvious material gain from participating in our research, when our research involves behaviours that fall outside of that which is deemed socially normative, our participants may arrive to confess their secrets in the hope of, as Foucault (1995) suggests, some kind of catharsis, liberation, or absolution from guilt, or in the hope that some kind of therapeutic change might occur (Sanders, 2012).

Moreover, by applying Foucault's theorising of the confessional to the interview context, it can be argued that the interviewer also holds the power within the confessional-interview relationship, because they are the ones who make meaning of their participants' narratives, scientifically validating them through their analysis. Regardless of how egalitarian our interviewing style might be, or how much power our participants enter the research process with (as my middle class, middle aged, male participants did), we must acknowledge that we, as interviewers, command a level of power over our participants simply by the very nature of the research interview design. Schwalbe and Wolkomir suggest that, "to agree to sit for an

interview, no matter how friendly or conversational, is to give up some control and risk having one's public persona stripped away" (2001, p. 206). There were many instances in the interviews where this kind of power dynamic was evident, as participants were clearly anxious about what I made of their stories and admissions. For instance, Kyle (39, *Indian: Instant messenger*) asked, "What would you say about my sexuality after what you've heard from me?". After telling me about his sexual experiences, Ross (30, *white: Instant messenger*) said, "right now you probably think I'm totally mad¹⁸". I argue that the interviewer can become not only witness to participants' confessions, but also the authority figure who would make sense of, judge, validate, diagnose, or turn into knowledge their confessions.

However, an analysis of the interviewer-participant dynamics in these interviews points to a potential blind spot in Foucault's theorising of the power involved in the confession, as Foucault does not seem to fully account for the ways in which gender, as a vector of power, intersects the power relations inherent in the confessional relationship.¹⁹ Foucault's thesis focuses on how the person to whom one confesses holds the power; indeed, as interviewers we are afforded significant power over our participants in this way. However, our identities as women might simultaneously place our male participants, as confessors, in positions of power over us, the witnesses to their confessions. In fact, I argue that in cross-gender interviews the very fact that interviews take on this confessional nature may encourage the performance of traditional feminine gender roles that maintain men's dominance over women, and thus also allow male participants some level of dominance during the interview.

¹⁸ This narrative can be linked to Foucault's (2006) work in *Madness and Civilisation: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* on the relationship between the psychiatrist and his insane patient.

¹⁹ Despite how instrumental Foucault's sophisticated analysis of power has been in furthering a feminist agenda, he has not gone without criticism for his denial of power differences between sexes in society (particularly in relation to his articulation that rape should be considered purely in terms of violence, and not in terms of gender or sexuality (Cahill, 2000; Plaza, 2005)).

In traditional patriarchal constructions of gender, women function as facilitators of men's narratives. They seldom challenge or critique men's speech; rather they are constructed as empathetic listeners (Grenz, 2005; Pini, 2004; Winchester, 1996). For instance, feeling that I had my participants' deepest secrets in my hands led me to treat my participants with extra care, asking questions in non-threatening ways and avoiding responding to participants in ways that might have made them feel uncomfortable. Looking back on the transcripts, I realise (and this is evident in many of the excerpts presented throughout this thesis) that there were many moments in the interviews where participants made statements, comments, or gestures that were sexist and racist, and even times where they overtly sexualised me. However, I very seldom challenged or resisted their comments. Instead, I had nodded my head or given an understanding "mmm" to sentiments I sometimes wholeheartedly disagreed with because I did not want to make the participants feel as though I was judging them. Upon returning to the interview transcripts, I was horrified to realise how I had colluded with my participants in their racism and sexism, and sometimes actually facilitated the production of these problematic discourses during interviews. Indeed, numerous women researchers²⁰ (Arendell, 1997; Boonzaier, 2014; Grenz, 2005; Pini, 2004, 2005, Presser, 2005, 2005; Winchester, 1996) have reflected upon and critiqued how their patterns of relating to their male participants reproduced traditional gender roles and perpetuated dominant discourses of masculinity and femininity. As researchers we may find ourselves doing the very versions of gender we are interested in critiquing. Arendell (1997, p. 363) reflects on her own collusion with participants, saying, "in serving as an 'audience' to these men...did I contribute to or even implicitly endorse the perpetuation of the system of male dominance?". Conversely, Grenz (2005) argues that her aim was not to change the individual men in her study, but rather to study the very discourses that they produced:

²⁰ It is not only within cross-gender interviews that researchers find themselves colluding with their participants while doing research on sensitive or stigmatised subjects. Both Gadd (2004) and Gottzen (2013), for instance, write reflexively about the complexities of doing interviews with violent men.

On the one hand I clearly reproduced sexism just by being a woman, listening to my informants, and even encouraging them to talk. On the other, I challenged them, because my listening had an intention of its own. I made them my research “objects”. (p. 2106)

Grenz accurately captures the complex and shifting nature of the power that occurred within her interviews, and arguably in cross-gender interviews more generally. On the one hand, interviews became a context where traditional gender roles were reproduced. However, participants arrived at interviews to confess their secret transgressions; their narratives about paying for sex became confessions. As the interviewer, I was afforded power because their confessions became my research objects; I had the final say in turning their confessions into knowledge about men who pay for sex. Ultimately, men’s confessions became this very thesis.

4.2 Reasons for Arriving: Excitement and Risk

The previous section illustrated how men’s motivations for arriving for the interviews reveals something about how participants make meaning of paying for sex. Men constructed paying for sex as something secret, shameful, and taboo, and as something that needed to be confessed. In this section, I again look to the question of why men arrived for interviews as a way of exploring the meaning that men make of paying for sex. This time I discuss the interview as an opportunity for an enactment of excitement and risk, and argue that it is this same opportunity for excitement and risk that makes paying for sex alluring.

Participating in this study could have posed a considerable risk for men had I not been who I said I was. In our initial email correspondence, many participants asked me how they could be sure that I was not working with the police, and that they would not arrive to the interview to be arrested, or that I was not going to publically expose them once they had admitted to paying for sex. Most men said that if anyone were to find out about their paying for sex, their marriages, jobs, and sometimes even their friendships would be threatened.

However, they all agreed to speak to me anyway. Moreover, some men revealed their real names or gave me bits of information (such as the name of their place of work) that would allow me to easily identify them, despite my recommendations that they not do this in order to ensure an additional layer of anonymity to the study. It became clear that these men were, very consciously, taking risks by participating in these interviews.

In the excerpt below, Stewart talks about paying for sex in terms of the risk involved:

Stewart: One thing that did strike me, which made me think a bit about it, was this question of risk-taking. I mean I regard myself as a very conservative, a low-risk-taker.

Monique: Yes, you mentioned that.

Stewart: But, in fact, on reflection I'm probably not. I mean 'cause this is risky for me. This could destroy my reputation.

Monique: Yes, sure, sure.

Stewart: I ride a Harley-Davidson motorbike. I think, I think I take all the reasonable precautions, but it's a risky thing. I walk up steep hills and climb mountains, which is risky. Um, I invest in businesses with no certainty of an outcome. So perhaps, um, the view of um, engaging with sex workers is just an extension of my risk profile to some extent. (*Stewart, 67, white: Face-to-face*)

In the first section of this narrative it is unclear whether Stewart is referring to the interview or paying for sex when he says "this is very risky for me". It could be argued that this is largely irrelevant, because it is the risk of being "found out" or exposed for paying for sex that participants like Stewart find gratifying, or seem to get a thrill out of. In Stewart's narrative it is clear how taking this kind of risk is also tied into how he constructs his masculinity. He equates it with other stereotypical constructions of hegemonic masculinity, such as riding a motorbike, being brave in business, and being physically active and strong. Here paying for sex adds to Stewart's "risk profile" and his ability to construct himself according to traditional notions of idealised masculinity.

Moreover, it can be argued that with the sense of risk comes an equally thrilling sense of excitement. Frank (2003, p. 68), in her ethnographic research in strip clubs, reflects on how one of her participants said that he enjoyed the thrill of frequenting “dive” strip bars in dangerous parts of town because of the potential risks involved. The participant fantasised about a “worst case scenario” where Frank might not be a researcher and would drug him and rob him. Similarly, Humphreys (1975, p. 120) found that middle class married men derived the same kind of thrill from engaging in oral sex with unknown men in public restrooms, suggesting that “to them, the risks of arrest, exposure, blackmail, or physical assault contribute to the excitement quotient”.

In the previous section of this chapter, I presented an excerpt from an interview with Steve talking about why he decided to participate in the interviews. He said, “and I think just the opportunity to spend a couple of hours doing something out of the ordinary. That’s always valuable... Adds spice to life.” Like Steve, many other participants constructed their decision to participate in interviews in terms of doing something “out of the ordinary” or “exciting”. Below Johan also talks about the sense of libidinal excitement that he derived from participating in the interview:

It creates some excitement for me as well chatting to you about it, saying this is how my brain works. So excuse me for that... So, ja²¹ it’s exciting for me, to answer your question. (*Johan, 48, white: Face-to-face*)

The notion of doing something “out of the ordinary” as a reason for participating in interviews is pertinent because it is also how participants constructed a primary motivation behind their paying for sex. As found in previous studies (Gould & Fick, 2008; Holzman & Pines, 1982; Huysamen & Boonzaier, 2015; Joseph & Black, 2012), the majority of participants in long-term relationships said that paid sex offered them an opportunity to perform the kinds of sex acts (like anal sex, oral sex, sex with multiple partners, and sex in

²¹ “Ja” is a South African colloquial expression used to affirm or agree, equivalent to “yeah” in English.

various sexual positions) that were “forbidden” or not “allowed” by their wives or partners. For instance, in an instant messenger interview, Bongi (35, *black*) said he first started paying for sex because of “wanting to get what was forbidden at home, i.e. styles like Blowjobs, Anal and Threesomes”. Piet (36, *white: Instant messenger*) said, “with a working girl, you are allowed to experiment with different stuff! Not at home! At home, the same positions/procedures are ALWAYS followed”. Paying for sex gave men a thrill because it offered something different and out of the ordinary; it also gave them the opportunity to engage in the kinds of sex that were “forbidden” or not “allowed” in their marriages.

Be it in arriving for the interview or a paid sexual encounter, the thrill or enjoyment that participants derived from doing something that deviated from their “ordinary” lives, or from what they are “allowed to do”, or that posed the risk of discovery, could be linked to the Lacanian concept of *jouissance*. Hook (2017, p. 607) defines *jouissance* as a kind of “negative pleasure”, an “intense libidinal arousal”, or the “getting off” that we derive from doing or thinking things that transgress moral laws or socially prescribed limits. Hook (2017, p. 607) argues that *jouissance* is tied to pain and horror (“enjoyment intermingled with suffering”) because it is often in the moment of being horrified or distressed by our own actions or thoughts that we are also thrilled by them. Lacan (2013, p. 177) highlights the transgressive quality of *jouissance*, stating that, “without transgression there is no access to *jouissance*”. According to Hook’s argument, that something is deemed morally, socially, or legally wrong, or is in contradiction to our own personal beliefs, is the very condition that allows us to derive a thrill or enjoyment from it.

Part of the allure of paying for sex might have to do with something other than the actual sex: it might also be related to the *jouissance* or thrill of doing something that transgresses personal, moral, or social boundaries. In Sam’s narrative, he talks about the guilt he experiences in relation to paying for sex, saying, “because you have certain beliefs and doing

things doesn't change your beliefs, just knowing it's against what you believe in, that is a lot of guilt". If we apply the Lacanian thesis to this narrative, it could be argued that it is precisely because Sam's religious beliefs condemn paying for sex, and his doing so *in spite of* these beliefs, that allows for this "kick", "negative pleasure", or *jouissance*.

This argument might contribute to understandings of the mechanisms involved in paying for sex more broadly. The pleasure that men derive from paying for sex is, in and of itself, political and discursive. Hook (2017, p. 609) argues that "the making of laws produces the very conditions of possibility for enjoyment. That is to say, there is a direct relationship between what moral law insists *we not do* and the perverse kick we get out of doing it anyway". This suggests that it might be precisely the social, moral, legal, and religious discourses that condemn and stigmatise paying for sex that allow it to be thrilling (Holzman & Pines, 1982; Sanders, 2012). This is certainly of significance in a country like South Africa, where paying for sex is illegal, as well as being socially stigmatised and morally condemned by a large section of society.

4.3 The Interview as an Erotic Encounter: The "Two-Way Street"

Acknowledging the impact of sex and sexuality on fieldwork is fraught with complexities. However, ignoring our sexuality will not make it go away, but will simply impede our understandings of how it shapes our positionality in a number of contradictory ways. (Cupples, 2002, p. 388)

It is, perhaps, not surprising that some men arrived for interviews with the assumption that talking to me about paying for sex might offer them some kind of erotic pleasure or sexual arousal. In this section of the chapter I reflect on how the research interview became an erotic encounter for the men involved, and show how I was often implicated in this eroticism.

In exploring the impact of the interview-participant relationship on the data collected I borrow from some psychoanalytic principles put forward by Hollway and Jefferson's

psychosocial approach to the research process (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). They suggest that the interviewer and participant's perceptions of each other are not purely derived from a "real" relationship, but are influenced by our own histories and relationships that we bring with us into the research relationship. Hollway and Jefferson's concept of the *defended subject* is particularly helpful in making meaning of the discourses that emerge from the interviewer-participant relationship. They suggest that, in every social encounter, people experience anxiety resulting from perceived threats their identities. People draw on certain available discourses and discursive positions, rather than others, as defences against these feelings of anxiety. Therefore, in terms of the interview relationship, both the interviewer and the participant can be understood as defended subjects (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). An example of this dynamic is provided in the excerpt below, where Dan speaks about his reasons for arriving to the interview in terms of sexual arousal:

Monique: Yea that's always one of my questions, like what made you decide that you would be willing to contribute?

Dan: ... Oh, ok. I, I, I [long silence] I mean when we started chatting over, you know, Locanto messages, the more I thought about it, the more it became a bit of turn on for me.

Monique: Well obviously for me this about my research

Dan: No, no I understand, I'm not hitting on you or anything. You asked why. And yea, so the more chatting to a total stranger um you know had some sort of appeal...I was really nervous as the beginning, but I told you as we were chatting on Locanto and then email I kind of got more into it and it started becoming more erotic for me, um to talk about it. Specially, I mean, if you were a guy I don't know if I would have actually spoken to you to be quite honest.

Monique: And why is that? Because I mean a lot of people say that so.

Dan: I donno, I think it's just guys feel more comfortable around a woman.

Monique: Yea, if I was a guy, a male researcher?

Dan: Yea, but like I wouldn't let a guy massage me you know.

Monique: Sure. But this is supposed to be different!

Dan: No it is to a point, but it's kind of the same mind set, that was my point when I said I would never let a guy massage me. I don't feel comfortable opening up my secure side to a male, um. And I think maybe because opening up and talking about it, talking about my experiences is arousing for me, I definitely wouldn't wanna do it with a guy.

Monique: Sure

Dan: So yea I didn't expect like this, because it's been quite nice chatting to you, it's been yea, opening up, I've never told people things like that. It's been, um, ah, [silence] a turn-on, I'll probably have to go rub-off after this, um, but it's it been very interesting.... I think for me it was a two-way street, we both got something. (*Dan, 37, Indian: Skype*)

Dan acknowledges that, rather than just the telling of his sexual stories, my presence, as a woman bearing witness to his sexual stories, was a necessary condition for the interview to be an erotic experience for him. Like Dan, many other participants explicitly stated that they would not have arrived for the interview had I been a man. This might partly be understood as men's expression of homophobia or *homohysteria* (Anderson, 2013), which is discussed more fully in Chapter Six, as well as being related to social constructions that position women as empathetic listeners (Arendell, 1997). However, when I ask Dan why he would not have been willing to be interviewed by a male researcher, Dan likens my listening to his sexual stories to other erotic acts (like massages) that a woman might offer him. In this moment, rather than being the interviewer, I became a woman with whom he could potentially have a sexual encounter.²² In response to Dan's comparison I exclaim (and I remember the exasperation I felt) "but this is supposed to be different!". This sentence is

²² When I suggest that I became a woman with whom Dan could have a sexual encounter, I use the notion of becoming discursively rather than materially. This interview was conducted online, and Dan lived in a different province to me, thus it is highly unlikely that Dan, or participants like him, had expectations of having sex with me.

pertinent because it reflects how my own gendered position and my own expectations impacted how I related to my participants in the moment of the interview. Here the words “supposed to”²³ are central: I am suggesting that the men in the interviews are “supposed” to treat me as a professional rather than a potential sexual object.

However, my professional identity did not override my positioning as a woman (Arendell, 1997), as almost every participant either asked me whether I had ever sold sex or whether I would consider selling sex, or suggested that I should sell sex. For example, Benjamin (22, *Indian: Instant messenger*) asked, “have you thought about actually advertising yourself? You can command a high fee”. Rather than remaining just as the interviewer, I became someone from whom men like themselves could buy sex. Men’s sexualisation (of me and the interview more broadly) functioned not only at a discursive, but also at an affective, level: it made me *feel* like I was not a real researcher. I reflected on this in my research journal:

My interview with Dan has left me feeling resentful and panicky...what do I do with these parts of the interviews, like where Dan says he’ll probably go and jerk off after the interview? Surely this doesn’t count as data? Could I just exclude these sections of talk from my analysis? Do I have to transcribe them? If people were to read these would they take the rest of my research project seriously? Would they think that, rather than real research interviews, these were just something men used to “get off” over. Is this even a real research project? Am I really interviewing these men or am I just playing into their fantasies?

As I identified with men’s sexualisation I began to question whether I was a proper researcher and whether my project was “real” research. I argue that these interview dynamics are significant because they reflect broader patterns of gendered power relations that continue to operate in society. My feeling of being discredited and ashamed in response to participants’ sexualisation in the interviews tells us something about how men’s sexualisation

²³ As an aside, and in light of the earlier discussion on *jouissance*, by sexualising me Dan also deviates from how one is “supposed to” behave in an interview, which is likely to have provided some thrill and libidinal arousal in itself.

of women in professional or workplace settings operate in ways that diminish their sense of power and credibility in these settings.

However, as interviewers it is important to look not only at what our participants project onto us, and how we may identify or disidentify with these projections, but also at how our own defences shape our interview relationships and the data that emerges from them (Gadd, 2004). A more critical reflection of the interview transcripts revealed that I too entered the interview as a defended subject (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). I approached the interviews with the expectation that men might sexualise me, and I brought with me an anxiety that if they did so this might negate my research. As my journal entry reflects, I was reluctant to acknowledge men's sexualisation of me in writing up my findings, as I was anxious of how I would open myself up to the scrutiny of other academics who might prejudice me in the same way these men did. I understand the root of these anxieties as two-fold. Firstly, my anticipation of men's sexualisation was partly a result of my positionality as a woman; as women researchers we bring with us a history of being (both overtly and covertly) sexualised in various spheres of our lives. Secondly, my insecurities and anxieties about how this sexualisation would negate my position as a researcher and the credibility of my work can be attributed to traditional research discourses that privilege and uphold the illusion of the researcher as neutral, objective, and detached. Other researchers have written about their experiences of being stigmatised and having their work discredited within academic peer groups for researching topics of a sexual nature (Attwood, 2010; Hammond & Kingston, 2014). For instance, Cupples (2002) discusses how researchers might avoid acknowledging the erotic elements present in their research for fear that these might call into question the credibility of their work. Similarly, Taylor and O'Connell Davidson (2010) suggest that:

Prostitution occupies a troubled and troubling space between two very different symbolic domains – the public world of market relations, and the private domain of sexual and domestic life... Researchers who enter this space are often conscious that they too may be perceived negatively, that their academic peers may suspect them of

having failed to maintain clear boundaries between their “public” professional selves and their “private” sexual selves. (p. 50)

Thus, my previous gendered experiences, together with dominant discourses on what it means to be a respectable researcher, culminated in a strong desire to manage and control participants’ eroticisation of interviews, particularly any sexual emotion directed toward myself. The effects of my defensiveness are evident in the excerpt from Dan’s narrative above. Instead of letting him honestly reflect on his experience of doing the interview (which is, as he rightfully points out, what I asked him to do) I tell him how he is “supposed to” relate to me in the interview. However, as researchers we base our claims to knowledge on the assumption that participants would reveal something of what they are “really” like to us. In this sense, it could be argued that these men were then “supposed” to show me that they are people who pursue opportunistic sex, without commitment and with any woman, which is exactly what participants like Dan did. But, because of my need to control and contain the interview, them showing me their real selves, when I was implicated in it, was unbearable for me.

In Jez’s narrative below, where the online interview again becomes an erotic space, I respond far more defensively, setting very clear boundaries and (re)establishing myself as researcher:

Jez: We, going into some serious depth now. It's a two way street. First I want to know what you enjoy sexually. Not details just basics. Then I will tell you what sparked me to see selective working girls.

Monique: I'm sorry but I don't want to make this conversation about me and my sexuality. I understand that in a way that's a bit unfair, but I have to set some guidelines for my research...

Jez: Ok let me ask basic questions that are common. You can answer yes or no. What I have learnt in my MBA is that practical experience is what contributes significantly to one’s understanding of the theory.

Ok here goes. Do you enjoy foreplay as a build up? Oral sex giving and receiving?

Monique: I'm really sorry but with all due respect, I am going to have to end this interview now...

Jez: If you are not open-minded enough to be able to reciprocate with mutual opinion you wasting your time with this project and it will, believe me, be the difference between a C grade and A grade with distinction. You will never understand a one sided opinion until you get questioned

(Jez, 45, white: Instant messenger)

The above excerpt firstly illustrates the shifting nature of power relations within the interview. It could be argued, as Grenz does (2005, p. 2097), that when a woman interviews a man about his sexuality, the heteronormative position of the male “looker” and the female “looked-at” is subverted, placing women in a position of power that threatens traditional gendered power relations. With this in mind, it could be suggested that, by focusing the questions back on me, particularly on my sexuality, men like Jez attempt to return me to my “rightful” place as the “looked at” rather than the “looker”. Schwalbe and Wolkomir (2001) also interpret men’s sexualisation of women in cross-gender interviews as men’s attempts to exercise and reassert power over them. Indeed, there were many other ways in which men attempted to challenge my position of power within the interview, for example men tried to challenge the power associated with my doing a PhD by undermining my intelligence or by trying to appear more well-read, learned, or knowledgeable on the topic of sex work than I. However, the interview with Jez illustrates how, even though men exercised their power in the interviews, I, as the interviewer, did have the “final say”, as in this instance it is me who ends the interview.

In this excerpt I seem to have been, as Gadd (2004, p. 395) reflects in his paper exploring the dynamics between him and a male interviewee, “far more geared towards

establishing my intellectual authority, rather than the particular methodological imperatives I adopted". Feminist researchers such as Oakley (1981) have called for egalitarian interviewing methods that include mutual disclosure. It is of course this mutual disclosure that Jez is demanding from me. I refuse to disclose anything about my own sexuality, despite expecting my participants to do so themselves. I end the interview early, abandoning my research principles and losing the opportunity to hear Jez's whole story.

