RISKS & WELLBEING OF GROUPS OF FEMALE SEX WORKERS IN THE NETHERLANDS

The Perspective of Activists and Professionals

MASTER THESIS OF **BRIDGET BORG**
MSc Sociology: Contemporary Social Problems
Utrecht University, 2017

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Utrecht University

A Thesis presented to the Department of Sociology in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Master Degree, Sociology: Contemporary Social Problems at Utrecht University, 2017.

Thesis Supervisor: Tali Spiegel

Second Reader: Jornt Mandemakers

OMBUDSMAN
METROPOOL AMSTERDAM

This thesis has been carried out as part of an internship at the Ombudsman Metropool in Amsterdam. It is an exploratory project which informs the Ombudsman about problems and issues being faced by female sex workers. This study incorporates recommendations to the Ombudsman's office.

Internship Supervisor: May Pastoors

ENDEAVOUR
SCHOLARSHIPS SCHEME

Preface

Dear reader,

This thesis is presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Master of Science in Sociology: Contemporary Social Problems at Utrecht University. I have written this thesis in a period of six months, while doing an internship at the Ombudsman Metropool Amsterdam.

Being an international student proves to be of benefit to enter a field in an objective manner, although not speaking the Dutch language in itself might have narrowed down my options. I have always found joy in researching unique topics that might be challenging. Valuing participants and serving as a voice to others have always been important to me. Researching within the sex industry ticked all the boxes. By exploring the field, I knew I could be the voice for sex workers directly or indirectly. The Ombudsman, Arre Zuurmond, and my internship supervisor, May Pastoors, were very supportive throughout the process, showed interest in exploring the field, and allowed me to address the topic using my sociological imagination in ways that best suited the field. For this I would like to thank Arre and May.

Delving into the field of sex work without being a sex worker was not only challenging but proved to involve a great deal of effort and time in building trust relationships with anyone in the field. I started from scratch, going to the field (the red-light district amongst others) during some internship days or after office hours to contact people, visit many organisations, and speak to people who could assist me, even in the pre-understanding of the field. I wanted the research not only to address gaps in literature but also to reflect what is really needed in society.

Bit by bit, after having various appointments with individuals who study or work in the field, I started to be referred to others. Although this has been a lengthy process, in hindsight I have enjoyed and learned in every step along the way. I have developed new skills for using qualitative analytical software and enhanced my social and academic skills on how to be sensitive in my approach to participants and to regard them in a tailored manner. Creating a tailored approach is what helped me gain trust from participants. In retrospect, I am very satisfied with the research process and would not change anything, because I have developed a passion on the subject in serving as a voice to the participants and the sex workers they represent. Therefore, I would like to express my gratitude towards every person in the field who introduced me to the participants. Special thanks go to all the participants in this study, for their trust, sharing their personal experiences, representing others, and sharing their enthusiasm about the field.

There were a number of key people in the background of this journey who offered their continuous support. I would like to thank Dr. Tali Spiegel, my thesis supervisor who encouraged me to proceed with the topic in spite of the challenges it entailed. Her guidance and support kept me motivated. I would also like to thank Dr. Jornt Mandemakers, who challenged me and triggered questions to keep me focused on the topic. Certainly, the course co-ordinator, Dr. Stefan Soeparman, has been key during the Master program—thank you for caring and instilling positivity in every student. In addition, I would like to thank Stacey Aguis, Christina Brus, and Prof. Godfrey Baldacchino for their support. I am thankful towards my family, particularly my parents Emanuel and Marlene, for believing in me. Lastly, but not least, I thank the Lord for everything.

Best regards,
Bridget Borg

Summary

Prostitution in the Netherlands is tightly knit into the economy, although the underlying realities of sex workers, particularly when encountering risks and wellbeing, tends to be pushed to the background. Previous research and Dutch policies on prostitution tend to generally address sex workers as one group and as being exploited and trafficked, but little is known on how risks are encountered differently by groups of female sex workers and how this may impact their wellbeing. Therefore, this study considers four groups of sex workers within a hierarchical structure—escorts, sex workers in brothels and clubs, window sex workers, and street sex workers—and the potential differences among these groups. The first aim of the current study looks at the extent to which this hierarchy is present in the current Dutch context. The second aim is to look at how female sex workers in the various groups encounter health risks, risks of physical violence, and emotional risks, which may differ in type, likelihood, and intensity. Lastly, this research aims at getting an in-depth understanding of the role risk plays and its potential direct or indirect impact on the wellbeing of sex workers within the different groups.