Both Dan and Jez's narratives provide clear examples of how the interview relationship itself became transactional, and how I become enveloped into the discourse of the "two-way-street". Jez attempts to use the resources that I need (his narratives and knowledge on the topic) in order to coerce me into complying with his sexual demands, becoming quite threatening when I do not "reciprocate". Here, Jez tries to turn my "no" into a "yes" by insisting that my choosing to study men's sexual narratives means that I must be consenting to talking about my own sexuality. It could be argued that men's "two-way-street" fantasies, and the ways in which the lines between consent and coercion become blurred in the research relationship, resemble those of the date-rape scenario²⁴ and reflect broader patterns of domination found in heterosexual relations. This question of coercion and consent takes me back to another excerpt from my research journal, one where I reflect on my responses to the ways in which men often made me the object of their sexual stories by simply substituting me, as an "example", into their narratives about their erotic encounters with women:

As I listened to Cyril describe me giving him a blowjob I felt both resentful and trapped. If any other man I did not know in any other setting had began describing himself undressing me and us having oral sex I certainly would have stopped him in his tracks. But I didn't. As the researcher I felt I had to listen, because after all, I "asked for it", didn't I?

The double-edged nature of doing this kind of research is further revealed in this excerpt from my research journal. I reflect on feeling like I could not stop or call my participants out

²⁴ For a helpful psychosocial analysis of popular discourses around consent versus coercion through the deconstruction of media coverage of a date-rape case, see Hollway and Jefferson (1998).

for sexualising me because “I asked for it”– I had asked them to tell me stories of a sexual nature. This discourse of “asking for it” reminds me of when I counselled and facilitated therapeutic support groups for women who had been raped. I was often struck by the intense feelings of self-blame that many of these women carried. Perhaps some of my discomfort here is related to finding myself in a position where (save for my interpretations) I became the “done to”, rather than being in the position of the therapist or interviewer, where I could hold and control these kinds of emotions and challenge these damaging discourses. Some of my anxiety came from realising that I could not transcend the gender discrimination of the research encounter and I could not write it out of my research.

My above reflections provide some insight into the complexity of doing cross-gender research with men, or even more broadly with participants whose views or behaviour we might not align with. On the one hand, in not fully confronting men about their sexualisation, in order to keep the relationship intact, I became complicit to their narratives. On the other hand, defending my position as a researcher (which I felt was threatened by men’s sexualisation) meant simultaneously abandoning my research principles. Although it might be difficult or uncomfortable to reflect on the erotic elements of our research encounters, particularly when we find that we are the objects of the eroticism, it is important that we do. In fact, perhaps we should reflect on these moments specifically because it is difficult and uncomfortable to do so. As Ahmed (2013, p. xvii) suggests, “difficulties are, as ever, pedagogic”.

4.4 Reasons for Arriving: Intimacy and Connection

Getting people to assist you and to open up and talk to you about their attitudes and experiences demands the performance of emotional labour no matter what your social identity. (J. S. Taylor & O’Connell Davidson, 2010, p. 48)

There was a resounding sense of loneliness present in many participants' narratives, as men expressed feeling isolated in their marriages and disconnected from their partners. It was this sense of loneliness that also brought some men to the interviews. In this section, I explore the desire for emotionality and intimacy as a reason for men participating in interviews, and again show how it provides insight into the meanings men make of paying for sex.

Some men entered the interviews with the hope that I would meet an emotional need, be it for companionship, conversation, or intimacy. An interview with a participant called Cyril stands out as a particularly pertinent example of this interviewer-participant dynamic. In a journal entry I reflect on how "as the interview with Cyril progressed I found myself growing more and more mentally fatigued, I was surprised by my strong desire to escape the interview". Upon a deeper analysis of the interview data I realise that this strong response to Cyril was due to how emotionally demanding (or "needy") he had been of me throughout the interview. Cyril expressed a sense of desperation to maintain some kind of emotional relationship or connection with me after the interview. In the excerpt below, it is clear that he wanted more from the interview-participant relationship than simply an opportunity to tell his story:

Cyril: I'm going to be really, really truly honest with you and to the point. I'm actually sorry to hear that you're involved. Okay and there's a reason for me saying this. Okay because I would've so much liked to have had the freedom, okay, to be able to phone you and say: "Monique let's go and have supper or let's go and have lunch and sit and talk to you like I have spoken to you now". Okay. Because a, I have never found someone like this. Okay. And I, I don't think that I will find another.

Monique: No, I'm sure that you will. You just need to find them.

Cyril: ... It would've been absolutely beautiful, okay, to be to be able to have this freedom. To pick up a phone and say to you: c'mon please,

we're such good friends, let's just sit down now. I need to chat about this. Give me your views on it.

Monique: Ja, ja, I think that's what's been nice about this research is, I mean it is, it is research-based, I have to keep within those boundaries. But otherwise

Cyril: That's fine, I understand that...I do understand that, totally. Ja, ja and I reiterate and I'm asking you, please don't just cut it. Don't go away from here and just and cut it. I just want you to just drop me a line... about any bullshit, irrespective, irrespective of what it is, you know. Even if it's a bit cold today, what do you think? Because it's food, it's life, it's food. And it it's so, ja it's so, it's so beautiful and, you know I often say to people you know a connection between two people brain-wise, okay is far greater than, connection, anything else. Strangely enough okay... I'm not saying that you have got a connection with me. I'm saying that I have got a connection with you, okay, as a person, alright. (*Cyril, 53, White: Face-to-face*)

I argue that Cyril transferred onto me his desire for someone to constantly attend to his every emotional need. Cyril also brought to the interview his anxieties about getting older and no longer being desirable to younger women. He asked me in this same interview whether I would consider getting involved with someone of his age. I thus argue that Cyril transferred his desires to be known, accepted, and desired onto me much in the same way that a client in a therapeutic relationship²⁵ might do.

Cyril seems to have some awareness of this transference dynamic as he says, “strangely enough... I'm not saying that you have got a connection with me. I'm saying that I have got a connection with you”. Initially, this statement sounds counter-intuitive; surely an emotional “connection”, by definition, cannot be one-directional, but rather is a mutual process? However, Cyril was quite right in saying that I did not have a connection with him; in fact, I had a surprisingly strong desire to distance myself from him. Due to my anxieties around

²⁵ See Birch and Miller's (2000) article on the parallels between interview and therapeutic encounters.

being sexualised and my need to maintain my control and “integrity” as the researcher, I responded to his very emotional pleas in a cold and distancing manner, using professional and impersonal language like “research based” and “boundaries”. In my attempts to establish “professional” boundaries, I simultaneously rejected participants who brought any sexual emotions into the interviews. I return briefly to Dan’s narrative as an example:

Dan: ...the more I thought about it, the more it became a bit of turn on for me.

Monique: Well obviously for me this about my research

Dan: No, no I understand, I’m not hitting on you or anything...

In an attempt to re-establish *my* role as the researcher, I immediately dismiss Dan’s erotic feelings. Dan perceives my response as rejecting or accusatory, as he immediately responds to me by defending himself. Thus, despite the fact that Dan describes the interview as a place where he hoped that he could “open up” and reveal his “secure side”, the interview relationship became one where he felt rejected or judged for expressing his sexual feelings. This dynamic between participants and I is significant, and in Chapter Six I explore how men construct women as potentially rejecting and judgmental in sexual encounters. I argue that paid sex has value for men precisely because it becomes a “safe space” where they are able to avoid the anxieties and threats to their masculine selves that the possibility of being rejected or judged by women brings.

Returning now to the question of men’s desire for intimacy and connection, I once again argue that interviewer-participant dynamics and men’s reasons for arriving offer insight into the paid sexual encounter. Another example of this is offered in the excerpt below, where Johan attributes both his participating in the interview and his paying for sex to a deep sense of loneliness and a desire for emotional connection. Many men, in addition to expecting sex workers to offer them exciting and varied sex, expected to be provided with intimacy, connection, emotion, and companionship within the client-sex worker relationship:

- Johan: Ja and when you getting older, I'm forty-eight next week and you realise but what is money? What is all that materialistic stuff when you don't have love? When you don't have that connection? If you don't feel someone's skin on your skin? That's what love is about and I've missed that boat. That's how I feel. Married for twenty-five years you, you don't feel that emotional connection. There was many days that I wanted to walk out and say I hope that she finds someone that's really, really good for her but you still feel that responsibility. You can't walk out.
- Monique: Towards her?
- Johan: To her, ja, ja. She lost her voice, vocals about five years ago as well. She had laryngitis, so she only has about thirty percent left of the vocals. I'm an outspoken guy, you see me here...
- Monique: Ja, that's difficult.
- Johan: So it's a bit of a challenge. And so that's for me going out and finding someone you can talk to and that's one of the reasons why I'm here as well.
- Monique: So do you think that's the reason that you pay for sex, from what you've said you know it's quite a, almost a loneliness on one side within your...
- Johan: That's what it is
- Monique: ... so is it just that responsibility you think that's made you, not ten years ago, decide maybe it would be better to leave?
- Johan: Maybe responsibility and, and to still have that father-mother house structure. I went to class meetings some years ago and we were the only ones that were still married. So that was a concern... That loneliness for me, that intimacy and I said it now you must stop me please.
- Monique: No, no, please.
- Johan: That loneliness where you feel you need that intimacy. Where you need that touch of someone. Someone, you know they don't care, you know that actually it is in your mind, for that hour they care. And you have that skin on skin touch and that girlfriend experience or

whatever and you walk away and you, you feel stimulated again. It's how I feel. (*Johan, 48, white: Face-to-face*)

Johan's narrative reflects the resounding sense of loneliness that featured in many men's stories as he speaks with regret about the aspects such as "connection", "love", and physical closeness that he has missed out on in his own marriage. This kind of language is a far cry from that of the sexual drive discourse that dominates our understandings of male sexuality. This need for intimacy can be seen as the antithesis of the hegemonic man who is constructed across many cultures as a rational and unemotional being (McPhillips et al., 2001). However, as discussed in Chapter Two, there are other discourses around masculinity that are becoming increasingly dominant that do make room for expressing sensitivity, emotions, and the desire for intimacy (Wetherell & Edley, 1999). It could be argued that, as men depart further from traditional masculine roles, and the ideals of romantic love and emotionality become more available to them, men may increasingly seek out opportunities to fulfil desires for intimacy (Sanders, 2012).

As Johan explicitly explains, some men used the paid sexual encounter to compensate for their loneliness and meet these needs for conversation, intimacy, and physical touch. This is, of course, not the first research project on men who pay for sex to identify intimacy as an expectation of the client-sex worker transaction. A number of studies on clients have reported participants' desire for intimacy and emotional connectedness within the client-sex worker interaction (Bernstein, 2001; Chen, 2005; Holzman & Pines, 1982; Jordan, 1997; Plumridge, Chetwynd, Reed, et al., 1997; Sanders, 2008). This demand speaks to the emotional labour that sex workers have to perform as part of the work that they do. Returning to my experience of having had similar²⁶ emotional demands placed on me by participants within the interview

²⁶ However, as a researcher I could end the interview if these emotional demands on me became too much; conversely, some workers who rely directly on income from clients for their livelihood might not feel as free to do so.

context, and how exhausting this was for me, it can be suggested that this emotional labour is one taxing aspect of the work that sex workers do (Sanders, 2012).

The findings of this study suggest that men tend to be aware that it is not real intimacy that they are buying, but rather a fake, performed, mimicking, or manufactured kind of intimacy. This finding is substantiated by previous research on clients (Chen, 2005; Holzman & Pines, 1982; Huysamen, 2013; Sanders, 2008). In the excerpt above, Johan acknowledges that the women he pays for sex “do not really care” for him, however, that for the hour that he is with them he is able to imagine or feel like they do. Similarly, Richard said, “I for one like the intensity and the intimacy to go with the physical. I accept and I want it to be manufactured”. It can be argued that, if men are aware that women do not experience genuine feelings and emotions towards them, but rather manufacture or perform emotions, it points to how intimacy becomes another service or a product provided by sex workers. These findings can be linked to Hochschild’s (2003, 2012) notion of emotional labour, as discussed in Chapter Two. This also supports Bernstein’s (2001) notion of bounded authenticity, which suggests that men find paying for sex so alluring because it provides them with the authenticity of a genuine relationship, but allows for boundaries that safeguard them from all the commitments associated with heterosexual relationships.

Finally, Johan’s narrative also illustrates how some men constructed paying for sexual intimacy, rather than leaving their wives to find it elsewhere, as a way in which they could remain “good” committed fathers and keep the traditional nuclear family unit intact. This is in agreement with previous research on both clients (Huysamen & Boonzaier, 2015) and female sex workers’ (Sanders, 2006) constructions of paid sex as “saving” the family unit. Being a good father and financial provider has been found to be yet another important attribute of the hegemonic man across various cultures (Barker & Ricardo, 2005; Boonzaier & De La Rey, 2004). Paying for sex becomes a space where men can obtain the sex and

intimacy they desire, while at the same time maintaining public accountability and their heterosexual identities as “good fathers”. In these narratives about fatherhood there did not seem to be space for imagining the possibility of continuing to be a “good father” outside of the heterosexual marriage. Thus, I argue that, on the one hand, paying for sex can help to maintain the illusion of a neat and tidy heterosexuality, reinforcing dominant constructions of the heterosexual nuclear family. On the other hand, these narratives elucidate how paid sex might provide a space where men feel they are able to express their desires for emotionality, intimacy, and sensitivity, aspects which challenge traditional constructions of masculinity.

4.5 Conclusion

My motivation for addressing the question “why did men arrive?” for interviews was two-fold: I wished to explore some of the meanings men make of paying for sex while simultaneously making a methodological contribution to knowledge on doing cross-gender research with men about issues of sexuality.

With regards to the first aim, I have discussed four reasons why men arrived for interviews. Each of these themes has provided some insight into the meaning men made of paying for sex. In discussing the interview as an opportunity for the confessional, I drew on Foucault’s (1981) theorising. I argued that participants perceived paying for sex to be highly stigmatising, as contrary to their moral beliefs, and as potentially threatening to their various relationships and their identities as good fathers. This study therefore demonstrates that almost all participants understood paying for sex as something that should be kept a secret but also something that must be confessed. It suggests that discourses around sex work, and indeed broader discourses around (hetero)sexuality, are intimately tied up in the meanings men make of paying for sex, the feelings of guilt they experience in relation to it, and the ways in which they manage and conceal their activities related to paying for sex.

In discussing the second theme, the interview as an opportunity for *jouissance*, I have argued that it might be exactly because paying for sex is constructed as risky and as deviating from social, legal, moral, and personal values that makes it such a thrilling activity. This finding thus has important implications for legislation and policy on sex work, which both is shaped by and shapes discourses on sex work and sexuality more broadly.

The third theme, the interview as an erotic encounter, revealed that some men related to the interview relationship as though it were a transactional relationship where they were entitled to make certain demands of me as the interviewer in exchange for their time and participation. I argue that, in light of this discourse of the interview as a “two-way-street”, men’s patterns of relating to me in interviews provided insights into how men might attempt to use their power in other transactional relationships with women. These are insights that might not have been gained simply by asking men or analysing their narratives at content level.

In the last section of the chapter, I discussed the sense of loneliness and the desire for intimacy that men brought to the interviews and transferred onto the interview relationship. I argue that it was this same desire for emotional intimacy and connection, rather than just sex, that contributed to the value that men placed on paying for sex. I reflected on how emotionally taxing I found the emotional demands that men placed on me during interviews, and argued that this allowed me, as the interviewer, into some deeper insight into the emotional labour that sex workers have to perform as part of the work that they do (Sanders, 2012).

With regards to making a methodological contribution to conducting cross-gender research on topics related to gender and sexuality, the second aim of this chapter, I have argued that the power relationship between participants and I was complex and shifting. I have reflected on how my identity as a researcher did not supersede or replace my

positionality as a woman; rather the two identities intersected one another in complex ways. On the one hand, I argued that doing cross-gender interviews with men about sexuality troubles feminist research, as bearing witness to men's confessions meant that participants and I reproduced traditional gender dynamics within the interview. On the other hand, as participants were acutely aware, I had the final authority over how their most intimate stories and their confessions would be analysed, categorised, and turned into knowledge.

In this chapter I presented both participant and interviewer as defended subjects (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). I highlighted the importance of exploring how as researchers our own defences shape our interview relationships and the data that emerges from them (Gadd, 2004). I scrutinised moments where the interview became an erotic encounter and participants transferred their emotional, sexual, and erotic feelings and desires onto the interview relationship. In highlighting the complexities of conducting this kind of research, I have shown how I became implicated in the fantasy of the "two-way street" discourse, where the lines between my choosing to interview men about paying for sex and my consent for allowing my own sexuality to be brought into the interview became blurred. I have reflected on how my own expectations and about being sexualised by my participants, and my anxieties about how this sexualisation might negate my professional position and discredit my research, impacted on how I responded to my participants. I redirected or even shut down their narratives, forfeiting hearing their stories and abandoning my method to satisfy my need for control within the interviews.

As Ahmed (2006, p. 39) suggests, "at least two entities have to arrive to create an encounter". Claiming neutrality as an interviewer (often prized as the gold standard in traditional research methods), and thus ignoring our part in the interviews, would mean telling only half the story. For it is clear that as the interviewer my positionality both influenced men's reasons arriving for interviews and greatly impacted on the narratives that

were “allowed” to emerge from the interviews. Paying attention to the dynamics within the interview relationship not only revealed many of the complexities of doing cross-gender research, but also provided rich insight into the ways in which men negotiated and made meaning of their paid sexual encounters.

CHAPTER 5: INTERSECTIONS OF RACE, CLASS, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY IN MEN'S CONSTRUCTIONS OF THEIR CLIENT IDENTITIES

This chapter continues to explore the ways in which participants performed, constructed, and negotiated their identities through telling stories about paying for sex. I focus specifically on the ways in which participants employed dominant discourses of class and race to construct desirable masculine identities for themselves. Throughout the chapter I pay careful attention to my positionality and how my identity as a white woman was heavily implicated in the racist discourses that emerged from the interviews.

5.1 Doing Class through Paying for Sex

By talking about paying for sex, men were not only doing gender, but they were also doing class. Discourses of money, wealth, affluence, and class ran powerfully through almost all participants' narratives. Participants' identities as men who paid for sex operated in various ways that allowed them to negotiate and construct themselves as wealthy and as belonging to a social class that they found desirable. At the crudest level, the very nature of paid sex allowed men to construct themselves as the kind of men who could afford to pay for sex. This is illustrated in the excerpts below:

I suppose from an economics perspective as well, I suppose you, we also in a point of life where you can afford to do that. (*Riedwaan, 32, Indian: Face-to-face*)

But they will say like "why?" and my thinking is quite simple. In anything you pretty much want what you want and if you get what you want it's ideal. If you've got money and you can afford to pay for it... So again, to answer your question, why? It's an expediency thing. It is a because I can afford it thing. It is a variety, is the spice of life. (*Richard, 43, white: Face-to-face*)

Both Richard and Riedwaan construct paid sex as something that a man must be able to "afford" to obtain. Thus, the act of paying for sex becomes material evidence and symbolic affirmation of their wealth. Research on masculinity in South Africa suggests that money and

wealth are heavily tied into men's ability to construct desirable and powerful masculine identities (Barker & Ricardo, 2005; Morrell et al., 2012). Carrigan et al. (1985, p. 592) suggests, for instance, that hegemonic masculinity is "a question of how particular groups of men inhabit positions of power and wealth, and how they legitimate and reproduce the social relationships that generate their dominance."

Anesh provided particularly vivid descriptions of the ways in which paying for sex allowed him to "do" a certain kind of affluent masculinity. Anesh explained that he worked in a corporate environment and was responsible for "entertaining" his company's international male clients by taking them to "upmarket" brothels where both he and his clients would enjoy paid sexual encounters at the company's expense. Below, Anesh describes the identity he was able to perform whilst frequenting these brothels with his wealthy clients:

He's got, he's got um, he's got numerous properties, he's got a Rolls Royce, chauffeur.... As I said, you know, I thought to myself, Jesus, I can live this man's lifestyle, you know? They were our clients on a contract basis. So with me being single I had to build a relationship with them. What they loved about me, I was single, I had the Jamie Foxx look. I know I'm not dressed now - I wore the blazer, dinner jacket, shoes. I never wore jeans. I never dressed slack. I was always formal. I had that Pacino gangster look. You know what I mean? (*Anesh, 40, Indian: Skype*)

It is evident from the above excerpt that, for participants like Anesh, paid sex is about a great deal more than just the act of sex. These upmarket brothels provide a context in which Anesh is able to enact or mimic the living of a certain kind of "lifestyle" clearly connected to identifications of class and hegemonic masculinity. Anesh says he realised that he "can live this man's lifestyle", indicating that by going to these brothels he is able to enact living a kind of lifestyle that does not belong to him, but rather to another, more affluent kind of man. Anesh provides me with evidence of the physical indicators of the classed masculinity he performs at these brothels, explaining that when he goes to these establishments he wears blazers, dinner jackets, and shoes, and that he is always formal. He also distances himself from what he imagines to be a less affluent, less desirable masculinity by saying that he never

looks “slack”. Anesh’s narrative about putting on clothes speaks to Butler’s (1999, 2008) suggestion that all gender is like drag: she purports that hegemonic heterosexuality is inherently a copy of a copy, a constant effort to imitate its own idealisations because no one fully achieves these idealised versions of masculinity or femininity. Anesh certainly provides a rather literal illustration of what Butler describes. He explains how, at these brothels, he had the “Jamie Foxx look” and the “Pacino gangster look”. By using the term “look”, Anesh himself is acknowledging that it is not that he *is* the kind of idealised masculinity that these celebrities represent, but rather that he was able to *mimic* it in the context of these brothels. Anesh says, “I know I’m not dressed now...”, acknowledging that his appearance in the interview might give him away or reveal the ordinariness of his masculinity, and that I, as the interviewer, might not be able to recognise the kind of idealised man he is describing simply by looking at him. This illustrates powerfully how the context of paying for sex in these brothels, as a means of entertaining corporate clients, made the imagining, performing, and mimicking of a more desirable masculinity possible for Anesh. Men like Anesh were, in the context of paying for sex, able to renegotiate and reimagine their identity in relation to affluence and class. Thus, talking about paying for sex provided possibilities for men to perform dominant versions of masculinity and to construct themselves as affluent.