The field of sex work is diverse, and in order to proceed with this exploratory study, a qualitative research design tends to be the most appropriate and informative. The perspectives on the encounters of risks and their impact on the wellbeing of different groups of female sex workers are drawn from interviews of twenty-two activists and professionals—former and current sex worker activists, activists who are not sex workers, and social and health professionals—whose roles with sex workers allows them to address the topic from an overarching perspective.

As the topic is complex in nature, the theoretical framework of this study combines a number of theories, including hierarchy of sex workers, risks, social capital, individualisation, and wellbeing, while structuration theory is presented in order to contextualise the topic.

In broad terms, the empirical findings align with the research expectations: first, that the groups of female sex workers are implicitly hierarchical; second, that the likelihood and intensity of health, physical violence, and emotional risks that the groups experience are linked to their group position within the hierarchy; and third, that the positions of the particular groups are linked not only to their experience of risks but also to their wellbeing. Thus, the lower a group features within the hierarchy, the more likely those in that group encounter risks and have poorer wellbeing when compared to those in the highest group within the hierarchy, who encounter the least risks and have better wellbeing. However, one's place within the hierarchical groups is not solely dependent on the sex worker's educational attainment and socio-economic status as suggested in previous research, but knowledge about the group-related skills, appearance, personality, and social skills play a pivotal role in this matter. Managing health risks are generally the responsibility of the sex worker, and such risks tend to be linked to the venue they operate in. Safety measures also differ in relation to the workplace;

therefore, the likelihood of risks of physical violence is connected to the hierarchical group. Emotional risks are less likely to be seen as being linked to the hierarchy since all sex workers are highly stigmatised and tend to cover up their work from relatives and friends. While emotional risks have previously been given minimal scholarly attention, this study concludes that emotional risks are by far the greatest risks experienced in the sex work field, at least within the legal branch of sex workers.

The recommendations aim to reduce the risks and improve the wellbeing of female sex workers within the hierarchical groups and comprise two main facets: the stimulation of dialogue in the form of round table discussions between sex workers, supporting organisations, the taxation institution, and police officials, and the assigning of an impartial and neutral process manager within the Ombudsman's office who could oversee the round table discussions among other responsibilities.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 General Introduction and Research Questions

Prostitution and sex work is a topical subject in academia as well as in public discourses and policy (Papadopoulos, 2010; Attwoon, 2005; Coy, Wakeling, & Garner, 2011). The sex industry is significantly tightly knit into local and global economies (Coy et al., 2011). However, the underlying realities experienced by sex workers, particularly in relation to perceptions and experiences of risks, tend to be given less importance (Sanders, 2001). Existing academic research has focused mainly on risks related to health, especially the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) (Nixon & Tutty, 2003; Green et al., 1993; Scambler, Peswani, Renton, & Scambler, 1990; Lewis & Maticka-Tyndale, 2000). Research in Britain and Australia has also incorporated physical violence and assaults experienced by female sex workers[1], while suggesting further research on emotional risks is needed (Sanders, 2004; Harris, Nilan, & Kirdy, 2011). It should be noted that existing research on risks of sex workers tends to generally focus on street sex workers while addressing findings to the whole population of sex workers.