5.2 Sex Work and Discourses of Dirt and Disease

Although paying for sex allowed men to construct themselves as affluent, they were simultaneously confronted with the longstanding social stigma associated with sex work with which their identities as men who pay for sex would inevitably be intertwined. The bodies of women who sell sex have, throughout history, been constructed as dirty and diseased. Gilman (1985), in an analysis of the ways in which black and white female bodies were portrayed in nineteenth-century art, medicine, and literature, shows how “the prostitute” was constructed

as the essentially sexualised woman and was associated with moral corruption, physical pathology, disease, and decay. Similarly, Levine (2003), in her archival case study of the British colonial policies around prostitution and venereal disease, argues that between 1850 and 1880 virtually every British colony was subject to contiguous disease regulations that identified prostitutes as the primary source of contagion. In South Africa, paying for sex and the broader sex work industry is still largely constructed as “dirty” by the general public, and is linked to the moral decay of South African society (Gardner, 2009). It is often seen to be the opposite of the “good”, “pure”, or “wholesome” sex occurring within the auspices of a traditional loving and committed heterosexual relationship, exemplified by the have/hold discourse (Hollway, 2001). Sex work in the contemporary South African context is also largely stigmatised by its association with the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. Similarly, Lawless, Kippax, and Crawford (1996) write about how women who are associated with HIV infection are stigmatised and constructed as being dirty and diseased. The great majority of both qualitative and quantitative social research conducted in South Africa and internationally is framed within a risk discourse, and focuses on the link between sex work, risk taking behaviours, and HIV/AIDS (e.g. Bucardo, 2004; Karim, Karim, Soldan, & Zondi, 1995; Stadler & Delany, 2006; Wojcicki & Malala, 2001). Sex workers have been particularly stigmatised through this body of work, often being constructed as vectors of disease.

Sex work has, therefore, a long history of being associated with discourses of dirt, disease, and moral corruption. At the same time, discourses of dirt and disease have been, and continue to be, inextricably linked to class. McClintock (2013) shows how discourses around dirt and hygiene were among the first to be conflated with the conception of class. From the twentieth century onwards, dirt and disease has been associated with the poor working classes, who have been characterised as having crowded, unsanitary living conditions and

little regard for personal hygiene. Beyond physical dirt, “moral dirtiness”, which includes dirtiness related to sexual practices, has also been associated with the poor working classes (Berthold, 2010). Conversely, cleanliness, physical hygiene, and “moral purity” have been associated with civility and higher class. Berthold (2010), writing about contemporary American society’s obsession with sanitisation and hygiene (which is also relevant in the South African context), suggests that distinctions of class based on dirt and disease versus cleanliness and purity are still dominant today, with a hygienic dirt-free aesthetic conferring higher status (Berthold, 2010).

Berthold (2010) suggests that “dirt, contamination, or pollution are labels likely to be associated with behaviours that fall outside of, and thereby threaten, our most carefully guarded categories of social classification, including races, classes, genders, and sexualities” (p. 9). Considering the continued association that sex work has with disease, as well as the association that dirt and disease have with constructions of class, it becomes clear that notions of dirt and disease could pose a threat to the identities of men who pay for sex. I have thus demonstrated how paying for sex might have divergent and contradictory implications for men’s identities. Although paying for sex allows men to construct themselves in desirable ways as affluent, discourses of dirt and disease simultaneously threaten to undermine these very identities. How then do men resolve these conflicting aspects of paying for sex in order to maintain a desirable client identity? I will attempt to answer this question, specifically in relation to participants’ constructions of race and class within the interview context.

5.3 The Intersections of Class with Discourses of Dirt and Disease

One way that men addressed threatening constructions of paid sex as dirty and diseased was by constructing women who sell sex dualistically, as either dirty and diseased or as clean

and “classy”. Men’s tendency to construct women dichotomously as either good/bad, clean/dirty, or as the Madonna/whore has been noted in other research on men’s constructions of heterosexual relationships (Hollway, 2001; Seal & Ehrhardt, 2003). The most common way participants in this study achieved this dualistic distinction between dirty and clean sex workers was by constructing sex workers who operated on the streets as essentially different to those who operated from indoor contexts. This supports Simpson, Slutskaya, and Lewis’s (2012, p. 2) argument that “cleanliness is about establishing boundaries, separating the pure from the contaminated and imposing a system on an ‘inherently untidy experience’”. Throughout men’s narratives, street-based sex workers were constructed as dirty, cheap, and disease-ridden. Conversely, sex workers operating from indoor venues were constructed as being physically clean and hygienic, free of disease, more respectable, and more “classy” than women who sold sex on the street. The majority (37 out of the 43) of the participants stated explicitly that they would never patronise street-based sex workers. Therefore, men were able to construct themselves as respectable, an important position because, as Skeggs (1997) suggests, respectability is a key signifier of class. Similarly, Hoang (2011, p. 390) found that wealthy Vietnamese men paid beautiful “high-end” Vietnamese sex workers for sex as a way of asserting their class and status in public. These constructions were also tied into notions of dirt and disease, as one participant in Hoang’s study stated, “I don’t go to those low-class dirty girls, you know? These girls are young and pretty, and other men want them.” This highlights how the use of discourses of dirt and disease versus cleanliness and respectability are important for negotiating social class, which in turn allows men to command a position of power and status in relation to other men.

The excerpts below illustrate how this binary construction of sex workers, particularly the discourse of dirt and disease, operated to allow men to distance themselves from the stigma and negative constructions associated with paying for sex, enabling them to maintain

their positive identifications with class. Steve, like many participants, classified or ranked sex workers according to the context within which they operated, often adding a monetary value to women according to this classification:

And then, so it seems there are three tiers, at least. You've got the street-workers and over here they are plentiful. Dodgy. Dodgy because of diseases, dodgy because of crime, dodgy because half of them rip people off. Then you've got the agency kind of tier, brothel ... And you see the ads, the newspapers and the websites. And then there's the really, really classy [private] women, amazing. And I almost, I almost admire them for their detachment from conventional values and their courage and their, um, I guess, I don't know really how to put it, but their uniqueness. (*Steve, 57, white: Face-to-face*)

The above excerpt clearly illustrates the intersection between dirt, disease, and class. Through juxtaposition with the dirty and diseased street-based sex worker, the cleanliness and classiness of the private sex worker is emphasised. In addition to constructing private sex workers as “classy”, as opposed to “dodgy” and diseased, Steve constructs them as differing along moral standards. Whilst street-based sex workers are constructed as criminals and likely to “rip people off”, the “really classy” women are constructed as having some kind of moral high ground, as he explains to me that he admires their “detachment from conventional values” and their “courage”. This is an example of how constructions of dirt and disease come to symbolise moral dirt or decay, and how physical purity comes to suggest moral purity. Through this excerpt we begin to see how this production of the Other operates to allow men to construct their own identities in favourable ways. This process of Othering is further elucidated in the following excerpt:

Anesh: I used to laugh. I used to. Men who went for pavement specials [laughing] they got a kick out of parking their Audi A8 in Voortrekker Road and having this hideous hooker. I mean hideous, I mean hideous where you swear this woman has got AIDS. She's got like, you know what I mean?

Monique: Yea, yea

Anesh: You know, that thrill that she's sucking his, vrying²⁷ in the open air. You know? But one thing I can tell you, pavement specials: no, no. (*Indian, 40, Indian: Skype*)

Much in the same way as Steve constructs street-based sex workers and “dodgy” and diseased, Anesh expresses an almost visceral disgust for a street-based sex worker. He seems to dehumanise her by referring to her as a “hideous hooker”, comparing her to a mongrel dog, a “pavement special”.²⁸ However, narratives like this did more than just actively distance participants from associations with dirt and disease. By constructing the Other dirty sex worker, they also produce the Other client. In the above example, Anesh emphasises this Otherness, or distance, between himself and men who patronised street-based sex workers through the act of laughing at them. Zoia (2015, p. 17) suggests that “to say something is clean is to imply that other things are dirty; people hold both ends of the binary in mind, whichever is being invoked at any point in time”. By creating the Other, dirty client, Anesh was also simultaneously creating a disease-free and clean client identity for himself. Similarly, Hall (2001b) talks about the crucial role that the Other plays in construction of identity. He suggests that the process of identification is not only based on identifying as identical to a particular group, but rather is largely based on disidentifying with the Other:

Identity means, or connotes, the process of identification, of saying that this here is the same as that, or we are the same together, in this respect. But something we have learnt from the whole discussion of identification, in feminism and psychoanalysis, is the degree to which that structure of identification is always constructed through ambivalence. Always constructed through splitting. Splitting between that which one is, and that which is the other. (p. 146)

Not only did participants like Anesh construct their identity favourably by identifying with a certain class of sex workers, and thus a certain class of clients/men, they also construct their identity through creating the Other class of client.

²⁷ Afrikaans slang word equivalent to “making out” in English slang.

²⁸ A colloquial term used to describe a mixed breed or mongrel dog.

As the excerpts above illustrate, men were able to negotiate classed identities by distinguishing between street-based and indoor sex workers, using binaries of dirt and disease as well as intersecting binaries of upper and lower class. However, men's construction of street-based sex workers as Other, and as dirty and diseased, was not only based on, or intersected by, class, but also very heavily by race.

5.4 The Intersections of Race and Class with Discourses of Dirt and Disease

Cleanliness and dirt are accordingly inscribed onto particular bodies, affording them different levels of value. (Simpson et al., 2012, p. 7)

Participants' constructions of street-based sex workers as lower class, dirty and diseased were intertwined with constructions of race, with only certain bodies—black bodies—being constructed as dirty and diseased, while white bodies were constructed as clean and expensive. The conversation between Cyril and myself below illustrates these intersections of race, class, and gender that was present across men's narratives quite explicitly:

Cyril: If it was, if it was an upper class situation. If it was middle class and below, I would have a problem with it.

Monique: So what would the difference be?

Cyril: Okay the difference would be, and now it's becoming a racial thing. Okay. The upper class people will not sleep with another colour. And I'm talking about, there's two ex-Miss South Africa's that are in this game. Okay. Alright and it's categorically stated okay that they do not entertain other races, okay. So that is the, that is the bottom line of that scenario. Where, where whereas if it's middle to sort of lower, okay, that is: wham, boom, bang, you just pay... When I say that mm it's not a, it's not a racial thing. Okay not at all, absolutely not at all. It is a thing of risk. That is the biggest thing. Okay because, because the amount of people that are out of Africa that are in Cape Town at the present moment of time. I mean there is all types of diseases that come with it. And I'm not talking, I'm not talking sexual, I'm not

talking STD, I'm not talking sexual diseases. I'm talking diseases as in *diseases*. You know like Ebola and stuff like that, that a person doesn't know. So, so it is it is a very sort of... huge risk factor.

Monique: As in you feel that those diseases are attached to people of colour more than to white people?

Cyril: Ja, because of the situations.

Monique: And by situations?

Cyril: The areas, ja the areas ja, that they come from. I mean if you go in, I mean if you go up into Africa, it's riddled. It's riddled with all types, all types of things. You know? And as I say it's not a, it's not a whatchamacallit. It's not a, a, I'm not being discriminatory. It's not a colour issue. (53, *white: Face-to-face*)

Cyril clearly distinguishes between sex workers who are “upper class”, “middle” class, and those who are “below” middle class. It is striking how explicitly and candidly Cyril makes definite linkages between class and race. In no uncertain terms he constructs “upper class” in terms of whiteness and “lower classes” in terms of blackness. However, Cyril in fact does not once use the terms “white” or “black”, but rather he uses “upper class” as a signifier for whiteness. Moreover, he takes it for granted that I do too. It is only because of an assumed shared understanding of “upper class” as signifying whiteness that “other colour” or “other races” could hold any meaning in our conversation at all. Similarly, when I ask Cyril to elaborate on why he associates disease with black people, his justification is “because of the situations”. Here again we see an indication of Cyril’s assumption of shared knowledge or common consciousness between he and I. Cyril does not feel he has to explicate what the “situations” in “Africa” are, because he assumes that, as a function of my whiteness, I already know. It is because of mine and Cyril’s shared whiteness that blackness could so easily become Other within the context of this interview. Similarly, in another interview, Johan said, “white people, we, we know the context around it. I’m very realistic about the economy and what is happening in South Africa”. Here it can again be seen how this assumption that

as “white people” *we* had a collective understanding made the interviews a comfortable context for participants to express their (or rather our) racism.

In an attempt to disrupt Cyril’s assumption of a shared racist understanding between us, I ask him to explain what he means by “situations” in Africa. Cyril tries to avoid appearing to be overtly racist by employing the discourse of disease to motivate and sanction his racism. He draws on the colonial trope of black bodies coming from distant locations, such as “out of Africa”, as diseased (Jungar & Oinas, 2004). Here, Cyril also draws on the idea of all Africans belonging to one race and being one nation. Spronk (2014) argues that, although this notion of a unified “Africanness” is held with pride by many black people in Africa, this discourse has largely been used in scholarly work to produce degrading essentialist constructions of black masculinity. She shows how the notion of “African men” is a mechanism of Othering, and is “premised upon a historical process of Western imagination and practices where Africa served as the paradigm of difference” (Spronk, 2014, p. 515). Cyril specifically clarifies his statement by saying “I’m not talking STD, I’m not talking sexual diseases. I’m talking diseases as in *diseases*. You know like Ebola”. This highlights how he is not just associating black bodies with stigmatised notions of sex work (as a potential risk factor to the spread of sexually transmitted diseases), but rather that he is drawing on a much broader, more established discourse of black bodies as generally diseased. Motivated by the construction of black bodies as germ carriers, and white bodies as vulnerable to contamination by black bodies (Gilman, 1985; Levine, 2003; Zoia, 2015), he states his unwillingness to have sex not only with black sex workers, but with any woman who has had sex with black men. Here, black bodies are constructed as being dangerous for white bodies to be close to (Berthold, 2010; Levine, 2003).

Cyril was not the only participant to use this kind of health/disease discourse to validate their racism and to construct racial difference between their white bodies and Othered

“diseased black bodies”. Nine out of the 11 participants I interviewed face-to-face explicitly stated that they would not have sex with black women. A further 11 out of the 32 men I interviewed online stated the same. Below are some examples of how this racist rhetoric ran through participants’ narratives:

Mm, I wouldn’t, I wouldn’t go black. I wouldn’t go foreign, as in Malawi. *(Peter, 50, white: Face-to-face)*

I’ll be honest, ah white and coloured girls only. *(Mark, 38, Indian: Face-to-face)*

I haven’t met one [black woman] in my life that was really of interest. *(Piet, 55, white: Face-to-face)*

I won’t go to someone that say “all races welcome”. Specifically someone who qualifies it and it’s only whites. You limit certain risk with that. *(Johan, 48, white: Face-to-face)*

I know issues can be with any person but I never will go to a black... health issues with AIDS and stuff. *(Ashish, 37, Indian: Instant messenger)*

I don’t want to cross the racial barrier... I don’t want, say someone who knows me and sees me to go around and tell everybody that guys sleeps with blacks. *(Gideon, 53, white: Instant messenger)*

Participants’ repeated association of the black body with dirt, disease, and risk are, of course, no coincidence, and reflect a long history of racism in South Africa, stemming from colonisation. During the first half of the twentieth century, dirtiness and disease was strongly associated with the black body. Zoia (2015) charts the relationship between race(ism) and sanitisation discourses and practices in the South African context between 1880 and 1980. Zoia shows the ways in which the emergence of germ theory and sanitisation discourses allowed for black African bodies to be constructed as dirty and diseased in relation to white bodies, which were valorised and constructed in terms of purity, sanitisation, and the absence of disease:

Occurring at a time when the British Empire was at its zenith, it would be the black body that was to assume the role of principal germ-carrier for the white colonists could certainly not blame their (imagined to be) superior selves for epidemic disease. Racism then resulted when a sense of disgust came to characterize white encounters with said black body; a sense of disgust that was given public legitimacy through the science and

social science of the first half of the Twentieth Century that reified racial difference as natural and unchanging. (p. 158)

Constructions of black bodies as dirty and diseased are not limited to the first half of the twentieth century; they are still very much present in post-apartheid South Africa. These discourses still operate to maintain the status of black bodies as less desirable than white bodies, and continue to filter through into people's gendered identities. In South Africa these constructions of black bodies as diseased are given public and scientific legitimacy through biomedical HIV/AIDS discourses. Patton (1997) has written about the construction of "African AIDS" as instrumental in constructing black bodies as diseased. Patton (1990) discusses how colonial constructions of black sexuality were revived in efforts to explain the characteristics of the AIDS epidemic. Similarly, Spronk (2014), in her critical paper on how academic research on male sexuality in Africa has produced degrading notions of black masculinity, shows how colonial racism has been incorporated into Eurocentric academic discourses. Along the same lines, Jungar and Oinas, in their analysis of various texts about HIV/AIDS prevention (both scientific and media texts), show how these texts also construct HIV/AIDS as an African problem and African men, and in fact the black penis, as "high risk" for HIV/AIDS and other diseases. They discuss how these assumptions are both based on and reproduce "colonial imaginations of 'African sexuality'" (2004, p. 97).

The discourses about dirty black bodies that are present in men's narratives did as much for white bodies as they did for black bodies, because, as Zoia (2015, p. 17) suggests, "any statement is characterized as much by what it leaves out as by what it includes". Similarly, Hall (2001b, p. 147) writes about the "doubleness of discourse", suggesting that identity is always composed of more than one discourse, and that for every narrative about a black body there is an (at times) unspoken, corresponding narrative about a white body. In other words, the discourses of the dirty black body present in participants' narratives were simultaneously discourses about whiteness. Just as the relationship between class and discourses of dirt and

disease serve to defile and degrade the black body, so they serve to idealise the white body (Berthold, 2010). In thinking about the meaning the white body has (only) in relation to the black body, we are reminded of Fanon's (1986, p. 146) words:

when one is dirty one is black—whether one is thinking of physical dirtiness or of moral dirtiness. It would be astonishing, if the trouble were taken to bring them all together, to see the vast number of expressions that make the black man the equivalent of sin... Blackness, darkness, shadow, shades, night, the labyrinths of the earth, abysmal depths, blacken someone's reputation; and, on the other side, the bright look of innocence, the white dove of peace, magical, heavenly light. A magnificent blond child—how much peace there is in that phrase, how much joy, and above all how much hope!

Constructions of the black Other are a necessity for the white and Indian men's construction of their own masculinities. Cyril's construction of the black Other as a lower class, dirty, disease-carrying body coming from "out of Africa" is significant not only in how it constructs blackness, but rather by what it "does" for whiteness. By constructing Other black bodies as lower class and diseased, he is able to construct his own white body as the opposite, as higher class and disease-free. Just like white people during the colonial era, Cyril is able to distance himself from any associations of disease that may be attached to his identity as a man paying for sex in the context of South Africa. By constructing the distant Other from "out of Africa", he can construct himself in terms of his whiteness, rather than in terms of his potentially "dirty" and stigmatised practice of paying for sex.

It was not only white participants who negotiated desirable identities for themselves by drawing on discourses of whiteness as pure and disease-free. To illustrate this point, I draw on the excerpt below, taken from an interview with Riedwaan, who described himself as a "traditional Indian" throughout the interview. Riedwaan was also one of the very few participants I interviewed who said that he patronised street-based sex workers. In this excerpt, Riedwaan is able to distance himself from discourses of dirt and disease associated with street-based sex workers, not only by distancing himself from dirty and diseased black bodies, but by constructing himself as having sex with clean white bodies:

Riedwaan: I think it also comes from the standards I've set for myself. I wouldn't pick just anybody up. I mean cleanliness is something that is important to me. Safety is something that is important to me. So at the end of the day even if you were in the mood to pick someone up, for example, I could drive around for half an hour before I decide on who... Someone who was actually, I mean who firstly you trust to actually pick up. They not going to get in and want to rob you and steal from you. From a safety in terms of health obviously, in terms of diseases.

Monique: Okay. But how would you know?

Riedwaan: It's difficult to obviously assess... I suppose it's the same rule of thumb that you apply to day-to-day life. We mix with people who we assimilate with... In the sense that if you meet someone for the first time and argument's sake you've got relatively good hygiene yourself and the other person doesn't, mm you wouldn't judge them by it, or at least I wouldn't, but I probably wouldn't want to hang out with them as often. And I think that's something which I set for myself and that's the reason, again I don't want to sound racist but if you in Joburg, you found a black girl on the street, chances are she wouldn't be that clean. So you'd probably prefer a white woman, in terms of Joburg. And that's the other reason why I'd rather go to Boksburg. Because you would find more white women available. (*Riedwaan, 32, Indian: Face-to-face*)

Riedwaan constructs himself in terms of a health and sanitisation discourse, using words like “cleanliness” and “hygiene” to define himself. In order to qualify these statements about his cleanliness, he described the ways in which he avoids “dirty women” when selecting sex workers to have sex with, equating black bodies to dirt and disease. I challenged the notion that physical dirt is indicative of internal disease by asking Riedwaan how he would be able to know, by looking at someone, whether or not they had diseases. In response to my question, Riedwaan explains that they should appear to have the same level of hygiene as

himself, and, therefore, that they should not be black, because if he were to find a black sex worker on the street, the “chances are she wouldn’t be clean”. He then juxtaposes this black body with the white body, “so you would probably prefer a white woman”. It is clear that the discourse of the diseased black body was just as constructive of the white body as it was of the black body. Riedwaan did not need to describe explicitly the white body as clean and disease free; in fact, he did not describe the white body at all. This extra clarification would have been redundant, because the black body has already done the discursive work (by virtue of its “dirtiness”) in constructing the white body as clean. It is by talking about having sex with a white body that Riedwaan is able to construct his own body as clean.

I have illustrated how men’s narratives were riddled with both overt and covert racist colonial discourses that functioned to degrade black bodies as well as valorise and privilege white bodies over black bodies. How did I, and my presence, contribute to the racist rhetoric that ran through these interviews? This is a difficult and personally painful question to explore, but it is possibly one of the most important questions that this chapter and this thesis addresses. Regardless of how “open-ended” our research questions are, or how neutrally we believe that we position ourselves, our interviews always allow for the telling of certain stories and the silencing of others. Throughout this chapter it becomes increasingly clear that my presence, as a white middle class woman, enabled the telling of certain racist narratives within the interviews.

Because of my whiteness, participants felt that they could, quite comfortably, construct the black Other in my presence. In some instances, I even got the sense that participants’ racist narratives were actually *for* me. I have written elsewhere (Huysamen, 2016) about how, in the moment of the interview, participants attempted, in various ways, to construct themselves as “good” and “respectable” men. Similarly, in the early stages of an interview with Johan he said, “I’m not saying I do this twice a week... you tend to go to someone that is

fairly clean, I'm very cautious about that... and that you know it's only a specific race". I got the sense throughout Johan's interview that he was trying to construct his paying for sex in ways that he thought I would find most respectable. For Johan, just like minimising how frequently he paid for sex, assuring me that he did not have sex with black people was one way he thought he could construct himself as more respectable in my eyes. Duneier (2000), writing reflexively about his ethnographic research with street vendors in New York, reflects on how a white businessman he spoke to during his field work was explicitly racist and extremely derogatory about black street vendors. In a manner similar to my own findings, Duneier suggests that the white businessman felt comfortable using racist language in his presence because he considered Duneier to be a racial insider, and thus assumed that they shared an understanding about these black men. Duneier reflects on how, if he were a black researcher, he would have been unlikely to collect such racist narratives during his fieldwork. Similarly, I must question whether, if I were a black woman, these interviews would have elicited the same narratives. Is it likely that men would have been able to look me in the eyes and construct my body as disease carrying and dirty? Although, of course, I cannot answer these questions with complete certainty, what is certain is that my white body, at least to some degree, invited, symbolised, and sanctioned racism within the interview context.

5.5 Dangerous Black Bodies

A strong thread running through participants' narratives was the construction of the black body as dangerous. This danger was primarily constructed in terms of the threat of disease that the black body signified, but it was also constructed in terms of violence and crime. In this excerpt, Stewart, talking about a sex worker he patronises regularly, draws on a dominant narrative around the danger of the black man's sexuality (Ratele & Shefer, 2013):

- Stewart: Most of her [the sex worker's] clients are regular. Most of them are all white guys. And almost exclusively they're married... She's never been harmed. She doesn't go with African men.
- Monique: That's her personal choice?
- Stewart: She said, "I won't even go. I just turn them down".
- Monique: And what do you think about that?
- Stewart: Well... her concern is that, her concern is violence. That she has, in her head, rightly or wrongly, African men are more likely to be violent, they're more likely to demand rather than request things of her, and she said, I mean it's quite interesting from a business point of view, she didn't put it this way, but she has a target market. She doesn't mind coloured guys, she don't want young guys, she don't want twenty-five, thirty year olds...Forty-five, fifty onwards is her market. Even my age... So, she's clearly said well this is a safe market, it's a well-paying market, it's a clean market, a you're less likely to get disease market. (*Stewart, 67, white: Face-to-face*)

I argue that men (re)produced racist discourses not only to construct themselves as desirable, but in order to construct themselves as *superior* to black men who pay for sex. Stewart, in the example above, draws on the familiar discourse of the black male body as notoriously dangerous, hyper-sexualised, and as a violent threat to women (Shefer, 2013; Spronk, 2014). Compared to young black men, Stewart is able to construct himself (and older white men like himself) as desirable in terms of being a "safe market", a "well paying market", a "clean market", and a "you're less likely to get disease market". Ratele and Shefer (2013), talking about apartheid, suggest that racist discursive and legislative divisions were not only about white supremacy; they were also about patriarchy, about white men wielding patriarchal authority and superiority over black men. Shefer (2013) reminds us that "hegemonic masculinity takes its power through disempowering, devaluing and marginalising 'other' masculinities" (p. 178). This can certainly be applied to the narratives of participants in this study. Men's narratives about black bodies as dirty and diseased were not only about

constructing their whiteness in idealised ways, they were also about establishing and legitimising their positions of power over Other (black) men in the moment of the interview. This speaks to the complex intersections between race, class, gender, and sexuality, and highlights the importance of adopting an intersectional approach that pays attention to the ways in which these vectors of power deploy and maintain one another.

5.6 Idealised White Bodies

Throughout this chapter I have demonstrated how white bodies were idealised while black bodies were denigrated and shamed. However, it was not always white participants who did the idealising of white bodies and denigrating of black bodies. In this section I discuss the manifestations of internalised racism that featured in some of the Indian and black participants' narratives; whiteness and lightness of skin colour were championed above other racial and colour identifications, maintaining the discourses of the idealised white body and the denigrated black body.

Colourism can be defined as an internalised form of racism, often amongst people within the same ethnic group, which involves prejudice, stereotyping, and perceptions of beauty according to the lightness or darkness of one's skin, whereby lightness of skin colour is valued and privileged over darkness of skin (Burton, Bonilla-Silva, Ray, Buckelew, & Hordge Freeman, 2010; Gabriel, 2007). Colourism does not exist independently of racism, but rather colourism can be seen as a product or "fundamental building block" of racism and white supremacy (Hunter, 2005b, p. 2). Hunter (2005), in explaining how the broader racist project operates through colourism, suggests that the physical features associated with whiteness or blackness take on the meaning of whiteness or blackness as it is constructed through racist discourses. For instance, light skin, specific facial features, and long straight hair take on the social meanings of whiteness, and those physical features come to be

privileged within an ethnic group for their beauty and superiority. Conversely, physical features associated with black bodies, such as dark skin and short curly hair, take on the meaning of blackness, and those features consequently come to signify savagery, dirt, and ugliness. In this way, light skin as a physical feature becomes prized for how it signifies or points towards whiteness, and is consequently more highly valued than dark skin within and between ethnic groups.

Two of the three black men I interviewed, as well as many of the Indian men, stated explicitly that they preferred paying white women for sex. The following excerpts from the interview with Unam provide some insight into the ways in which discourses of the idealised white body, internalised racism, and colourism work to reproduce and maintain racist discourses that construct the black body as less desirable. I asked Unam, to tell me about his first experience of paying for sex:

Well I started maybe about 10 years back! I was always wanted to be with a white woman, so thought best or easiest way was to pay for one, I did and I never stop. (*Unam, 32, black: Instant messenger*)

As well as Unam's valuing of white women's bodies over those of black women, his narrative also tells us something about how he constructs himself in relation to white women. Unam's language here implies that having sex with white women was something that was not easily achievable for him as a black man. This plays into discourses of white bodies as "not for" black bodies. It might also point to the ways in which social and other spaces in South Africa continue to be racially segregated, so that Unam is unlikely to encounter an opportunity to meet and have a sexual relationship with a white woman. Participants like Unam therefore construct paying for sex as having value because of the *proximity* to white women's bodies that it facilitates. I return to the notion of the proximity of white bodies to black bodies in the section that follows.

A little later in the interview I ask Unam to tell me more about the sex workers he patronises. Although he could have answered the question in a variety of other ways (i.e. which kinds of venues they operate from, their demeanour and temperament, which kind of sexual services they offer), Unam chose to answer the question by listing the physical features he prefers sex workers to have:

Monique: Ok and tell me about your preference in girls, what kind of girls do you choose?

Unam: Guess nice body, nice tits not too big, light in complexion if they not white girls, not skinny, not fat! (32, *black: Instant messenger*)

In Unam's description of his preferences, skin colour is included or lumped in with other desirable physical features like the size of women's breasts or the shape of her body. In this narrative, skin tone becomes an object of desire in the same way that a woman's breasts might be. Unam's description is an example of how the woman's body is objectified as being solely for the purpose of male pleasure, and indicates how talk on paying for sex might invite this discourse.²⁹ However, this narrative also shows how whiteness is privileged over all other races, which are constructed as less than or "not white". Just as Hunter (2005) suggests in his analysis of the ways in which colourism operates, for Unam, having a light skin colour that resembles that of a white person affords women who are "not white" some of the value and desirability associated with whiteness, and brings them closer to whiteness. This is yet another example of how heavily race is entangled with constructions of gender, sexuality, and desirability, and how it is tied into the ways men make meaning of paying for sex.

As black and Indian participants like Unam spoke about their preference for light-skinned women, I wondered whether they made meaning of their own skin in the same depreciating way they spoke about "dark" women's skin. Although I did not explicitly ask participants this question, Anesh's narrative below does address this issue. Anesh describes

²⁹ It could also be argued that through my choice of language ("kind of girls"), I too was inviting and feeding into this kind of objectification of sex workers bodies.

the meaning that various shades of lightness or darkness have within his family and the broader Indian community. For the purpose of clarification, Anesh is talking about an ex-fiancé who was also Indian but had a very light complexion:

Anesh: Uh no, no, no, look for me it was look, look, on the screen you can see, I'm a dark individual. My ex-fiancée, she was fair, like you, she was white. She was white, she was tall, she was everything that I was looking for, you know? So although I called it quits, I think, what happened was um I allowed my parents to control me, which was totally stupid. After her I met weird, the girls were either too short, too dark. I mean look seriously, I'm a dark man. I want a fair woman. I don't want my kids Bournville³⁰ chocolate sorry [laughs] really seriously, you will only be seeing their teeth. I come from a community where the dark Indians tell their kids you marry the fair ones, you know? And the fair ones tell them you marry the fair ones because we don't want dark kids in the family.

Monique: Wow, that's quite hectic

Anesh [Laughing] you know, for me, I mean really for me for me it was also like status for me, you know what I mean? It was status for me, because you know you want a fair person. You know you don't want a, I know it's being sectionist. We were, I can use the word, in my home community we were racist. (40, *Indian: Skype*)

It is significant that Anesh begins this narrative by positioning himself in terms of darkness: he says, "look on the screen you can see, I'm a dark individual". He immediately juxtaposes his own skin colour with that of his ex-fiancé, saying "she was fair, like you, she was white". His narrative elicits the discourse of the idealised white woman that exists in relation to the black body. This narrative is also powerful in illustrating the ways in which racial stereotypes and dominant racial discourses were reproduced in the interview context. Not only was the content of Anesh's narrative about the undesirable black (or dark) body and

³⁰ A brand of dark chocolate.

the idealised white (or light) body, but Anesh and I repeated, performed, and embodied these racist constructions. In the moment of the interview, through explicitly constructing himself as dark and constructing me as white (“she was white like you”), I became the idealised white woman and he the denigrated black body.

Anesh explained that he paid for sex because he had never married. He told me that, after breaking up with his fiancé, he was lonely. He struggled to find the right woman, as all the Indian women he subsequently met were either too short or “too dark”. He explained that at least when paying for sex he could choose what kind of women he had sex with. Initially, I had difficulty understanding and relating to Anesh’s discrimination of Indian women based on skin tone or complexion. An excerpt from my research journal reads, “I’m struggling to understand why the shade of another Indian person’s skin could be so important to Anesh”. This journal entry, and my initial difficulty to understand the meaning that Anesh made of women’s skin tones, are reflective of my own privileged position as a white woman. For it is often in the things we take for granted most that we find the greatest examples of our privilege (Duneier, 2000). I have never had to think about the tone of my own white skin. It is so much a part of my taken for granted reality that I have not had to consider how the shade of my skin would make me closer to, or further from, being white, and thus more or less desirable or powerful. My journal entry is also reflective of my ignorance of how racism operates not only across different racial identities and constructions but also within them, permeating all relations, interactions, practices, and discourses.

What is central to this narrative is Anesh’s acknowledgement of his own darkness within a society and community that devalues dark skin to this extent. It is through this internalised racism that the full meaning of Anesh’s preference for light-skinned women can be understood. The women’s lightness “does” something for Anesh’s darkness—he even says so himself. He explains that having a fair-skinned woman as his partner would afford him the

“status” that his community associates with light skin. Through this narrative we learn that Anesh constructs light-skinned women as valuable to him, because by marrying a light-skinned woman he is more likely to produce light instead of dark offspring. Anesh expresses personal distaste at the thought of having dark-skinned (like “Bourneville” chocolate) children, saying, “you will only be seeing their teeth”. This imagery suggests that when whiteness is contrasted with darkness, the only part that will be “seen”, or perhaps matters, is the whiteness. Not only would his offspring be more valued and desirable within his community if they were lighter, but he, as a man, would command a higher status, and be more respected and powerful, if he produced light-skinned children. Thus, a light-skinned woman does something for Anesh’s masculinity.

Men’s desire to pay to have sex with light-skinned sex workers cannot be understood in isolation from broader cultural, racial, economic and social factors, because this desire for light bodies, and men’s paying to be in close proximity to them, is heavily tied up with power and status. This again highlights the intricate ways in which constructions of gender, race, and class are intertwined and are responsible for one another’s construction and maintenance (Butler, 1999).

5.7 The Black Body: Proximity, Disgust, Fantasy, and Desire

Participants’ narratives reflect the powerful ways in which South Africa’s colonial past and the legacy of apartheid shaped, and continues to shape, not only men’s disgust towards, but their desires for, and fantasies of, the black body (Ratele & Shefer, 2013). Ratele and Shefer (2013) suggest that the laws and discourses that functioned to entrench apartheid did more than just impose geographical separation between black and white bodies. Laws like the *Immorality Act* (1927/1957) also sexualised the (dis)connection between white and black bodies and imposed notions of (im)morality onto them (Ratele & Shefer, 2013). This was instrumental in constructing sexual intimacy between bodies of different races as taboo. As

Ratele and Shefer (2013) suggest, “that apartheid was sexualized lives on in current constructions of intimacy, community and self-regulative practices with respect to desire and racial identification, and continues to be reinscribed in new ways in post-apartheid South Africa” (p.189). Indeed, when I asked participants to tell me about their preferences for paid sex, many told me about self-regulative boundaries that they set for themselves with regards to both the kind of sexual practices they would or would not pay for and the kinds of bodies they would pay to engage in these sexual practices with. For example, Steve explains how he sets sexual boundaries for himself in terms of race, gender, and sexuality:

Um, I kind of have this sense with three categories of partner. One is black women. Black women in general, though one shouldn't generalise. But there's something about the skin or the smell or the something, it just er, doesn't reach me. Same with men, same with transsexuals. (*Steve, 57, white: Face-to-face*)

Steve explains that there are three categories of sexual partner (both in paid and unpaid sexual encounters) that he has decided are off-limits for himself, namely black women, men, and transsexuals. Butler (2008, p. 184) addresses the kinds of boundaries or “prohibitive laws” that Steve talks about above, in particular how they function to maintain, normalise, and make compulsory an idealised heterosexuality. Butler (2008) shows how bodies are restricted and policed along the lines of gender and sexuality in order to maintain the illusion of a stable and consistent heterosexual ideal. She argues that socially constructed taboos (such as taboos around homosexuality or transsexual bodies) function as regulatory practices that she describes as “the prohibitions that produce identity along the culturally intelligible grids of an idealised and compulsory heterosexuality” (p. 184). To incorporate race into my understanding of this framework (so that I could simultaneously make sense of the ways in which participants repeatedly reinforced racial boundaries between themselves and black bodies), I also draw on Ahmed's work on orientation. Ahmed (2006) theorises that since colonial times whiteness has been maintained and reproduced through both its proximity to other white bodies and through its distance from black bodies:

The alignment of race and space is crucial to how they materialize as givens, as if each “extends” the other. In other words, while “the other side of the world” is associated with racial “otherness”, racial others become associated with the “other side of the world”. They come to *embody distance*. This embodiment of distance is what makes whiteness “proximate” as the “starting point” for orientation. Whiteness becomes what is “here”, a line from which the world unfolds, which also makes what is “there” on “the other side of the world”. (p. 121)

Ahmed claims that distance is what defines racial Otherness, and distance from the racial Other defines and maintains whiteness. Similarly, Ahmed suggests that closeness (“what is here”) comes to define whiteness and racial sameness. Whiteness must, therefore, be reproduced through intimate proximity to white bodies. Consequently, too much proximity with blackness is prohibited in and by society as it comes to threaten this reproduction of whiteness:

Such a prohibition is organized by the fantasy that white bodies must be sexually orientated toward white bodies in order to maintain their whiteness. Too much proximity with others, we might say, could threaten the reproduction of whiteness as a bodily or social attribute. (Ahmed, 2006, p. 128)

In Steve’s narrative, we see how these prohibitive laws and regulatory practices are put in place precisely in the ways in which Butler and Ahmed define them. Although Steve tried to construct himself as sexually liberal and adventurous throughout the interview, he sets strict rules for himself (“no men”, “no transsexuals”) that keep him safely within the boundaries of heterosexuality. At the same time, colonial- and apartheid-sanctioned taboos about interracial sexual contact keep racial boundaries, and therefore his whiteness, firmly in place. These racial taboos make sexual separation between black and white bodies appear as though it were somehow biological or natural (Steve says, “there’s something about the skin or the smell or the something, it just er doesn’t reach me”). Thus, these regulatory practices and prohibitive boundaries around race, class, and gender function, in conversation with one another, to maintain a natural, coherent white heterosexuality.

Despite the boundaries that Steve establishes to separate himself from black women's bodies, and despite the visceral distaste that he expresses for them, these black bodies are simultaneously heavily eroticised in his narrative below:

I remember when I was probably fourteen having these incredible dreams, an incredibly erotic dream about a black nanny. Turns out I had a black nanny when I was a kid – [when I was] like four or five, and I used to ride on this woman's back, blanket around. Probably where that came from but it still stands out as the most erotic dream of my lifetime. (*Steve, 57, white: Face-to-face*)

Steve's narrative, set in the context of apartheid South Africa, reflects a complex interplay between power, race, sexuality, and gender. The image invoked here of the "black nanny" as nurturer and surrogate mother is, in and of itself, a product of apartheid. Black women working as residential domestic workers in white families were widespread in apartheid South Africa³¹ (Shefer, 2013). In this narrative Steve speaks about his first relationship to a black woman's body, a relationship that was sanctioned by apartheid. The black woman carrying him on her back represents the nurturing maternal role (the emotional labour) that black women had to provide for white people's children, most often at the expense of not being available for her own children. However, through fantasy, Steve flips this act of riding on the black woman's back, turning it into a highly erotic encounter, one that is subversive of the self-governed boundaries he set for himself. Ratele and Shefer (2013) so aptly theorise:

Desire for the inadmissible³² is endemic to regulatory practices that disallow certain practices; desires are therefore always 'breaking out' (if only at the level of fantasy) of the shackles that contain them, while also always ensuring the very reproduction of the structures that hem them in. (p. 205)

Similarly, Butler suggests that "although the gender meanings taken up in these parodic styles are clearly part of hegemonic misogynist culture, they are nevertheless denaturalised and

³¹ Black women working as residential domestic workers in white families is still a widespread feature of contemporary South Africa.

³² This "desire for the inadmissible" could be linked to *jouissance* as it is discussed in Chapter Four. See also bell hooks (2006, p. 366) who suggests that, "the 'real fun' is to be had by bringing to the surface all those 'nasty' unconscious fantasies and longings about contact with the Other embedded in the secret (not so secret) deep structure of white supremacy".

mobilised through their parodic recontextualisation” (2008, p. 188). In the same way, Steve repeats the racialised act of riding on the black women’s back, but this time in the context of an erotic adult encounter. In doing so, Steve oversteps, in this moment, his own racial boundaries that prohibit proximity between white and black bodies. Drawing on the work of Ratele and Shefer (2013), as well as Ahmed and Butler, I suggest that Steve’s narrative serves to maintain dominant positions of power, keeping black women in their (disempowered) place as servants and “nannies” in relation to white men’s bodies. However, the narrative simultaneously potentially queers the sexual boundaries that enforce distance between black and white bodies.³³ Although the participants narratives were filled with racist and sexist discourses, this narrative shows that there were also moments of possible “breaking out” (Ratele & Shefer, 2013, p. 205).

5.8 Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that paying for sex affords men possibilities for constructing themselves as desirable and affluent, but, at the same time, because of the stigma attached sex work, particularly in the context of South Africa, it may also threaten these favourable identities. I explored how men negotiate these conflicting aspects of paying for sex in order to construct desirable client identities. Pattman and Bhana (2009) suggest that identity is constructed through producing the racial or gendered Other “which becomes a fantasy structure into which difference is projected, a peg onto which fears or desires can be hung” (p. 121). This chapter has presented an analysis of the process of constructing the Other onto which the stigma of paying for sex can be hung.

³³ It is important to note that the intimate proximity of white bodies to black bodies does not always subvert racial boundaries, nor does it necessarily threaten whiteness. Conversely, some fantasies of interracial intimacy, particularly where this desire is based and centred on difference (the exotic Other), allow for whiteness to be confirmed and emphasised (Ahmed, 2006). See bell hooks (2006) on “eating the other” for a discussion on this issue.

I have demonstrated how men deploy racist discourses, tropes stemming from the colonial era, to construct the black body as lower class, dirty, diseased, and dangerous as a means of distancing themselves from the stigma attached to sex work. The chapter thus speaks to the complex intersections between race, class, gender, and sexuality. Butler calls for us to do the important work of “thinking through the ways in which these vectors of power require and deploy each other for the purpose of their own articulation” (1999, p. XXVI). Butler (1999) suggests that we ask questions such as “how is race lived in the modality of sexuality?” and “how is gender lived in the modality of race?” (p. 78).³⁴ This chapter brings these kinds of questions to the forefront of discussion, as we see how men exploit constructions of race and class in various ways to establish and maintain more desirable and powerful masculine heterosexual selves. This highlights the importance of an intersectional approach to research on men who pay for sex.

This chapter also showed how the notion of orientation and the proximity of white bodies and black bodies can provide new and important insights to the ways in which men negotiate the meanings of paying for sex (Ahmed, 2006). Paying for sex, or at least the act of talking about paying for sex, functioned to (re)establish racial boundaries and distance between black and white bodies (Ratele & Shefer, 2013). Discourses of dirt and disease employed in men’s narratives about paying for sex served to bolster white supremacy while keeping the black body’s subjugated position as the distant Other firmly in place. Conversely, I argued that men valued the ways in which paying for sex allowed them to associate themselves with, and come into close proximity to, desirable and idealised white bodies as a way of negotiating class, affluence, and, therefore, power. This research serves as a striking example of how, as Ratele and Shefer suggest, “intimate relations continue to be a key site for the reproduction of racism and binaristic discourses of ‘us’ and ‘them’ in contemporary

³⁴ However, Butler (1999) does not provide many answers to these questions that she poses.

South Africa” (2013, p. 190). It illustrates how paid sex, as a kind of intimate relation, is in no way immune to this process. However, the chapter has also been sensitive to moments of “breaking out” from prohibitive racial boundaries and regulative heterosexual practices, moments where paid sexual intimate relations might make the queering of the boundaries of these hegemonies imaginable.

Finally, in keeping with the aim making a methodological contribution to research on men who pay for sex, I have reflected on my positionality as a white woman researcher. I have reflected on the moments in the interviews when my white body invited, symbolised, and sanctioned racism in various ways. I showed how my whiteness allowed for the assumption of a shared racist consciousness between myself and white participants, and how my whiteness made possible the imagining of the black Other in the context of the interview. This chapter highlights the importance of understanding race as a methodological issue, and points towards the value of employing a kind of reflexive intersectional approach to our research on men who pay for sex.

CHAPTER 6: PAID SEX AS A “SAFE SPACE”

The question people most often ask me in relation to this research project is, “so why do men pay for sex?”. People tend to take it for granted that this research, simply by virtue of being about clients of sex workers, sets out to uncover the reasons behind why men pay for sex. Even though I worded my recruitment advertisements in a way that distanced my research from this very question, many of my participants also assumed that they had arrived to help me answer the question of why men pay for sex. For example, Richard said, “I think the first question or, or the subject matter that you put in you advert, was speaking to guys on why they do it, which is a question I get asked regularly”; or Peter, who in the interview said, “now you’ve got to ask me, from a client’s perspective, why do you do it”.

However, rather than asking *why* men buy sex from sex workers, a question that has been addressed by many others doing research on the topic (Jordan, 1997; McKeganey, 1994; Pitts et al., 2004) this chapter asks *what* it is that men pay for when they pay for sex. I argue that men took far more from the paid sexual encounter than simply sex. Through the discussion of four discursive positions or themes—paid sex as a “safe space” for learning sexual skills, paid sex as an opportunity to have selfish sex, paid sex as a way to escape the mundane marriage, and paid sex as a safe space for sexual exploration—I explore what paying for sex “does” for men in relation to how they negotiate their masculinities and sexualities in their everyday lives. I demonstrate how, across these four themes, men value paid sex as a safe space in which they are largely exempt from the perceived constraints on, and threats to, their masculinity that they experience in their other (hetero)sexual encounters. I also argue that men use paid sex as an opportunity to explore their sexualities and push the boundaries of heterosexuality.