Three categories of risks which various groups of sex workers encounter are explored in this research, namely health, physical violence, and emotional risks. Risk is defined here as a situation where a person might be exposed to, perceive, or experience danger or harm. It is evident that prostitution takes different forms and is made up of various groups: street walkers, window soliciting, brothels and sex clubs, service at home, sex workers in bars, hotels and massage parlours, and escorts (Dutch policy on prostitution, 2012). Different researchers have addressed individual female sex workers through interviews, but research on the different groups is limited (Kowalewski, Henson & Longshore, 1997). As a contribution, this study considers specific groups and potential differences among these groups—an area where research is needed. These groups of sex workers tend to be hierarchically stratified. Scholars acknowledge a class-stratified continuum, referring to a hierarchy where, for instance, escorts are at the pinnacle, having generally a higher or better education than the other groups and having a higher socio-economic status. While street sex workers feature at the lowest end of the hierarchy as they tend to lack educational attainment and have a lower socio-economic status (Scott, 2011; Weitzer, 2005; Sanders, 2005).

This research draws from the perspective of activists and professionals. The former refers to persons who are the voice of others to bring about social or political change. Activists include individuals who have an inside view of this topic by virtue of their subjective experiences,

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[1] The terms 'prostitute' and 'sex worker' tend to be used interchangeably in common discourse (Daalder, 2015). In this research the term 'sex worker' is employed, as the researcher considers this term to distinguish more clearly between the person and the occupation.

being either current or former sex workers. Other activists include people who are not sex workers, but who are interested in voicing the needs of sex workers and have direct contact with them. The professionals in this study include social and health employees, who through their career offer advice and services to sex workers. Therefore, the research population is composed of activists and professionals having direct interaction with female sex workers from one, some, or all of the various groups.

The advantage of the perspective of activists and professionals is that they are able to address the research questions from a more comprehensive standpoint due to the nature of their roles in relation to sex workers. Individual sex workers who work within one group are unlikely to have a similar vantage point since their perspective is usually limited to their specific group. The different professionals and activists forming the research population might not individually have contact with all the different groups of sex workers. However, by merging together their perspectives on the various sex workers' groups, the research aims to achieve a broader overview of the experiences of risks and wellbeing of all the groups of sex workers.

The perspective of activists and professionals is widely unknown, pushed to the background by previous studies (Ayuste, Gijón, Payá, & Rubio, 2016). Although research on the perspective of such actors tends to be missing, some scholars highlight the major role these actors play in improving the ways society addresses sex workers (Alexander, 1998; Nagle, 1997; Ayuste et al., 2016). Thus, the viewpoint of activists and professionals who assist and offer advice to sex workers is important. These actors in this study serve as *key informants* by reflecting on various situations and cases that either are or are not linked to the hierarchy of sex workers. Professionals and activists tend to have an established trust relationship with sex workers; this facilitates the process of researching the topic by referring to experiences of sex workers while minimalizing psychological harm. This is also true for activists who are or were sex workers. These activists, who voice the experiences of others and also refer to their personal experiences, tend to be accustomed to revealing such experiences to larger audiences.

This study offers three main contributions to current research in regards to four groups of sex workers—escorts, sex workers in brothels and clubs, window sex workers, and street sex workers. The first contribution of the current study looks at the extent to which this hierarchy is present in the current Dutch context. This is meaningful since a hierarchical presence may influence the intensity or kind of risks certain groups experience. A deeper understanding of the hierarchical groups as linked to risks and wellbeing helps the reader understand the potential differences between the groups. In this study the way the hierarchy is perceived is central. Therefore, when delving deeper into the risks and wellbeing of sex workers, the researcher shall make reference to the hierarchy as perceived by activists and professionals. Therefore, the first research question is: *To what extent do activists and professionals who are in direct contact with sex workers perceive various hierarchical groups of female sex workers in the Netherlands?*

If the differences in the group hierarchy are found to be extensive or limited, the influence on the encountering of risks should be questioned. The phrase 'encountering risks' encompasses the sex workers' measures to prevent risks, the experience of risks, and coping strategies. Thus, the second contribution of the study is to look at how female sex workers in the various groups encounter risks, which may differ in type, likelihood, and intensity. The current study gives center stage to looking at the risks encountered, focusing primarily on health, physical violence and emotional risks. The second research question is thus: *From the perspective of activists and professionals who are in direct contact with sex workers, how do different hierarchical groups of female sex workers in the Netherlands encounter risks?*