6.1 The Experienced Teacher and the Bashful Student

Most discourse on sex work paints a picture of a relatively empowered and confident client, regardless of whether this discourse is positioned within an exploitation perspective, where the client is constructed as dominant or even violent (e.g. Jeffreys, 2009), or a market perspective (see Niemi, 2010), where he is constructed as an entitled customer. However, in this study some of the participants' narratives depict a more anxious, insecure client.

6.1.1 Paid sex as a way to “lose” one’s virginity. True to the narrative research approach I have adopted, I asked all participants to tell me the story of their first experience of paying for sex. Commonly arising in response to this request was the narrative of “losing my virginity”. About a quarter of the participants explained that their first experience of paying for sex was also their very first experience of penetrative sex with a woman. Anesh’s narrative provides an example:

Anesh: I remember going out for group drinks in Port Elizabeth with my friends. It just so happened there was one guy that passed on. He had the perfect life. He had the perfect wife. He had a Rolls Royce at 28. Cum Laude at School. Er, everything was set for him. Only married for one year and he dies in a car crash, in a car accident. And we’re all sitting and my, my friend Gerry, says to all of us in the pub: “Thank the lord, he didn’t die a virgin”. [laughs] Everybody was laughing except for me [laughs]. Because I was still a virgin [laughs]. At 27. [laughs] So it got me thinking, I don’t want to die a virgin, that was my main concern. I, I yearned for women. I yearned for the taste. I yearned, you know, it was that watching soft porn on E-TV [laughs] those years back. That *Emmanuelle*³⁵ lifestyle I missed. So, what actually happened was that, I mean look, honestly people say go to a bar, you can pick up a woman. Take her to bed. Take her to bed and shag her brains out. You know, I mean, look, that wouldn’t work for me, so seriously

³⁵ A series of French soft porn erotic movies

Monique: How come?

Anesh: Well, I'm being honest. It would not walk, I don't have the guts to go into a bar and say, "excuse me, Hi. How are you? I like you. Don't you want to sleep with me?" You know, that's not going to happen. I'm being honest with you. So as I said for me, being adventurous, I open up the newspaper and I looked and I said okay, let me try to lose my virginity. It would be with a lady of the night.

(Anesh, 40, Indian: Skype)

Anesh tells me this story about his friend's death to illustrate the value that losing his virginity to a sex worker—it was a safe way for him to “lose” a threatening aspect of his sexuality, and thereby negotiate and achieve a desirable masculinity. Firstly, Anesh's narrative provides insight into the collective meaning that men in a homosocial context make of adult male “virginity”, which is constructed as laughable and shameful. It also shows how being able to retell stories about their successful heterosexual encounters to other men is important for men's ability to negotiate their masculinity (S. R. Bird, 1996; Flood, 2008). Anesh and his friends found comfort in the fact that by the time their friend died, he had achieved what would be described as a “perfect life” for a man according to ideas of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2000). He had achieved success and status in his career and he was financially successful, evidenced outwardly by his expensive car. He had lived up to what was expected of a desirable heterosexual man - he had beautiful wife, and, most importantly, he was *not* a virgin. It is as if achieving all the other characteristics of a successful man may have been negated if Anesh's friend was unable to prove his success as (hetero)sexual man. This demonstrates how (hetero)sexuality is constructed as the cornerstone of successful hegemonic masculinity (Farvid & Braun, 2006).

Participants constructed being a virgin as threatening to their masculinities in relation to other men. However, men's narratives also highlighted the deep sense of vulnerability that they have (at some point in their lives) experienced in relation to women in terms of

intimacy. In the narrative above, Anesh draws on a dominant sexual script where the desirable man walks into a bar, picks the woman he would like to have sex with, and proceeds to “shag her brains out”. Anesh reflects that, although this was something he desired to do, it was not a realistic option for him. Anesh could have rather imagined a different story about losing his virginity, perhaps a story of mutual exploration with a woman equally as sexually inexperienced as himself. However, Connell (1995) suggests that many men aspire to the ideals of the powerful hegemonic man, regardless of whether they are realistically able to achieve them or not. Anesh therefore opts to lose his virginity according to a dominant masculine heterosexual script. Men’s narratives revealed how the paid encounter offers a safe space where they are able to fulfil this dominant script without risking being rejected by women, a potential threat to their masculinity. In this sense, paying for sex can be seen as valuable to men in as much as it is a *masculinising practice* (Connell, 2000), enabling men to engage in sexual acts that allow them to more closely approximate hegemonic masculinity.

In talking about their early sexual experiences, many participants constructed women (or girls, when narratives were about adolescence) as threatening figures, as harsh, judgemental, and rejecting. For example, in an online instant messenger interview, Dean (38:coloured) explained that, while all the other boys at school were “getting sex”, the girls would not talk to him because, “I was poor, never had style, not one of the cool kids”. Nelson’s narrative below is another example of the kind of stories men told about being inexperienced teenagers or young adults who felt vulnerable in relation to women:

Monique: So on the topic of paying for sex, could you tell me about the first time you paid for sex, what was the context leading up to it?

Nelson: Young, shy and did not know how to talk to ladies. Lol, had low self-esteem. It was difficult for me to talk to girls and I just thought, hey why not just pay for it. So looked in the newspaper, found someone close to where I stayed and called her. I was like hey if I am paying I

won't be rejected. So I went, I paid her R500, she gave me a BJ, she climbed on top of me and it was all over in 10 minutes.

Monique: Ok, I see. So you say you weren't very confident about being around women at that point in your life?

Nelson: No. Not at all!

Monique: Why do you think that was so?

Nelson: Don't know. I had a low self-esteem. I was overweight. Well, I still am a bit but not fazed by it. I learned to deal with it and funny enough I do believe the short while I was paying for it, it helped me with that.
(*Nelson, 33, white: Instant messenger*)

Many participants explained that they, as teenagers or young adults, were shy and uncomfortable around girls or women, and felt that they lacked the confidence to approach them romantically or sexually. At the same time, their failure to approach women for sex also led to them remaining, in their minds, sexuality inexperienced when compared to other men. They said they had felt that they lacked the sexual skills necessary to compete with other men, and that this resulted in feeling inadequate and anxious when they were around women; a vicious cycle thus ensued. Again, losing their virginity to sex workers was constructed as an attractive and non-threatening way to break this cycle.

Some men constructed paid sex not only as a context where their physical need of losing their virginity was met, but also where their emotional needs were satisfied. Paid sex offered participants like Nelson a safe space where they were able to “deal with” and overcome their insecurities and low self-esteem relating to their sexuality. In Nelson's narrative, there is a sense of “becoming” in that he tells of emerging from his paid encounters as a slightly more confident and more sexually experienced man than when he began paying for sex—both his behaviours and emotions were more in line with what is expected of a desirable heterosexual man than when he started. In shaping my understanding the concept of “becoming” and the related possibilities for change, I draw both on the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1988) and

the work of Ahmed (2006). I understand becoming not as a process with a beginning and an end point, but rather as a continuous process, one that takes time and is both historical and relational (Ahmed, 2006). As Ahmed (2006, p. 40) suggests, “what arrives not only depends on time, but is shaped by the conditions of its arrival, by how it came to get there”. It is through our contact with others that the possibilities for becoming (white, old, young, heterosexual, or homosexual, etc.) emerge, and it is through becoming something slightly different to what we were that future becomings are made possible.

6.1.2 Performance, “sexpertise”, and the female orgasm. Men’s anxiety relating to feeling sexually inexperienced is hardly surprising given that one of the imperatives of the desirable hegemonic man is that he be sexually experienced and sexually skilled (Barker & Ricardo, 2005). Much critical work on masculinities shows how dominant constructions of successful male sexuality are centred on the notion of sexual “performance” (Farvid & Braun, 2006; Potts, 2000b, 2000a). The desirable man must possess the qualities that allow him to perform sexually: sexual experience, sexual skill, the strength of his erection, and his ability to be athletic and strong during sex, as well as his sexual endurance and the maintenance of his erection, are all essential. These discourses on the imperatives of male sexual performance are constantly reproduced in a variety of discursive fields, including popular culture, medicine, pornography, psychiatry, sexology, and the media (Potts, 2000b). Research has shown how these discourses are prominent in men’s lifestyle magazines (Attwood, 2005; L. D. Taylor, 2005), which commonly champion portrayals of idealised, hyper-sexualised masculinities and problematise any lack in male sexual performance.

This discourse of sexual “experience” (or inexperience) and its relationship to men’s sexual performance ran consistently through men’s narratives of paying for sex. Anesh talks about the experience of losing his virginity to a sex worker, and reflects on the value that this encounter had for him in terms of negotiating his sexuality:

So, I got to her [the sex worker's] place. I was nervous. Obviously you don't know what to do... So she took it from there and honestly the experience lasted six minutes. I mean it's true, I'm a virgin. As soon as she came on me it just came out. Look, I know this is part of your research. So she laughed. You know? She giggled and she said are you a virgin? It was like watching one of these er Hollywood movies, obviously, it was like I was in that *American Pie* situations [laughs]. So on my mind was more that, geez, I fucked up, sorry for my language. It was only six minutes and I'm thinking to myself, I'm paying 350 Rand for six minutes which means I wasted my money. So, she laughed and she giggled and she said to me look, she actually likes me. I'm a gentleman. She'll be able to assist me or groom me, you know, in that department. So, I saw her for six months. But, but she did warn me, in this six months, we saw each other for six to nine months, but she said as I become more learned, I'll become more adventurous. (*Anesh, 40, Indian: Skype*)

Potts (2002, p. 137) suggests that “the focus on hardness, strength, activity, and endurance in hegemonic masculine sexuality determines how a man measures his own ‘success in sex’”. Across participants’ narratives, successful sexual performance was clearly defined in terms of how long the encounter lasts, which again shows how men draw upon dominant discourses around men’s sexual stamina and endurance to make meaning of their paid sexual experiences. Almost all the narratives collected about men losing their virginity to a sex worker end similarly, in what the participants seem to construct as a “failed” first attempt at sex. Anesh constructs his first sexual encounter, due to his sexual inexperience, as a failed performance (“I fucked up”) because he ejaculated too quickly and the sexual encounter lasted only six minutes. This is similar to Nelson’s narrative, where he says, “it only lasted 10 minutes”. However, in telling me about losing their virginity to sex workers, participants did not talk about being ashamed of this “failure”, and certainly did not talk of experiencing the feelings of humiliation that they said they feared experiencing in other sexual encounters with women. These participants constructed paid sex as a space in which they, because they were paying, did not have to risk being rejected by women; a space in which they did not have to feel ashamed or threatened by their lack of experience; and a space in which they could have their first sexual experience without feeling compelled to put on a good sexual performance or exhibit sexual skill.

Perhaps even more importantly, participants described the paid sexual encounter as one through which they could acquire new skills. Anesh, in the narrative above, describes how the sex worker offered to “assist” him, and how he learned techniques and styles from her. Again, there is a sense of becoming, a sense that by using the space to “become more learned” or to “become more adventurous” Anesh had somehow graduated or progressed sexually as a man. Another example of this dynamic can be found in the excerpt below, where Kyle describes his relationship with a sex worker 15 years his senior:

- Kyle: Maybe that's why I have not been with any other sex worker since I met her...She is the first women I made orgasm. She taught me how.
- Monique: Ok, so she has been helpful in that way too, teaching you new skills
- Kyle: Showed me her G-spot and told me what and how to touch her. I felt great after that. *(Kyle, 39, Indian: Instant messenger)*

Kyle and Anesh’s narratives provide examples from that data that suggest that sex workers sold men more than just sex: they sold them sexual experience and, most importantly, sexual skill. Similarly, research with female sex workers (Sanders, 2006; Wahab, 2004) found that the women described themselves as educators of their clients, and spoke about offering them sexual experience and education about women’s bodies and aspects of sexual health.

Sex workers sold men like Kyle an opportunity to learn the very important skill of making a woman orgasm. Much research on dominant social constructions of heterosexuality (Farvid & Braun, 2006; Gilfoyle et al., 1992; Huysamen & Boonzaier, 2015; Potts, 2000a, 2001) has shown how the production of female pleasure is inextricably linked to how men’s sexual performance is appraised in society. Specifically, the woman’s orgasm is central to male sexuality because it is seen to be indicative of his sexual competence and skill. It is the woman’s orgasm that, as Potts (2000a, p. 64) terms it, is the proof of the man’s *sexperts*. It is this *sexperts* that men could buy from sex workers. Thus, I argue that these paid sexual encounters were valuable to men because they offered them the opportunity to acquire the

sexual experience and skills they needed to prove their ability to perform sexually outside of these paid encounters. Paid sexual encounters provided men with the skills they (thought they) needed to compete with other men whom they imagined were more skilled and were “getting sex” whilst they were not.

This finding that sex workers sold men sexual skills rather than just sex can be said to contribute to the body of knowledge that recognises the emotional labour (Bernstein, 2001; Huysamen & Boonzaier, 2015; Milrod & Weitzer, 2012; Sanders, 2005) that sex workers perform as part of their job. This understanding of the purchasing of emotional labour is consistent with Hochschild’s (2012) work, outlined in Chapter Two, on how intimacy and emotionality become marketable services.

Men’s narratives also provide insight into the power dynamics at play within the client-sex worker relationship. In both Anesh and Kyle’s narratives, the sex worker assumes the position of power as the knowledgeable, sexually mature teacher, while the client assumes a relatively passive subject position as her inexperienced and bashful student. Anesh constructs himself as sexually inexperienced, nervous, and unsure of how to interact with, or relate to, the sex worker. Conversely, he constructs the sex worker as calm, knowledgeable, and experienced, and as taking the lead (“she took it from there”) in the interaction. Anesh’s choice of the word “groom” further illustrates the adult-child/teacher-student dynamic of the relationship, because, when used in the context of sex, the term usually refers to the process of an adult drawing a child into a sexual relationship. Therefore, I argue that sex workers can command power over their clients because of their positions as experienced sexual teachers. Moreover, they also use this power to sell their service (the teaching of sexual skills) regularly. For it is the promise of this skill or expertise that resulted in clients, very enthusiastically and with gratitude, agreeing to buy sex from women regularly (“we saw each other for six to nine months”) as well as exclusively (“that’s why I have not been with any

other sex worker since I met her”). It therefore becomes clear that sex workers can yield power over their clients at both discursive and material levels. In agreement with these findings, Sanders (2005) explores how women manipulate the sexual and emotional labour they provide to make themselves marketable to clients. This highlights the ways in which power, agency, and influence are not only located with clients, but also with sex workers themselves.

6.1.3 The (hegemonic) performance of your life. Frank (2003, p. 70) suggests that “sexuality and sexual conquest... can be experienced by men as humiliating and stressful as well as thrilling”. Indeed, the perceived pressure to perform and produce pleasure (and the subsequent vulnerability men feel in relation to women) did not always cease as men became older and potentially more sexually experienced. For many men, sex remained a potentially stressful and humiliating encounter. This is evident in Richard’s narrative below:

Which comes down to pride but also comes down to the fact if you want to have sex with this person again, *they* need to want to, you know. It’s all very fine and well going through all this, you know, winning the person’s attention, you’re having a great third date and you have sex what happens after that? When you feel you put in the performance of your life and they like “eh I’ll give you a call next week”. So then it’s back to, well you know what? I really like so-and-so and if I pay her, I get to see her every Tuesday morning. (*Richard, 43, white: Face-to-face*)

Richard reflects on his potential vulnerability within a heterosexual encounter. What is noteworthy here is that Richard makes meaning of a woman not “wanting” to see him, after three dates and a sexual encounter, entirely in terms of his sexual *performance* (“When you feel you put in the performance of your life and they like ‘eh I’ll give you a call next week’”). This narrative is an example of the ways in which men often constructed sex purely in terms of their own sexual performance, rather than as an erotic encounter between two people. It can be argued that if something is a performance then it automatically implies that there is some kind of audience who observes and appraises this performance. In the case of the heterosexual encounter, the woman then becomes this audience. As Farvid and Braun (2006,

p. 304) point out, “with sexual performance framed as central to both the male ego and masculinity... it also paradoxically positions women as ‘powerful’ and as having the ability to cause ‘sexual anxiety’ by pointing out men’s sexual inadequacies.” It is this heteronormative construction of sex as a man’s performance, rather than a mutual interaction, that renders men vulnerable to women’s judgement, real or perceived. Similarly, Frank (2003, p. 72) theorises that men find strip clubs alluring because they provide a “fantasy of sexual potency” while also providing “a certain protection from vulnerability that other arenas, including the bedroom at home, may not”. She argues that at these strip clubs men could fantasise about, and to some extent engage in, erotic encounters with women, but, because they were not allowed to remove their clothes or have sex with the dancers, they were neither at risk of having their bodies or physical performances appraised by the women, nor were they responsible for the women’s pleasure. I argue that narratives such as Richard’s point to the same value in paid sex. The findings of this study suggest that paid sex also offers a “fantasy of potency” and “protection from vulnerability”: a man can engage in an erotic encounter with a woman, but, because he has paid her, he can do so without having to worry about her rejecting him. Because a woman’s rejection after sex is understood as a reflection of his poor performance, removing the risk of rejection from the sexual encounter protects him from feeling undesirable or inadequate.

Participants’ narratives also speak to the complex question of power in both heterosexual relationships and in the client-sex worker relationship. Richard, like many other participants, constructs women as gatekeepers who ultimately are in control of whether or not a couple will have sex (“if you want to have sex with this person again, *they* need to want to, you know”). Richard’s narrative is reflective of normative heterosexual scripts that place women in positions of power as gatekeepers that were present in many participants’ narratives (Laner

& Ventrone, 2000; Mooney-Somers & Ussher, 2010; Weaver & Herold, 2000). In light of this dynamic, Huysamen and Boonzaier (2015) suggest:

One may argue that paying for sex was not only attractive to men because it was constructed as cheaper and easier, but because it removed the woman from her power position as gatekeeper within heterosexual sex and invested men with the power to purchase the access they required.³⁶ (p. 542)

Richard's narrative supports this suggestion ("I really like so-and-so and if I pay her, I get to see her every Tuesday morning"). However, I argue that this was perhaps an oversimplistic analysis of the power dynamics at play. The current study has shown how the sex worker can also hold a position of power over the client by being an experienced teacher who offers him the desirable possibility of acquiring new sexual skills. This not only affords her discursive power over the client, but also material power, in that it keeps him coming back and paying for her services every week. Thus, perhaps it is not always as simple as assuming that paying for sex affords men absolute power over sex workers. Rather, I argue that men construct paying for sex as valuable because it provides relief from, or compensation for, the feelings of rejection, powerlessness, shame, or inadequacy that they risk experiencing in their interactions with the more "dangerous" women outside of the paid sexual encounter.

6.1.4 Paid sex as a safe space to deal with sexual difficulties. The men's narratives about paying for sex that have been discussed above clearly reflect how performance is central to idealised male sexuality. Potts (2000b, p. 87) suggests that in western society "the 'hard on' is the essence of male sexuality". For men who had experienced difficulty with achieving or maintaining erections (which four men I interviewed specifically spoke about), sexual performance was a particularly threatening and anxiety-provoking issue. Below is an excerpt from an online interview with Grant where he speaks about his experience of struggling with erections:

³⁶ In this article, as a counter-argument, we also acknowledge that many women do not always exercise control and hold gatekeeper positions within heterosexual relationships, particularly in contexts of widespread and normalised violence against women.

Grant: Here's something else that may be interesting for you. About two years ago, maybe a year and a half ago, I started to experience what I thought was erectile dysfunction and this is a big worry for a man. Not only because it brings his entire conception of his virility into question, but I started to worry about if my heart was working well if my circulation was okay, if my overall health was okay... So, I was seeing the PA [regular sex worker] and it was such a relief to engage in really athletic wild sex with her. I remember one time I was almost crying with relief. I thought I had a heart condition or something and she would just show up and everything would work beautifully. A couple times it didn't and of course I didn't really feel guilt - she actually felt worse about it than I did. But when things started working again and I found I could have really satisfying sex and really hard orgasms. I have to say it was a relief. I know it sounds dirty but if suddenly your body stops working it's frightening. I was so worried about it one time that I actually went down toward the massage parlours and just had crazy sex on the floor with this one girl and she assured me everything is totally fine. I think I must have tipped her five hundred Rand. So I think that's another big part of it. You start to worry about your body and how a woman reacts to your body and what you can do with it is a big deal and it's part of being human as part of a man's conception of himself. It's obviously not the most important thing, but there's no question that it's important.

Monique: Yes. And what you seem to be saying here is that when you had sex with these women and were able to have erections and successful sex they obviously helped to affirm this, right?

Grant: Without a doubt! Without a doubt. Look, think about it, if you are a man and you have a girlfriend or you are having a sexual relationship with somebody you know well, this is something you are likely to keep secret from her. And the bottom line is, it's massively humiliating to try to impress your girlfriend in bed and nothing happens. Obviously your girlfriend will be understanding but she's going to wonder whether there's something wrong with her, she's going to be hurt and ultimately she's the one to solve the problem

because of course your ability to get an erection directly influences her ability to enjoy sex so there's massive pressure to please her and that of course makes everything much worse. You don't want to go out to dinner with a woman you really like or love and go home and nothing happens. But with a girl you are paying, the dynamic is utterly different. You have the space to say “look I have this problem and I need you to do X Y and Z number to see if this works” and you know she won't exactly be heartbroken if you don't have sex with her and you just pay her for her time. You know she won't even think twice about it.

Monique: A very interesting point you make

Grant: And this goes back to the selfishness you're allowed to have if you're paying for sex. Again, and I don't mean to sound offensive, but if your girlfriend is giving you oral sex for instance and you are not getting a hard on she's going to be annoyed and if you say “listen I need you to keep doing that, I need you to keep sucking my dick for like 45 minutes to see if I can actually get this to work” or you want to really thrust hard in her mouth and she doesn't like that too much then the problem doesn't get solved that's mutually frustrating. I'm not saying that all sex with people you pay is humiliating but it's just a small adjustment that could mean everything for a guy. (*Grant, 46, white: Instant messenger*)

Grant's narrative reflects various dominant discourses around male sexuality, and shows how these discourses influence the ways in which men make meaning of sex and their sexualities. Firstly, Grant's narrative clearly reflects how he understands his problems with erections in terms of a medical sexual health discourse. He speaks about his fear that his “erectile dysfunction” was indicative of a “heart condition”, poor circulation, or just poor “overall health”. Indeed, in our society the erection is constructed through a variety of discursive fields (such as medicine, sexology, psychiatry, as well as popular culture) in terms of male sexual health. The hard, strong erection is deemed “normal”, “natural”, and

indicative of a “healthy” and successful male sexuality. Similarly, the failure of the penis to erect fully is constructed as a medical condition, as unhealthy, dysfunctional, and abnormal. A lucrative medical industry for diagnosing and treating these medical “problems” supports and is supported by this medical discourse (Potts, 2000b).

The way in which Grant makes sense of his erectile problems also reflects the phallocentrism that dominated many participants’ narratives and also dominates discourses around heterosexuality more broadly. Jackson (1984, p. 44) uses the term *coital imperative* to capture the way in which dominant, phallocentric discourses construct the erect penis penetrating the vagina as the only legitimate form of sex, leaving little room for the imagining of sex without penetration. Grant constructs his “erectile dysfunction” as extremely threatening to a man’s masculinity as it “brings his entire conception of his virility into question”. The “massive pressure to please” that Grant describes is indicative of how women’s sexual pleasure is also understood according to these phallocentric constructions of heterosexuality, where the woman’s ability to engage in and enjoy sex (and her subsequent orgasm) is understood to be directly reliant on the man’s ability to penetrate her. This phallocentric understanding of women’s sexual pleasure remains dominant in society despite women reporting masturbation and oral sex as equally and often more pleasurable than penetrative sex (Gavey et al., 1999; M. Jackson, 1984; McPhillips et al., 2001). Ussher (1997), in highlighting how threatening erectile problems are to masculinity, argues that “male impotence or erectile problems is a serious matter, particularly in a culture where the penis, and successful achievement of intercourse, is how ‘sex’ is defined” (p 328). According to dominant discourses, having heterosexual sex is largely how masculinity is defined. When a man loses the ability to penetrate a woman he is therefore both desexualised and emasculated (Farvid & Braun, 2006; Gavey et al., 1999; McPhillips et al., 2001; Potts, 2000b). So it is hardly surprising that Grant describes his failed erections as “massively

humiliating”. On the one hand, the man and his penis are privileged within heteronormative discourses and elevated to a position of power as the penetrator and the provider of pleasure. On the other hand, it is precisely this male-centric, phallogentric construction of heterosexuality that puts men under “massive pressure to please” women, rendering men vulnerable to women’s appraisals of their performance and making women dangerous and threatening to their masculinity.

Grant’s narrative is also a story of becoming, one where, through the paid sexual encounter, he becomes sexually competent and virile once again. It was the client-sex worker dynamic that provided men with a non-threatening context in which they felt safe to engage in sex despite their potentially emasculating sexual difficulties. Participants constructed the dynamic between themselves and sex workers as “utterly different” to their relationships with their wives or partners. Grant’s failed erections are so humiliating that he keeps them a secret from his partner and they become unspeakable and unknowable in her presence. Conversely, Grant constructs paid sex as a space in which he could openly and without fear acknowledge his “problem”. The sex worker is not only expected to have sex with her client, but also to accommodate his specific sexual and emotional needs. The emotional labour expected of the sex worker is reflected in the emotive language Grant uses when he describes his inability to have erections as “frightening” and himself as “almost crying with relief” when he does achieve an erection with the sex worker. Reinstating Grant’s masculinity, by ensuring him that “everything was totally fine” with his sexual performance, is part of the emotional labour that the sex worker provided. Farvid and Braun (2006) suggest that, when it comes to sexual dysfunction or inadequacy, the male ego is often constructed as fragile, and something that should be protected by women. They show how, in the case of male sexual dysfunction, part of the emotional work that women in heterosexual relationships provide (or are expected to provide) involves offering men support and reassurance that they are sexually adequate.

However, contrary to these findings, many of the men in this study did not feel that they could, or did not wish to seek, this kind of support from their wives or partners, but rather turned to paid sex workers to meet these needs.

6.2 “Selfish”/Misogynistic Sex: The Slave and the Master

Thus far, this chapter has explored the theme of the sex worker as the wise and patient teacher and the client as the inexperienced student. However, a more misogynistic element to the client-sex worker relationship was also apparent in some men’s narratives. The notion of “selfish sex” emerged as a theme across numerous interviews. Analysis revealed that paid sex provided a context where men felt they were physically “allowed”, and also discursively allowed, to enact this kind of dominant, misogynistic masculinity that would not be permissible in other heterosexual contexts.

Grant, in the last section of his narrative, speaks about the “selfishness you're allowed to have if you're paying for sex”. I argue that the word “allowed” is significant here. We can again link this to the concept of *jouissance*, the thrill of behaving in ways that deviate from that which is morally and/or socially permissible (Hook, 2017). Paying for selfish sex means that men can make sexual demands of sex workers that they would not be allowed to make of their partners. In a society where discourses of permissiveness, reciprocity, and mutuality are increasingly being constructed as the benchmark for ethical heterosexual sex (Braun et al., 2003; Gilfoyle et al., 1992; Hollway, 2001), paying for “selfish sex” means that men can disregard the needs (and sometimes the wellbeing) of the woman they have sex with, demanding that their own desires take centre stage. To provide another example, Mario (32, *white: Instant messenger*) told me that often he did not want to go to the effort of engaging in foreplay, an aspect of sex that his girlfriend greatly enjoyed, but he felt “obliged” to do so.

Conversely, when he paid for sex he could disregard the woman's needs without feeling guilty.

However, Grant's narrative speaks to more than just a disregard for the sex worker's needs in order to privilege his own, but points to the desire to humiliate and dominate the woman he pays for sex. The word "humiliating" arises twice in Grant's narrative. Grant first uses it to describe the sense of emasculation and powerlessness that he experienced in his relationship with his partner due to his erectile problems. When the narrative then moves onto the context of paid sex, we see how it is Grant who humiliates the sex worker by describing a situation where he could "really thrust hard in her mouth" even though she has communicated that "she doesn't like that too much". Grant uses a disclaimer stating, "I'm not saying that all sex with people you pay is humiliating", which is an indication that he was aware that the acts he had just described *were* humiliating for sex workers (see Hewitt & Stokes, 1975 for early work on disclaimers as narrative devices). Thus, we can see how Grant manages his own feelings of humiliation and powerlessness that he had experienced in his relationship by "massively humiliating" the sex worker in an act of domination and power.

An example of this misogynist master and slave client-sex worker power dynamic is also presented in Christo's narrative. He talks candidly about his desire to hurt the women he paid for sex. Christo had just told me how he enjoys seeing women he has paid for sex "battling to accommodate the size" of his penis:

Christo: I have a large penis and girls normally would not do those things until much later, even with straight sex, if they are sober they always complain [that it is painful] the first couple of times.

Monique: Ok. But with a sex worker it's different?

Christo: Yup, even if I have rough sex they need the money and do not complain thus feeding my need to go deep or have hard anal with them. Also you don't have to feel guilty using them, I told myself it is their jobs. (*Christo, 41, white: Instant messenger*)

This narrative communicates the assumption that, because they are paying clients, men are entitled to disregard women's needs and can dominate, humiliate, and inflict pain on them in ways that are not acceptable (although not unusual in reality) within in most contemporary discourses on heterosexual relationships. Through describing his penis as large and having the potential to hurt women, Christo is able to construct his sexuality as both powerful and dominant in the moment of the interview.

These narratives elucidate the complexity of the power dynamics at play in the client-sex worker relationship. In the previous theme, the picture of the sex worker in a position of power as a mature teacher figure, emerges in relation to the inexperienced or anxious client/student. However, in the discussion of "selfish sex" a very different pattern emerges, one of power and domination by the client over the sex worker. Here, men understand the client-sex worker dynamic as a space where they are paying for the right to make sexual demands on, and disregard the needs of, the sex worker, and, for some, a space where they can dominate and humiliate the sex worker. Perhaps more importantly, however, what this discussion has demonstrated is that it is not necessarily an either-or situation, where some clients inhabit the passive student/child discursive position and others the dominant or misogynistic discursive position. Grant's narrative is a perfect example of how participants may shift and move between these positions. His story about his erectile problems is perhaps one of the most emotive displays of a vulnerable masculinity in this data, as he arrives to pay for sex out of desperation and is at the sex worker's mercy to reaffirm his masculinity. However, the very same narrative reflects his misogynist desire to sexually dominate and humiliate the women he pays for sex. The data thus suggests that power within the client-sex worker relationship is contradictory and shifting.

6.3 Mundane Marriage: The Madonna and the Whore

In Chapter Four I argued that men constructed paid sex as an opportunity to access the kinds of “exciting” sex that was “forbidden” by their partners. In this section, I investigate how and why men construct their wives as essentially different from sex workers. Men constructed sex within their marriages as boring and routine, and in stark contrast to paid sex where they can, in the moment of the encounter, become “porn stars”. However, men’s narratives suggest a slightly more complex dynamic than simply men requesting certain sex acts from their wives and their wives then refusing to engage in these acts. The following interview with Richard provides insight into this argument:

There’s certain guys who are just tired of missionary screwing, meat and potato sex, every Tuesday and Thursday night after *Dallas* at home. And they want to be Peter North³⁷, do the whole porn star thing, even if they might not be very good at it. But even though they might not possibly enjoy it, but they want the opportunity to do it. And sometimes it’s not just the fact that the wife will say no or the girlfriend will say no. It’s just sometimes when you’re in a familiar environment with someone who is the mother of your children or who you see every day or you know has heard you on the toilet or whatever, it’s just too embarrassing to want to behave like that. Because women probably would laugh at their husband, hopefully not tell everyone in book club. And that’s the difficult thing. Whereas if you buy someone for an hour it doesn’t matter how you behave. In fact they’re not going to care. You don’t ever have to go back. (*Richard, 43, white: Face-to-face*)

In this excerpt Richard draws on the dominant discourse of sex within marriage as being mundane and habitual, contrasting the “meat and potato sex” he has with his wife with the “porn star sex” that he can pay for. His narrative suggests that men have a desire, or at least feel a pressure, to perform a certain kind of “porn star” sexuality. It is through the paid sexual encounter that they can, in that moment, “become Peter North”. This ties into Anesh’s narrative, where he also draws on pornographic film references, saying that, despite never having had sex before, he longed to experience the “*Emmanuelle* lifestyle”. These narratives suggest that paid sexual encounters allowed for moments of doing a kind of porn star sexuality and masculinity, one that men felt they could not do elsewhere.

³⁷ A Canadian male pornographic actor.

What is significant about this excerpt is Richard's recognition that it might not always be that men's wives are unwilling to engage in that kind of sex with them, but rather that men themselves feel unable, unwilling, or too embarrassed to do this porn star sexuality with their wives or partners. When men told me that they paid for sex because they could not get porn star style sex from their wives, I often followed up on their statements by enquiring as to whether they had ever actually asked their wives to have this kind of sex with them. Although some men said that they had, many said they had never asked. Richard's narrative suggests that a sense of over-familiarity in the relationship with his wife could negate a man's ability to feel like they were performing a porn star role believably. Secondly, Richard draws on the discourse of the dangerous and judgemental woman. He suggests that men may feel too vulnerable and embarrassed to enact this kind of porn star sexuality (which he admits they might not be very good at) with their wives for fear that their wives might *laugh* at them or possibly even tell all of their friends about it. This fear that women might laugh at them or tell their friends about their "failed" sexual encounters or embarrassing desires emerged repeatedly across men's narratives. Conversely, Richard constructs paid sex as a safe space ("it doesn't matter how you behave") to experiment, explore, and perform this porn star sexuality.

However, men's reasons for paying for certain kinds of sex instead of asking their wives for this are not exclusively related to feeling embarrassed or vulnerable in front of their partners. The data also suggests that some men do not ask their partners to engage in "porn star" sex because they specifically want to keep the kind of sexuality that their wives do separate from the kind of sexuality that sex workers do. As discussed in Chapter Five, research into men's construction of their heterosexual relationships suggests that they tend to construct women dualistically (Bhana & Pattman, 2011; Hollway, 2001; Seal & Ehrhardt, 2003). In my previous research with men who paid for sex (Huysamen, 2013; Huysamen &

Boonzaier, 2015), as well as in the current study, I found that participants often constructed their wives as “good” and “respectable” women, and as the opposite of the kind of women they envisioned themselves having highly erotic encounters with. In line with Ahmed (2006) and Butler’s (1999) theorising, it can be argued that this very act of men repeatedly paying sex workers for a particular kind of sex and continuing to exclude their wives from this kind of sex serves to maintain and perpetuate the dichotomous constructions of female sexuality.

Mario’s narrative provides an example of this dualistic construction of women, as he explains how the sex with his girlfriend differs from the sex he has with sex workers:

- Mario: I can have sex but I can't Fuck her. Big distinction between the two.
 Monique: Could you explain that distinction for me please?
 Mario: Well I'll make love or have sex with her. But I can't treat her like a piece of meat and pound her till she is raw. I love her too much. I don't want to cheapen her. (*Mario, 32, white: Instant messenger*)

This excerpt provides a clear example of how participants not only constructed sex workers and their partners dualistically, but also constructed the kind of sex they wanted to have with them dualistically. Participants like Mario clearly wanted to maintain a distinction between the bodies of the “Madonnas” with whom they “make love” and the bodies of the “whores” whom they could “fuck” or “pound till she is raw”. I argue that paying for sex allows men like Mario to perform a dominant, misogynistic kind of heterosexuality without threatening the “respectable” image that they have of their partners, an image of their partners that they themselves wish to uphold. However, participants use these dualistic, heteronormative constructions of femininity to *justify* their paying for sex; they argue that, by paying for “porn star” sex rather than asking their partners to engage in these acts, they are actually helping the partners to maintain their “dignity” and are protecting them from the risk of being “cheapened”. It is these dualistic constructions of female sexuality that continue to police women’s bodies and limit their sexualities, and thereby shape what certain female

bodies can do and what other female bodies cannot do. It is also these dualistic constructions that continue to stigmatise women who sell sex. Consequently, these findings suggest that men pay for sex not only because sex workers are “different” from their wives, but because paying for sex maintains this difference.

6.4 Paid Sex as a “Safe Space” for Pushing the Boundaries of Heterosexuality

In Chapter Three I reflected on how I entered the interviews with preconceived assumptions about the sexuality of participants, initially wanting to label them as heterosexual men, based on the fact that they had answered to adverts about paying women for sex. However, as interviews progressed, men began to tell stories and share desires that pushed the boundaries of their heterosexuality. I was reminded that people’s sexualities seldom conform so neatly to the binaries and boxes that society prescribes, and that, for some participants at least, their sexualities were more fluid and more complicated than an unequivocal desire for the opposite sex. Eight participants told me about sexual experiences (paid and/or unpaid) they had had with men and/or with transsexual women or “shemales” as they termed them. Four participants used the labels “bisexual”, “bi-curious”, or “pansexual” to describe their sexuality. All but one of the men who said that they paid men and/or transsexual women for sex were either married or had been married to a woman. They all said their wives were unaware that they had ever had sex with “shemales” or men. For most of these men, the fact that they had experimented, or desired to experiment, outside of the strict boundaries of heterosexuality was a safely guarded secret. The excerpt below provides some insight into the ways in which men spoke about their homoerotic desires:

Kyle: Indians are very conservative and fear what people think of them. I wish I can be stronger and be more expressive of my feelings towards shemales or males for that matter...

- Monique: Am I right in assuming that you have kept your paying for sex a secret from your wife?
- Kyle: Yes
- Monique: What do you think she would have to say if you told her about it?
- Kyle: Probably would end our relationship...
- Monique: What is it that you have enjoyed so much about your encounters with shemales, you have said it is one of your ideal experiences?
- Kyle: The feminine side of a man. Something I can't reveal.
- Monique: Ok so you can relate to that.
- Kyle: I want to be able to do that without reprise... If I could go back 22 years, I may not have chosen women. I may not have gotten married. I would have experimented more with my sexuality. (*Kyle, 39, Indian: Instant messenger*)

Kyle's narrative is an example of the ways in which some men resisted the strict boundaries of hegemonic heterosexuality. It also reflects the frustrations that they felt about not being able to experiment with their sexuality or express and explore these desires more openly and fully in their daily lives. Throughout his online IM interviews with me (which continued sporadically over a number of weeks), Kyle spoke about the restrictions he experienced within his marriage and within his culture more broadly. He spoke of having a strong desire to exit his marriage and explore his sexuality, but explained that divorce would be considered unacceptable by his community, leaving him feeling "trapped" within his marriage. Having sex with men or "shemales", he explained, would be completely unthinkable because homosexuality was a taboo within the very conservative Indian community he came from. Previous research on the experiences of Indian men and women who identify as gay highlight how they often conceal their sexualities because homosexuality is heavily stigmatised and condemned within Indian communities around the world (Bhugra,

1997; Dave, 2011; Minwalla, Rosser, Feldman, & Varga, 2005; Traeen, Martinussen, Vitters, & Saini, 2009).³⁸

These findings illustrate, drawing on Ahmed (2006) and Butler's (1999) work, how bodies come to be policed and kept "in line" through social structures (such as culture and religion) that pathologise and limit sexual practices that fall outside of dominant conventions of compulsory heterosexuality. What the disciplining or policing of these deviating acts or bodies does is produce a false stabilisation and naturalisation of heterosexuality that conceals the fact that there is often not a coherent flow, or straight line, from sex to gender to sexual desire (Ahmed, 2006; Butler, 1999). This is certainly the case in Kyle's narrative and broader life story, where, to the outsider, he appears to be a traditional heterosexual Indian man with a wife and a child. However, stories like Kyle's show how discontinuities "run rampant" (Butler, 2008, p. 185) within heterosexual contexts. Kyle is a man in a heterosexual marriage, he speaks about wanting to have sex with men and transsexual women, and he describes his desire for revealing the "feminine side of a man". Here, Kyle repeatedly queers the "straight" line between gender, sex, and sexual desire that is naturalised within our heteronormative society (Ahmed, 2006).

Numerous participants said they had no outlet to explore these aspects of their sexuality without exposing their desires to their wives and communities. I found that paid sexual encounters with women often became spaces where men shared and expressed these desires openly for the first time. The client-sex worker context became a space for "coming out" as having desires that queered the boundaries of heterosexuality. Take, for instance, this excerpt from an online interview with Mohamed:

Monique: Have you learned anything about sex or about your sexuality through paying for sex?

³⁸ While I draw parallels between my own work and this body of research, it is not my intention to equate men who have sex with transsexual sex workers to men with homosexual identities, but rather to highlight how cultural structures operate to police and limit bodies.

- Mohamed: I learnt that you never know if you're gonna enjoy it until u try it. Also I learned that I am bi-curious.
- Monique: Ok interesting. Quite a few guys have told me that they found out that they were interested in more than just women through sex work. Could you tell me more about this...
- Mohamed: For me it's not only about sex. Its about the company and conversations you have with the lady. The right lady will not only talk to you but also listen to you. You can completely be yourself and have no fear of being judged. It's in these talks that all your fantasies and fetishes come out.
- Monique: Ok I see, so it's a much less judgemental space
- Mohamed: I think everyone is curious about same-gender sex. Very few people talk about it and even fewer explore it.
- (Mohamed, 37, Indian: Instant messenger)*

In this excerpt Mohamed, like Kyle, challenges and resists dominant assumptions of compulsory heterosexuality, suggesting, “everyone is curious about the same-gender sex”. However, he talks about how homosexual desire is something that people feel they cannot talk about, and certainly cannot explore in their everyday lives. Mohamed’s narrative is very clear on how providing a safe space for men within the client-sex worker relationship is part of the emotional labour that the sex worker performs. According to Mohamed, the “right lady will not only talk to you but also listen to you”. Such a sex worker provides a context where the client feels heard, and as though he can be himself and has “no fear of being judged”. Mohamed explains that it was in a non-judgemental client-sex worker context such as this that his fantasies and fetishes were able to emerge.

On a more material level, participants explained that sex workers would assist in preparing them to have penetrative sex with a man for the first time. This was done by, for example, by performing “prostrate massages” for clients, as Mohamed suggested, or penetrating them with dildos, as Kyle explained, until they felt confident to try sex with men.

Moreover, some men said that sex workers had arranged for a male or “shemale” sex worker to join them for their first sexual encounter, again playing a supportive, facilitative role in their sexual exploration. In Mohammed’s narrative there is, yet again, a sense of change or “becoming” as the client-sex worker relationship provided a space where desire for bodies of the same sex became possible, where Mohammed “learned” that he was “bi-curious”.

Richard’s narrative below speaks to some of the more intricate implications that homoerotic desires and experiences might have for men’s identities:

There are so many women out there who want to be with another woman, it’s a different sort of step for girls and it has nothing to do with the physiology of it... And men pride themselves on how many chicks they’ve fucked and the story and the high five and that pride. Whereas for a man to be prepared to be physically or sexually engaged with another guy that’s a huge step for them. Because they’re worried not only what the other guys are thinking, they’re worried about what the girls are thinking. Because if the girls, if the girls choose to go with another girl, first of all, most guys will just think that’s awesome, rad, that’s fantastic. Whereas the girls will be more sensitive. So that whole stigma is far smaller or far further removed in in my opinion... So now you have a scenario where you have a couple, a guy and a girl... for the woman it will be easier to be curious and say let’s explore that curiosity. Now the guy is like shit, I would like to explore that curiosity as well. But what happens if I tell her? I’ll alienate her because she’ll think I’m gay or I’m not man enough anymore or it’s repellent to her... Do you go and explore this curiosity on the side yourself?... If it’s by paying somebody, finding the swingers’ lifestyle, or going to a bar where there’s an opportunity to do this occasionally on the side and see how it works for you. And then keep your other, the other persona at home. The perception which you, you created for people. (*Richard, 43, white: Face-to-face*)

Richard talks about the threat that expressing homosexual desire could have on a man’s masculinity and reflects upon the fragility of masculinity in relation to sexuality. In conveying this point, he firstly describes men and women’s sexualities as differing, but highlights how these differences are social rather than biological (“it has nothing to do with the physiology of it”). This statement is, in and of itself, a form of resistance to dominant truths about gender and sexuality that construct men and women as inherently biologically different, a discourse that justifies and maintains patriarchal power imbalances. Rather than biological differences, Richard suggests that there are different social consequences for men and women expressing homosexual desire. Of course, by talking about the ways in which

homosexual desire is not so threatening to female identity, he is simultaneously talking about how it *is* threatening to masculinity. Kimmel (2004, p. 182) argues that “we come to know what it means to be a man in our culture by setting our definitions in opposition to a set of ‘others’—racial minorities, sexual minorities, and, above all, women”. This argument has been made in Chapter Five, where we saw how men negotiated desirable masculinities in opposition to the black Other. Similarly, Ahmed (2006, p. 71) suggests that, “the line of straight orientation takes the subject toward what it ‘is not’ and what it ‘is not’ then confirms what it ‘is’”. Thus, in order to be recognisable as a successful man, a man must explicitly express and prove that he does *not* desire other men, because to desire men is seen to be feminine. Anderson (2013) uses the term *homohysteria* to capture the fear of being perceived as gay that those living within a homophobic society experience. Similarly, Kimmel (2004, p. 188) suggests that it is one of men’s greatest fears that other men might expose them as having desires for men, suggesting that “this is the great secret of American Manhood: *we are afraid of other men*”. However, this study suggests that it is not only other men who stand to threaten men’s masculinities, but that women are also a threat. Richard is reluctant to tell his partner that he has sexual desires for men for fear that it would alienate her, because “she’ll think I’m gay or I’m not man enough anymore”. Here, Richard draws on the dominant discourse that equates homoerotic desire with being “gay”; being “gay” is in turn equated, as discussed above, with emasculation or not being “man enough”. Men’s fear of being alienated or humiliated by their female partners because of their sexual desires or performance arises as a central theme in the data. Richard’s narrative shows how some men value paid sex as a space where they can express and explore their sexualities without the fear of being exposed, rejected, or ridiculed by their female partners. Similarly, Huschke and Schubotz (2016), in their study on Irish men who pay for sex, present a case study of a male participant who identified as a heterosexual cross-dresser and found that paying for sex

offered him a non-judgemental space to fulfil these desires without having to broach this aspect of his sexuality within his other relationships.

Finally, using Richard's narrative to support my argument, I suggest that paying for sex allows men to compartmentalise their sexual identities. Paying for sex makes it possible for Richard to express his desires to engage in sex with bodies other than those that are prescribed for him by compulsory heterosexuality, while still being able to "keep" the heterosexual "persona" that he created at "home" for the benefit of others. Here, his choice of the word "persona" is significant. The word is typically used to denote a social role or a character played by an actor, and has its etymological origins in the Latin term *persona*, a mask worn by an actor (Bishop, 2007). Thus, Richard's narrative suggests that paying for sex meant that he could engage in the kinds of sex he desired while still being able to wear the mask and uphold the façade of a neat and tidy heterosexuality. Consequently, it can be argued that, while paid sex allows men a space in which they can deviate from the straight line of heterosexuality, it is also the very thing that allows them to maintain the illusion that this straight line exists. This resonates with Sandberg's (2011) assertion that "becoming represents possibilities of something other, while at the same time reiterating sameness, forcing things back onto the well-trodden paths" (p. 43).

6.5 Conclusion

Rather than asking why it is that men pay for sex, this chapter speaks to the question of *what* is that men pay for when they pay for sex. Participants' narratives suggest that men often hope for, expect, or demand far more from the client-sex worker encounter than simply the physical act of sex. I have argued that the paid sexual encounter serves as a safe space for men to express, explore, practice, develop, and sometimes push the boundaries of their sexuality: a space for "becoming", where they emerge from the paid encounter as slightly

different from what they were when they first paid for sex. This, I argue, is testament to the high level of emotional labour that sex workers perform as part of their services to clients.

In discussing paid sex as a safe space I have presented four discursive themes or positions. Firstly, I showed how men construct sex workers as mature sexual teachers who offer them, the inexperienced students, the sexual experience and skills they need to perform sexually according to dominant discourses of male (hetero)sexuality. Secondly, I discussed “selfish sex” as a theme from which a more misogynistic client-sex worker relationship emerges. Thirdly, I demonstrated how paid sex allows men to construct women along the Madonna-whore dichotomy, thereby keeping the kind of “mundane” sex that they do with their wives separate from the kinds of “porn star” sex that they desire to engage in with sex workers. In the final theme presented, I demonstrated how men constructed paid sex as a safe space to push the boundaries of heterosexuality and explore their sexualities.

Perhaps one of the key questions to arise from the findings in this chapter is, “why is the safe space that paid sex provides so desirable to men in the first place?” This chapter continuously demonstrated how paying for sex is inextricably linked to dominant social constructions of masculinity and heterosexuality. I have demonstrated how, across participants’ narratives, the idealised man is constructed (in addition to his taken for granted unequivocal desire for the opposite sex) as sexually skilled, sexually experienced, virile, and sexually powerful. My findings also revealed how participants, drawing on phallogentric heteronormative discourses, understand the penis and the man’s sexual performance as the only legitimate means by which women are “given” pleasure. I have argued that it is the very privileged position that men hold within heterosexual interactions that also renders them vulnerable to women’s appraisals of their performance, in turn making women in the context of sexual encounters “dangerous” and threatening to their masculinity. Butler (1999) suggests that “hegemonic heterosexuality is itself a constant and repeated effort to imitate its own

idealizations”, and that “heterosexual performativity is beset by an anxiety that it can never fully overcome, that its effort to become its own idealisations can never be finally or fully achieved” (p. 85). This chapter has demonstrated how the paid sexual encounter becomes desirable as a safe space where men can express and explore their own sexuality, with all its faults, inadequacies, and deviations from idealised masculinity, without being “beset” by these “anxieties” (Butler, 1999, p. 85).

This chapter has also provided valuable insight into the power dynamics at play within the client-sex worker relationship. I have argued that, on the one hand, the sex worker holds both discursive and material power over the client as his experienced teacher and the provider of desirable skills. On the other hand, I have shown how men also occupied a more dominant and powerful position in the relationship, believing that their paying for sex afforded them the right to make demands on sex workers that not only disregarded the sex worker’s needs and desires, but also sometimes harmed and humiliated them. Most importantly, however, this study revealed how the power dynamics between the client and the sex worker, rather than being unidirectional, were often multiple, complex, and shifting.

Finally, this chapter has argued that men’s narratives about paying for sex provide opportunities for both reinforcing and resisting hegemonic constructions of gender and sexuality. The findings showed that men often did not live up to, and deviated from, the idealistic imperatives and the strict boundaries of hegemonic masculinity. The data shows that men were not always sexually skilled or sexually confident and some men did struggle with problems with erections. It could be argued that men’s mere acknowledgement, in the moment of the interview, of their “inadequacies” or “failures” is, in and of itself, a challenge to the naturalisation of hegemonic heterosexuality. However, the findings revealed that men often paid for sex in the hope of becoming the kind of man that mimicked more closely, or was more in line with, an idealised version of masculinity. Therefore, the paid sexual

encounter simultaneously became a space for reinforcing and reproducing these dominant discourses.

The chapter revealed that the paid sexual encounter also offered moments of overt resistance to the constructions of compulsory heterosexuality. Men were able to acknowledge desires for bodies that belonged to those other than the “opposite sex”, opening up possibilities for becoming and exploring sexual identities which queered and pushed the boundaries of compulsory heterosexuality, allowing for the imagining of sexual desire in terms of fluidity and non-binaries. Ahmed (2006, p. 62) suggests that, “when bodies take up spaces that they were not intended to inhabit, something other than the reproduction of facts of the matter happens. The hope that reproduction fails is the hope for new impressions, for new lines to emerge”. Drawing on Ahmed’s work (2006, p. 61), I argue that that the paid sexual encounter becomes a *reorientation device*, in that a space that usually supports and facilitates the kind of sex that heterosexual men and women usually do becomes a space where men feel supported to explore desire for other kinds of bodies than those for which that particular space was originally intended.

However, I have argued that the client-sex worker context provides this safe space largely because it is a secret space where all deviations from a compulsory heterosexuality remain largely concealed from everyone else. It is through the secrecy of the paid sexual encounter that men are able to maintain the illusion for others of a neat and tidy, ideal heterosexuality. It could be argued that this simultaneously contributes to the false stabilisation and naturalisation of heterosexuality that helps to maintain its prominence in society. There is, therefore, clearly an oscillation between moments of potential resistance and moments of complicity within men’s narratives, highlighting the complex and contradictory nature and meanings of paying for sex. Indeed, these complexities and contradictions themselves are important, as Henriques et al. (2002) suggest, “every relation

and every practice to some extent articulates such contradictions and therefore is a site of potential change as much as it is a site of reproduction” (pp. 430–431). In the concluding chapter, I reflect on the implications of paid sex as both a site for the reproduction of hegemonic discourses of gender and sexuality (and also race and class), as well as an opportunity for potential resistance and change.

CHAPTER 7: THESIS SUMMARY, CONCLUDING THOUGHTS, AND LEGISLATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

This thesis has presented an enquiry into the subjectivities of men who pay for sex. It has explored how men negotiate and make meaning of paying for sex in relation to their various intersecting social identities, and, in turn, how paying for sex impacts upon the ways in which men are able to position themselves within discourses of masculinity and male sexuality. Secondly, this study has provided critical analysis of the participant-interviewer relationship, approaching it as site where identities are actively negotiated and produced by both the interviewer and participant. In this concluding chapter, I provide a brief summary of each of the chapters in this thesis. This is followed by a more detailed discussion of the key theoretical, methodological, and legislative contributions made by this thesis, as well as a reflection of their potential implications.

7.1 Summary of the Thesis

Chapter One contextualised sex work within South Africa, acknowledging the ways in which the country's colonial and apartheid past shapes the violence and inequality that prevails today. I argued that sex work remains highly stigmatised within South African society, and discussed how concerns surrounding HIV/AIDS further compound the social oppressions associated with sex work. In response to well-established debates and disputes around the nature and definition of sex work, I argued for the importance of research that acknowledges the diverse experiences of those involved in sex work, particularly in a society as heterogeneous as South Africa. The chapter introduced a legal policy framing of sex work, outlining the main approaches to legislating sex work as they are employed in various global contexts. I focused especially on current South African laws that criminalise both the buyer

and the seller of sex, raising concerns about the harmful impacts that the criminalisation of sex work might have in the South African context.

Chapter Two presented a review of the existing literatures on men who pay for sex, arguing that this thesis responds to the lack of South African research on the topic. The chapter began with a brief review of the most common kinds of social research into sex work, such as the (primarily quantitative) research that attempts to profile clients according to individual characteristics, categorise their motivations for paying for sex, and investigate clients' risk-taking behaviour in relation to HIV/AIDS. I argued that this research potentially has stigmatising effects, by individualising the desire to pay for sex and constructing those involved in the sex work industry as vectors of disease, while telling us very little about the subjectivities of male clients. The review then shifted its focus to the qualitative research that explores the subjective experiences of men who pay for sex. I linked men's narratives in these studies to dominant social discourses of masculinity and heterosexuality. I argued that the strong presence of these heteronormative discourses in men's narratives about paying for sex highlights the value of employing a discursive approach to understanding the social structures that shape men's desires for, and the meanings they make of, paying for sex.

Chapter Three presented a description and critical discussion of the research design of this study. Firstly, feminist poststructuralism, the theoretical framework that underpinned this research project, was introduced as a way of directing the research questions addressed in this study. The chapter argued for the value of a methodology that views the interview as a context where identities are performed and where meaning is co-produced, rather than simply a method of drawing data from participants. The chapter then outlined, and critically reflected upon, research design, including methods of participant recruitment, data collection, and the eclectic approach to data analysis taken in this study.

Chapters Four, Five, and Six presented the research findings of the thesis. Chapter Four argued that our participants' decision to participate in our interviews is neither incidental nor insignificant.³⁹ Participants arrive for interviews with particular hopes, expectations, or presumptions about the interview and what they might gain from it, as well as what they might contribute to it. I argued that men arrived at the interview because they saw it as an opportunity to confess about a stigmatised and socially unsanctioned activity, or as an opportunity to experience excitement and risk. Some men arrived with the assumption that there might be some kind of sexual pay-off, and others in the hope of having their emotional needs met. I argued that these desires and expectations for the interview relationship could also tell us something about the desires and expectations that men bring to the client-sex worker relationship. For example, I argued that part of the allure of arriving for these interviews, as well as for paying for sex, is tied into *jouissance*, the libidinal excitement and thrill that we derive from doing something that threatens or transgresses our personal, moral, or social boundaries and beliefs (Hook, 2017; Lacan, 2013). I suggested that it might be the very social, moral, legal, and religious discourses that condemn and stigmatise paying for sex that allow it to be thrilling (Holzman & Pines, 1982; Sanders, 2012). That these social structures can produce the desire to pay for sex has particular relevance to questions surrounding how sex work should be legislated, which are discussed later in this chapter.

In Chapter Five I argued that paying for sex affords men the possibilities for performing desirable and affluent masculinities. However, because of sex work's longstanding association with dirt, disease, and moral decay, I contended that paying for sex simultaneously threatens the very identities it bolsters. I investigated the ways in which men manage and counteract the threats to identity posed by the stigma attached to sex work. Specifically, I described how men drew on racist discourses, colonial tropes about the black

³⁹ Specifically when participation is voluntary.

body as dirty and diseased, to construct the black Other upon whom they could peg all the stigma associated with paying for sex, and in relation to whom they could construct themselves as clean and respectable men.

Chapter Six presented an enquiry into how the production of men's desire is socially constituted. It explored the question of what it is that men pay for when they pay for sex. I argued that men value paid sex for the "safe space" it provides; it offers them a context where they feel largely exempt from the pressures that dominant discourses on male sexuality impose upon them. I argued that men also used the client-sex worker encounter as safe space for "becoming": it forms a space where men felt that they could learn to better approximate these idealised versions of male sexuality through learning new sexual skills and becoming more sexually experienced. The chapter demonstrated that there were moments where men constructed the paid sexual encounter as an opportunity to perform and enforce misogynist versions of male sexuality. However, it also revealed how men constructed the client-sex worker encounter as a safe space for "coming out" as having and further exploring desires that queered the strict boundaries of heterosexuality. This, I have argued, highlights the subversive potential of paid sexual relations.

In the remainder of this concluding chapter I outline this thesis' unique contribution to the body of academic knowledge on men who pay for sex, discussing the social relevance and legislative implications of these findings for both South African and international contexts.

7.2 Theoretical Contributions to the Study of Sex Work

Because there is almost no South African qualitative research that critically explores the ways in which men's experiences and constructions of paying for sex are socially constituted, this thesis as a whole makes a valuable and novel contribution to the body of knowledge on sex work in the South African context. In the section to follow I identify some of the key

findings from this thesis, which I argue contribute to the international body of literature on men who pay for sex by providing novel insights into, or perspectives on, sex work, or by adding a deeper and more critical understanding to our existing knowledge on the subjectivities of men who pay for sex.

7.2.1 On the cultural and social production of desire

Although relatively little detailed historical work has been done on the production of the client's desire (Shrage, 1992), it hardly seems far-fetched to speculate that the cultural denigration of chastity (especially among men), the attribution of various disorders to "not getting any", and the equation of a "healthy" sex life with general well-being all serve to encourage prostitution even as the laws deny it. (Zatz, 1997, p. 303)

This study contributes theoretically to research on men who pay for sex through its detailed enquiry into the production of clients' desire. Research on men who pay for sex commonly looks to the individual to make claims about the demand side of the sex work industry, attempting to identify causal relationships between individual characteristics (such as age, race, marital status, or risk-taking behaviour) and paying for sex. Conversely, this project focused on the ways in which clients' desire is discursively, rather than individually, constituted. The study provides the empirical support for Zatz's speculations that the ways in which men make meaning of paying for sex are tied into, and produced by, broader social discourses around male sexuality in our patriarchal, heteronormative society.

Critical masculinities studies have revealed that the characteristics that constitute hegemonic masculinity are shifting, providing evidence that a "new", more emotionally expressive egalitarian man is emerging as idealised, particularly in the Global North (Anderson & McCormack, 2016; Hearn & Morrell, 2012). In much the same way, this study revealed that men expressed deep desires for intimacy and emotionality, and that this was reflected in the demands that they placed on the client-sex worker relationship. However, this study has clearly demonstrated how dominant discourses around male sexual performance have remained much as they were more than three decades ago, when Connell and colleagues

originally outlined the features of hegemonic masculinity (Carrigan et al., 1985; Connell, 1987). In this study, participants' narratives explicitly and repeatedly reflected the societal expectations of, and pressures upon, male sexuality, such as the expectation that men should have a high sex drive; display sexual virility, stamina, and endurance; and be sexually experienced and possess the sexual skills to prove this experience. I argue that the ways in which male sexuality is valorised, and how the hard, strong penis is privileged as the legitimate means of producing female pleasure, elicits men's fears of being rejected, humiliated, or laughed at during sexual encounters (Potts, 2000b). Failure to meet these expectations is, to varying degrees, inevitable for most men, because, as both Butler (1999) and Connell (2000) suggest, these idealised versions of masculinity are radically uninhabitable positions. That these South African men's narratives were laden with the discourses on male sexuality that are dominant in the Global North, as well as in other parts of the Global South, implies that the findings of this study, and its suggested implications, are of international relevance.

This study makes a novel contribution to research on men who pay for sex by demonstrating how the value that paying for sex holds for men is linked to the ways in which male sexuality is discursively constituted in society. If one looks to popular media, to critical research on male sexuality, or to the narratives of the men in this study, we see that being sexually skilled and experienced is crucial for men's ability to position themselves as desirable heterosexual men in society. It should then come as no surprise that, in our capitalist society, men would invest in purchasing these skills from sex workers, as this study demonstrates that they do. Participants' stories illustrated how being a virgin can be a serious hindrance to young men's ability to negotiate their manhood in society; consequently, it makes sense that men find value in paying for this rite of passage. In neo-liberal society, where constant physical and emotional self-improvement is encouraged, and where a deficit

in sexual “performance” is constructed through a health discourse as in need of treatment (Potts, 2000b; L. D. Taylor, 2005), it makes sense that men might use the paid sexual encounter as a means of sexual self-improvement. If failing to meet the (largely unachievable) cultural expectations for male sexuality during a heterosexual encounter is understood as a reflection of a failed masculinity, then it is not surprising that a man might opt to have sex in the (discursive) safety of the client-sex worker context, where his masculinity is not at stake, and where he can re-imagine it as positive self-help.

These findings therefore elucidate how the conditions that make paying for sex desirable for men are culturally and socially produced. I therefore argue that understanding sex work and the various mechanisms that are involved in its maintenance means paying attention to the broader discursive conditions within which it exists. This study thus has implications for those looking to influence how sex work operates within a society: rather than attempting to control the sex work industry or its participants, these findings suggest that they should attend to the broader social structures that produce the conditions that help shape and maintain the industry in the first place.

These findings point to the value of challenging the various sites where these dominant discourses around male sexuality continue to be produced: industries that medicalise men’s sexual performance; school syllabuses that teach essentialised versions of male and female sexuality; and music videos, film, men’s lifestyle magazines, blogs, and social media accounts that valorise largely unachievable versions of male sexuality and shame men for any evidence that they may have deviated from them.

7.2.2 Emotional labour. As one of its core contributions to knowledge on sex work, this study has provided detailed insight into the emotional labour that sex workers engage in as part of the service they provide their clients. The study has demonstrated that men buy far more than just sex from sex workers. Indeed, the emotional aspects of the client-sex worker

relationship were as pervasive, if not more pervasive, as the sexual aspects of the relationship in men's narratives about paying for sex. I have shown how men used the paid sexual encounter as a space where they could express their desires, emotions, and anxieties. I have demonstrated how they used the client-sex worker relationship as a space where they could reveal their perceived sexual inadequacies and sexual problems in a way that they felt too vulnerable to do in their other sexual relationships. The findings revealed that men expected sex workers to hold and contain their anxieties, to help address their sexual problems, to bolster their confidence, to facilitate and encourage their sexual exploration, and to affirm their masculinities when they felt they were under threat. Men expected sex workers to be patient and caring sexual teachers, to express sexual desire for their clients, to be emotionally engaged with them throughout the paid encounter, and to both produce sexual pleasure and appear to experience sexual pleasure.

If we wish to develop in-depth insight into the client-sex worker relationship, and acquire a holistic understanding of the mechanisms of the sex work industry, we could begin by identifying what it actually is that men are paying for when they pay for sex. This thesis shows that the term "sex work" downplays the level of emotional work demanded of sex workers by their clients. Understanding sex work primarily in terms of the sex act alone ignores the emotional work which is a significant aspect of the client's demand, and it overlooks one of the features that not only draws men to paying for sex but keeps them paying for it.

7.2.3 Power within the client-sex worker relationship. This study contributes to literature on sex work through the insight it provides into the complex power dynamics of the client-sex worker relationship. Research that draws on a client's perspective to understand these complex power dynamics is rare. Feminists have vehemently debated the question of how sex work should be defined, and each of the dominant positions on the nature of sex

work is based upon a different assumption about how power operates within the client-sex worker relationship. For example, the radical feminist approach suggests that the client is always inherently exploitative of the sex worker, and the liberal sex-as-work approach suggests that the sex worker should be understood as an active agent within a neutral business exchange. This study provides empirical support for an alternative approach, third wave feminist theorising, which calls for a complex and nuanced understanding of the client-sex worker relationship and the power dynamics that flow through it.

Rather than the client exercising absolute power over the sex worker, this work has illustrated that the flow of power within the relationship is often more complex and multi-directional. For example, I demonstrated how the sex worker is positioned as a mature and experienced teacher that offers the inexperienced and anxious client the possibility of acquiring sexual skills. This not only affords the sex worker discursive power over the client, but it also affords her material power as it is the prospect of learning these socially desirable skills that keeps the client returning to pay for her services regularly. I have argued that some sex workers manipulate and market their services to best capitalise on men's anxieties, perceived need for these skills, and their desires for emotionality and support (Sanders, 2005).

However, this study has also elucidated how some men understand the client-sex worker relationship as a space where they pay for the right to make sexual demands on, and disregard the needs of, the sex worker, and, for some, a space where they can dominate and humiliate the sex worker. Some men pay for sex as a means of imposing a selfish and misogynistic dominance over women during sex. Perhaps more important is the finding that these varying positions of power are not absolutes. This study reveals that it is not always the case that the client-sex worker relationship plays out as either the relationship between the experienced teacher and the inexperienced child or the slave and her master. It is not always the case that

some clients inhabit a passive discursive position and others a dominant or misogynistic position within the client-sex worker relationship. The findings demonstrate how, even within the same sexual encounter, the client-sex worker dynamic can shift and move between different power relationships. This study thus contributes to our understanding of the client-sex worker relationship by demonstrating that the power relationship between client and sex worker is not a simple one, but rather complex and multifaceted. This has material implications, because how a society understands power within the client-sex worker relationship directly impacts how it legislates sex work. It is thus important that, when informing policy and legislation, we fully acknowledge these complexities and nuances.

7.3 Methodological Challenges, Considerations, and Contributions

In addition to making a contribution to theoretical knowledge on the subjectivities of men who pay for sex, this study was designed to make a methodological contribution to knowledge on conducting research with men who pay for sex. Moreover, it is intended that some of the methodological insights generated from this study would be applicable more broadly to other qualitative research on topics related to gender and sexuality. In this section, I reflect simultaneously on the limitation and challenges of this study and on the methodological contributions that the thesis provides.

7.3.1 The complexities of doing cross-gender research. This thesis has illustrated how doing cross-gender research with men about their sexualities can involve a complex interplay of power that potentially troubles feminist research agendas in various ways. I have argued that the research interview mirrors the confessional (Foucault, 1981), and that this affords women researchers positions of power over our participants. I have suggested that participants often arrived to interviews in the hope of experiencing some kind of relief, catharsis, appeasement, liberation, or validation through talking about their unsanctioned

sexual activities with me. On the one hand, as researchers and witnesses to participants' narratives we are constructed as having the power to affirm, judge, label, or diagnose our participants. On the other hand, in the case of cross-gender research, our social positions as men and women are not fully displaced by the structure of the research relationship. I have argued that the fact that the research interview relationship shares many features of the confessional relationship produces the conditions that simultaneously set women researchers up, in line with traditional gender roles or emphasised femininity (Connell, 1987), as listeners of men's stories and facilitators of their talk. For example, being a good qualitative researcher, in the traditional sense, prescribes that we be non-judgemental, and that we make our participants feel empowered, comfortable, and supported enough to share their opinions with us unhindered (see, for example, Schwalbe & Wolkomir, 2001). This can leave women researchers feeling as though we have reinforced traditional gender power relations and, in situations where we might not agree with our male participants' opinions or actions, we may be left feeling as though we have colluded with participants' in their sexism or racism. However, I have argued that when as researchers we return from our interviews to our desks to analyse and write about our participants' narratives, it is we who have the "final say" in the relationship. In this sense researchers have the final position of power within the research relationship, as it is we who determine both how we will transform our participants' narratives into knowledge and to what ends we will use this knowledge. This speaks to the complexity of the power relationship that operates within cross-gender interviews

I have highlighted how interviewing male participants about their sexual experiences can present a particularly complex terrain for the woman researcher to navigate. I have argued that the interviews I conducted became erotic spaces for some participants, and I have demonstrated how I became implicated in this eroticism. I have shown how I became enveloped in the transactional discourse of "the two-way street", where men felt that my

decision to interview them about their sexual experiences equated to me consenting to talking about my own sexuality with them.

This research has illustrated the importance of understanding both the participant and the interviewer as defended subjects, acknowledging that both parties bring with them their own histories and anxieties that will inevitably limit and shape the data that emerges from the interview. I have reflected on how dominant research traditions that privilege researcher neutrality and detachment meant that I perceived men's sexualising of the interviews as a threat to my identity as a legitimate researcher. This made men's expressions of their sexual arousal, particularly their sexualising of me, difficult for me to bear. This, in some instances, led me to limit the emotions or desires participants were "allowed" to express in interviews. However, I have argued that as researchers we base our claims to knowledge on the assumption that participants would reveal something of what they are "really" like to us. In this sense, it could be argued that these men were then supposed to show me that they are people who pursue opportunistic sex, without commitment and with any woman.

This thesis contributes to our understanding of doing cross-gender research by demonstrating that it is a multifaceted process that involves an incredibly complex interplay of power that flows through the interview relationship. I have argued that the researcher is likely to find themselves, regardless of how they approach the interview-participant relationship (be it challenging and limiting men's narratives or facilitating and encouraging them), contradicting or working in opposition to their methodological or ideological principles at some point during the research process. I argue that these difficulties and contradictions are never completely avoidable. Therefore, a recommendation resulting from this study is that researchers should aim to build an analysis of these dynamics into their research design, rather than eliminate or conceal them. This could be achieved through keeping a research journal, adjusting methods of data analysis to account for micro-

communications between interviewer and participant, and through critically reflecting on every stage of the research process, as I have done in this thesis.

Such an analysis of these complex dynamics can, in and of itself, be generative. I have demonstrated how paying careful attention to participants' patterns of relating within the interview context can provide valuable insights into their interactions with the world outside of the interview context. I have argued that men's reasons for arriving for interviews, and the ways in which they related to me within the interviews, provided the kinds of insights into the subjectivities of these men that just asking them questions could not have produced.

7.3.2. Intersectional reflexivity: Methodology as pedagogy.

I hope that field researchers and ethnographers, even those whose research is not specifically concerned with racial disparities, will consider the significance of race as a methodological issue. (Twine, 2000, p. 5)

This thesis has highlighted the importance of approaching race as a methodological issue, particularly when conducting research into sex work in South Africa. It also speaks more generally to the complex intersections between race, class, gender, and sexuality, and reminds those of us who primarily research gender and sexuality of how deeply and inextricably these will be intersected by race and class (Collins, 1990; Ratele & Shefer, 2013). When embarking on this project, I was aware that participants' narratives about their gender and sexualities would be intersected by discourses of race and class, however I did not imagine that they would be so central to participants' narratives that they would warrant a full chapter in this thesis. Ratele and Shefer (2013), writing about the *Apartheid Archive Project*, reflect on how the narratives they collected coalesced around gender and sexuality despite them not explicitly asking participants about gender-related issues. This thesis has shown how the inverse is equally true: when asking people about gender and sexuality, constructions of race and class are likely to emerge consistently. This highlights the importance of taking an intersectional approach to our research on gender-related issues.

This thesis has also highlighted the significance of situating ourselves as researchers within this intersectional reading of our interview data. Throughout this thesis I have stressed the value of acknowledging the impact that we as researchers have on the research process through employing a critical intersectional reflexivity to our analysis. I have argued that my identity as a white middle class woman was intimately implicated in the data that emerged from the interviews. I have demonstrated how my white body sanctioned, and sometimes even invited, the racist discourses that were so frequently produced within the interviews.

What are the implications of knowing that our interviews provide a context where racism can be imagined and performed? What are we to do with the knowledge that we will inevitably collude with our participants, or reproduce the very discourses we are trying to resist, through our work? Should white bodies be doing research about black bodies? Should women be doing research with men on topics of a sexual nature? Although there are no definitive answers to these questions, racist and sexist constructions will trickle down into any social research we do, regardless of the topic. As I have demonstrated throughout this thesis, the interview is a context where identities are produced, and both the interviewer and the participant will inevitably do race, class, gender, and sexuality there. Rather than the impossible task of completely avoiding the co-production of these discourses within and through our interviews, we should design our analysis in such a way that we acknowledge them, harnessing the interview context as a possibility for learning more about how they operate.

A research design that requires the researcher to critically reflect on their own positionality, such as the one I employ in this thesis, pushes the researcher to be more aware of how these discourses operate. For example, it was in engaging in this kind of intersectional reflexivity that I, for the first time, fully appreciated my own white privilege. Perhaps some white people's difficulty in understanding and acknowledging our privilege lies partly in how

we choose to define the term privilege. We often equate the term privilege to financial wealth and access to various resources. But, as this thesis has clearly revealed, the privilege and power that white bodies wield is linked to more than just wealth. It was through participant's constructions of black and white women's bodies, and in realising that my body had become implicated in these narratives, that I fully grasped that, simply because my body is white, I was positioned as more respectable, valued, and desirable to society (and therefore more powerful within it) than I would have been had I been a black woman. It now seems strange that I had not fully comprehended how white privilege operates until that point, and that it took the analysis of my positionality within an interview context to do so.

I therefore argue that a benefit of employing this kind of intersectional reflexive methodological approach to our research is that it is, in and of itself, pedagogic and generative. Engaging with our data at this level has the potential to allow researchers to develop more critical understandings of how these vectors of power operate. This in turn allows us as researchers to respond to our participants in interviews, and to our research more broadly, in more astute and nuanced ways that could better challenge damaging discourses and make room for the imagining of alternative and more empowering ones.

7.4 Suggestions for Future Research

The way in which this thesis has emphasised the impact that the interviewer-participant relationship has on the data produced in the interview context also points to the value of studying the subjectivities of men who pay for sex across varying research contexts. Unlike under apartheid, or earlier eras, eroticism and its power plays are now conducted both online and in person, and the two are not always separable. The Internet thus opens up further possibilities for exploring men's constructions of paying for sex. Online forums for men who pay for sex are particularly suitable contexts for a study that enlists a narrative approach to its

data, as a story-telling culture is built into the very structure of these forums, where men provide one another with detailed reviews of their paid sexual encounters. Homosocial contexts, of which these online forums are a variant, provide powerful opportunities for studying how men negotiate, construct, and perform their masculine identities (Flood, 2008). Researching men's participation in online forums allows the researcher to explore men's narratives about paying for sex without being directly implicated in these narratives. What makes men's online accounts of paying for sex distinct from those collected through face-to-face interviews is that they are produced for an entirely different audience; instead of for the researcher, these performances are produced for other men who pay for sex. Such online contexts could open up further avenues for gaining a more holistic understanding of men's constructions of paying for sex, supplementing the insights generated by this study.

7.5 Sex Work, Race, and Stigma: Towards Legislative Recommendations

One cannot understand sex work, and the meaning it has within a society, without considering both the stigma attached to it and how it is legislated. Indeed, sex work, the law, and stigma are, and have always been, inextricably linked; they operate in relationship with one another. Very little research on men who pay for sex explicitly considers how race filters into the meanings men make of paying for sex; there seems to be a silence around race and how it interacts with the stigma attached to sex work in academic literature.

In colonial contexts, sex workers' bodies were policed and controlled through laws and regulations that were established under the guise of venereal disease control (Levine, 2003). In contemporary society, and specifically in South Africa, sex work is associated in much the same way with HIV/AIDS, the prevention of which is often used as a justification for the laws that criminalise sex work and place limits on what women are allowed to do with their bodies. The age-old stigma attached to sex work and laws that criminalise sex work function

reciprocally; the social meanings of sex work as immoral and deviant are reflected in the ways in which the state criminalises sex work. The criminalisation of sex work in turn serves to ensure that those who sell sex remain socially stigmatised (Mgbako, 2016). That sex work is illegal affords police the power to exploit and abuse sex workers, as research has shown they regularly do, in South Africa and globally (Amnesty International, 2016; Mgbako, 2016; Zatz, 1997). In turn, police abuse validates and normalises the ways in which the general public stigmatise sex workers (Mgbako, 2016).

Not all sex workers are equally disadvantaged by the criminalisation of sex work. Levine (2003, p. 2) argues that laws that criminalise sex workers have always punished poor working class sex workers operating in visible contexts, while “drawing a veil over the more discreet and hidden forms of sexual servicing exclusive to the wealthy”. In contemporary South Africa, and in most contexts across the globe, it is poor street-based sex workers who are the most visible and, therefore, the most stigmatised in their communities, the most harassed and exploited by the police, and the most likely to be arrested (Mgbako, 2016; Zatz, 1997). Thus, it is primarily street-based sex workers who become associated with the criminality, the dirt and disease, and all the other forms of stigma that is both perpetuated and produced by the laws that criminalise sex work. More affluent women working from discreet indoor settings are often less directly affected by this stigma and its legal repercussions.

The data presented in this study has provided explicit evidence for the argument that not all sex workers are equally stigmatised. Participants repeatedly linked street-based sex workers to the spread of HIV/AIDS, constructing them as dirty, diseased, and morally corrupt; “high-class” sex workers seemed to be exempt from these stigmatising discourses, and were sometimes valorised in men’s narratives. Perhaps even more importantly, the intersectional understanding of sex work employed in this study has revealed how deeply and extensively race is bound up in the social meanings of sex work. Men’s narratives illustrated

how the black body merged and became conflated with constructions of the dirty and diseased street-based sex worker. This thesis shows how considering race (or how racism operates) is central to understanding sex work in South Africa. Therefore considering how racism operates should be central to how sex work is legislated.

Due to the structural inequality in South Africa, the majority of the poorest street-based sex workers are black women (Gould, 2014; Mgbako, 2016). Because street-based sex workers are most targeted by the laws that criminalise sex workers, it is primarily black sex workers who bear the brunt of these laws and this stigma. Therefore, in the context of South Africa, policies that criminalise sex work and discourses that associate it with dirt and disease contribute to maintaining the dominance of colonial tropes about the black body as dirty and diseased. Certainly, this thesis has presented evidence of exactly how deeply ingrained these racist discourses are. This study has shown how men drew repeatedly on these discourses of the black body as dirty and diseased to negotiate their identities as men who pay for sex. In fact, I have argued that it was precisely in trying to counter the stigma attached to sex work that men enlisted these racist and racialising discourses.

What do these findings reveal about the possibilities for legal reform in a structurally unequal society with a legacy of colonising black bodies? This thesis highlights the importance of considering how laws controlling sex work have their roots in controlling and denigrating black women's bodies in the interests of protecting and valorising white bodies. I argue that criminalisation of sex work serves to perpetuate and maintain the age-old stigma associated with sex work, while structural inequality in South Africa serves to ensure that it is the black woman's body that remains the primary object of this stigma. Sex work, gender, race, class, and the law all intersect in ways that mean that the black body remains constructed, as it always has been, as dirty, diseased, and dangerous for the white body.

Thus, I concur with SWEAT, the Commission for Gender Equality, Sonke Gender Justice, POWA, Amnesty International (2016), and Chi Adanna Mgbako's (2016) book on the struggle for sex worker's rights in Africa, *To Live Freely In This World*, that, in order to begin to address the stigma associated with buying and selling sex, and to break away from a legacy of controlling the bodies of women, particularly those who are black and those who are engaged in unsanctioned sexual activities, we must advocate for a society that neither criminalises sex work, nor legislates and controls the ways in which women who sell sex may do so. Informed by the insights gained from this study, which provide understandings into the complexities and nuances of the sex work industry in South Africa, I recommend the decriminalisation of sex work. Decriminalisation is a way of appropriately responding to sex work in a country where structural inequalities ensure that not all sex workers' bodies will be treated equally by the law. Decriminalisation is also a way of responding to the stigma attached to sex work more generally. Sex work is stigmatised in South Africa and other parts of the Global South, but this stigma is not confined to the Global South: sex work is stigmatised globally, and women who sell sex in the Global North are also victims of this stigma and the marginalisation associated with it (Mgbako, 2016; Sanders, 2017, 2017). This means that addressing the stigma associated with sex work is not only relevant to South Africa, but is of global relevance.

Arguing that sex work should be decriminalised is not the same as denying that sex work can be harmful, nor is it the same as suggesting that it is always empowering; indeed, the findings of this study point to a much more nuanced understanding of sex work. It seems that policy makers informed by an exploitation position on sex work often argue for the criminalisation of sex work based on the (false) premise that the criminalisation of sex work equates to its eradication. On the contrary, as Zatz (1997, p. 299) suggests, sex work "currently thrives under a regime of police harassment and public condemnation". An

analysis of the history of sex work will suggest that it never has been, and is unlikely to be, eradicated regardless of how it is legislated.

What legislation does have some impact upon, however, is the social meaning that sex work has within any given context, and, therefore, the social status and standing that those who sell sex have within that society. The law shapes (and is also shaped by) the ways in which society relates to sex work, and specifically sex workers. It determines and limits the ways in which those who sell sex may interact in and with the world. Eliminating sex workers' status as criminals in society, and thereby removing some of the taboo that is created when an activity is illegal, allows the law to respond to sex work in such a way that discursively positions sex workers as legitimate and active agents in society, rather than criminals, victims, or vectors of disease. Although it is unrealistic to suggest that legal reform has the capacity to eradicate the age-old stigma attached to sex work, or the power to uproot the deeply engrained racism that still dominates our society, we must acknowledge the law's productive role and we must advocate for legislation on sex work that ensures that these intersecting mechanisms of oppression are not further maintained or perpetuated by the law.

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APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT DETAILS

Name	Race	Age	From	Occupation	Context	Relationship Status
<i>FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEWS</i>						
Cyril	White	53	Cape Town	Own Business	Private & Agency	In a Relationship
Steve	White	57	Cape Town	Freelance IT Developer	Private & Agency	In a Relationship
Johan	White	48	Cape Town	Banker	Private	Married
Mark	Indian	38	Cape Town	Professional Sportsman	Private	Single
Riedwaan	Indian	32	Cape Town	Own Business	Street & Agency	Married
Sam	White	40	Cape Town	Own Business	Private	Married
Richard	White	43	Cape Town	Own Business	Private & Agency	Divorced
Peter	White	50	Cape Town	Corporate	Agency	Divorced
Piet	White	55	Cape Town	Property Investor	Agency	Married
Stewart	White	67	Cape Town	Entrepreneur, Property Investor	Private	Married
Scott	White	69	Cape Town	Engineer	Private & Street	Married
<i>SKYPE INTERVIEWS</i>						
Dan	Indian	37	Johannesburg	IT Technician	Private & Agency	Married
Anesh	Indian	40	Dubai	Corporate businessman	Agency	Single
<i>INSTANT TEXT MESSENGER INTERVIEWS</i>						
Ryan	Indian	30	Durban	Engineer	Private	In a Relationship
Unam	Black	32	Port Elizabeth	Project manager	Private & Street	In a Relationship
Devdan	Indian	33	Durban	Engineer	Agency	Married
Randal	Indian	43	Durban	Engineer	Private	Married
Adil	Indian	22	Durban	Self Employed	Private	Married
Jeremy	White	28	Durban	Own Business	Private	Single
Gerry	Indian	37	Durban	Call Centre Analyst	Private	Married
Ivan	White	24	Bloemfontein	Accountant /Student	Private & Agency	Single
Dean	Coloured	38	Durban	Attorney	Private	Single
Lenard	White	54	Gauteng	Engineer	Private	In a Relationship
Benjamin	Indian	22	Durban	Student	Private & Agency	Single
Eric	White	41	Johannesburg	IT Specialist	Private	Married
Kyle	Indian	39	Durban	Engineer	Private	Married
Mario	White/Italian	32	Free State	Builder	Private & Agency	In a Relationship
Bart	White	67	Free State	Farm manager	Private & Agency	Married
Denis	White	43	Cape Town	Businessman	Street	Single
Ross	White	30	Cape Town	Advertising	Private	Single
Neels	White	64	Johannesburg	Engineer	Private	Married
Piet	White	36	Bloemfontein	Regional Manager	Private & Agency	Married
Hannes	White	36	Johannesburg	Import/Export Industry	Private	Married
Gideon	White	53	Kroonstad	Radio Technician	Private	Married
Jabu	Black	28	Cape Town	Engineer	Private & Street	In a Relationship

Carlo	White/Italian	32	Bloemfontein	Building Industry	Private	Single
Grant	White	46	Cape Town	Advertising	Private	Married
Mohamed	Indian	37	Vereeniging	IT Specialist	Private	Divorced
Ashish	Indian	37	Durban	Investment Company	Private & Agency	Married
Nelson	White	33	Johannesburg	Software Developer	Private	Single
Christo	White	41	Johannesburg	Building Industry	Street	In a Relationship
Bongi	Black	35	Bloemfontein	Architect	Private	Married
Jez	White	40	Johannesburg	Own Business	Private	Divorced

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FORM (FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEWS)

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN



DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

1. Invitation and Purpose

You are invited to take part in this study that explores your experiences of paying for sex. I am a research student from the Psychology department at the University of Cape Town.

2. Procedures

If you decide to take part in this study I will interview you in person about your experiences of paying for sex. The interview should take about an hour; however, you are free to speak to me for a shorter or longer period.

After the first interview, if you are willing to participate in a follow-up interview, one will be scheduled for a time and place most convenient for you.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You do not have to answer any questions you do not feel comfortable with answering. You are free to end the interview at any time with no penalty or any other negative consequences.

3. Risks, Discomforts, and Inconveniences

This study poses a low risk of harm to you. You might be inconvenienced by having to give up your time to participate in the interview.

4. Benefits

This project gives you an opportunity to share your opinions on, and experiences of, paying for sex, raising awareness about a client's perspective on the issue.

5. Privacy and Confidentiality

Any information you share with me is strictly confidential. You will remain completely anonymous throughout the research process. You have the right to request that any information you have shared be removed from the study.

With your permission, interviews will be recorded using a digital voice recorder. Only myself (the researcher) will have access to these recordings and they will be kept in a secure place.

After the interview, the voice recordings will be transcribed. Your name will not appear in these transcriptions.

The information gathered will be used to write up my dissertation on men's experiences of paying for sex. This will be submitted towards a postgraduate degree from the University of Cape Town. Your name will not appear in this report.

A. I hereby consent to this interview being recorded with a voice recorder

Participant's Signature

Date

OR

B. I do NOT consent to this interview being recorded with a voice recorder

Participant's Signature

Date

6. Contact Details

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the study please contact:

- Monique (student researcher) on 074 8499713 or uctwork@ymail.com
- Rosalind Adams (administration assistant, UCT Department of Psychology) 021 650 3417

7. Signatures

[Participant's name] _____ has been informed of the nature and purpose of the procedures described above, including any risks involved in its performance. They have been given time to ask any questions and these questions have been answered to the best of the interviewer's ability. A signed copy of this consent form will be made available to the participant.

Interviewer's Signature

Date

I have been informed about this research study and understand its purpose, possible benefits, and discomforts. I agree to take part in this research as a participant. I know that I am free to withdraw this consent and quit this project at any time, and that doing so will not impact on me negatively in any way.

Participant's Signature

Date

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM (ONLINE INTERVIEWS)

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN



DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

1. Invitation and Purpose

You are invited to take part in this study that explores your experiences of paying for sex. I am a research student from the Psychology department at the University of Cape Town.

2. Procedures

If you decide to take part in this study I will interview you about your experiences of paying for sex using an online instant messenger platform of your choice. The interview should take about an hour and a half of your time; however, you are free to speak to me for a shorter or longer period.

After the first interview, if you are willing to participate in a follow-up interview, one will be scheduled for a time most convenient for you.

Participating in this study is voluntary. You do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to. You are free to end the interview at any time with no penalty or any other consequences.

3. Risks, Discomforts, and Inconveniences

This study poses a low risk of harm to you. You might be inconvenienced by having to give up your time to participate in the interview.

4. Benefits

This project gives you an opportunity share your opinions on, and experiences of, paying for sex, raising awareness about a client's perspective on the issue.

5. Privacy and Confidentiality

Any information you share is strictly confidential. You will remain completely anonymous throughout the research process. You have the right to request that any information you have shared be removed from the study.

With your permission, online interview conversations will be copied and pasted into a word processor document and will be saved. These documents will be stored in a password-protected folder and the original online conversations will be deleted.

The information gathered will be used to write up my dissertation on men's experiences of paying for sex. This will be submitted towards a postgraduate degree from the University of Cape Town. Your name will not appear in this dissertation.

6. Contact Details

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the study please contact:

- Monique (student researcher) on 074 8499713 or uctwork@ymail.com
- Rosalind Adams (administration assistant, UCT Department of Psychology) 021 650 3417

7. Signatures

[Participant's name] _____ has been informed of the nature and purpose of the procedures described above, including any risks involved in its performance. They have been given time to ask any questions and these questions have been answered to the best of the interviewer's ability. A signed copy of this consent form will be made available to the participant.

Interviewer's Signature

Date

I have been informed about this research study and understand its purpose, possible benefits, and discomforts. I agree to take part in this research as a participant. I know that I am free to withdraw this consent and quit this project at any time, and that doing so will not impact on me negatively in any way.

Participant's Signature

Date

APPENDIX D: RECRUITMENT ADVERTISEMENTS

Locanto.com Advertisement:

Looking to interview men who have paid for sex

I am a postgraduate student at the University of Cape Town, doing research into people's experiences in the sex work industry. I have interviewed women who sell sex and would like to hear the point of view of men who have paid for sex. If you would be willing to tell me about your experiences and opinions, or for more information, please contact Monique. Email: uctwork@ymail.com

Gumtree.co.za Advertisement:

Looking to interview men who have paid women for intimate services

I am a postgraduate student at the University of Cape Town, doing research into people's experiences in the adult industry. I have interviewed women who sell intimate services and would like to hear the point of view of men who have paid women for these services. If you would be willing to tell me about your experiences and opinions, or for more information, please contact Monique. Email: uctwork@ymail.com