In the same way that literature on the risks of various groups tends to be lacking, the wellbeing of women from different groups is also minimally studied (Jackson, Bennett, & Sowinski, 2007; Davidson, 1998), particularly in relation to health, physical violence, and emotional risks. Such existing research on sex workers and wellbeing often dives into relations with pimps and clients and tends to be linked to physical violence (Davidson, 1998). Empirical knowledge on the wellbeing of sex workers has been indispensable to developing policy (Vanwesenbeeck, 1994). The history of prostitution policies in the Netherlands highlight the importance of strengthening the position of sex workers, with care and support being a primary aim (Factsheet Prostitutieerrr, 2015). The evaluation of risks should go beyond what is seen at the surface (Sanders, 2001), because exposure to risks may impinge or disturb sex workers' position to care for themselves, to reach out for help, and to receive support. If the different groups of female sex workers encounter varied risks, it is important to question the influence and connection of these risks on the wellbeing of the sex workers. Understanding where the risks are coming from might impact their wellbeing. Passing through intense risks may hinder one's wellbeing, which in turn creates vulnerability that may invite further risks. This is generally the experience of women within the lowest sector of the group hierarchy more than that of women featuring in the upper hierarchical groups. In turn, this paper questions if risks and wellbeing are interlinked, and if the wellbeing of these female sex workers reflects the risks experienced (Harcourt & Donovan, 2005).The third contribution of this study is to get an in-depth understanding of the role risk plays and its potential direct or indirect impact on the wellbeing of sex workers within the different groups by asking the following research question: *From the perspective of activists and professionals who are in direct contact with sex workers, in what ways, if at all, are risks related to the wellbeing of female sex workers in the Netherlands?*

Although risks might be considered as an inherent element of sex work, the perceptions of different risks might vary by region, throughout time, and amongst the hierarchical groups. For instance, the hierarchy of sex workers in the Netherlands could be different than in another country where sex work is illegal. Even within the same regional context, the hierarchy might have been perceived differently throughout time. For example, two decades ago the perception of hierarchy might have been more or less present compared to the current perception in contemporary Netherlands. This study acknowledges the importance of context and time.

Therefore, the research questions are to be addressed by activists and professionals by reflecting on the current situation.

Through the main research questions presented above, this research expects to demonstrate three matters: first, that the groups of female sex workers are implicitly hierarchical; second, that the likelihood and intensity of health, physical violence, and emotional risks that the groups experience are linked to their group position within the hierarchy; and third, that the position of the particular groups, apart from affecting their experiences of risks, is also linked to their wellbeing. Thus, the lower a group features within the hierarchy, the more likely those in that group will encounter risks and worse wellbeing when compared to those in the highest group in the hierarchy, which are expected to encounter the least risks and better wellbeing.

The field of sex work is diverse, and in order to proceed with this exploratory study, a qualitative research design tends to be the most appropriate and informative. A qualitative research design plays a pivotal role towards in-depth understanding of the topic at hand, and is the best way of addressing a study of this nature due to its sensitivity as well as the continuous trust between recruited participants and the researcher. The research questions above require *thick-description*, real-life examples to illustrate and elaborate the research population's explanations about groups of sex workers (Newman, 2015; Bungay, Oliffe & Atchison, 2016). This can also be most aptly accomplished by a qualitative research design. The key informants of this study—former and current sex worker activists, activists who are not sex workers, and social and health professionals—shall provide the thick-description required to address the research questions by reflecting upon different situations and cases they are informed about or experience.

It is important to note that this research was initiated based on the interests and initiative of the researcher and the Ombudsman in Amsterdam. The issues within this field of sex work are unknown to the Ombudsman because his office has not previously received complaints from sex workers. Regardless, the Ombudsman believes that there might be some issues or problems being faced by sex workers in which he could assist. Therefore, this exploratory study aims to inform the Ombudsman about issues faced by sex workers, particularly regarding the risks they face and their wellbeing, from the perspective of activists and professionals. Furthermore, this study shall incorporate recommendations to the Ombudsman and other potential parties within the field.

1.2 Research Structure

The next chapter will outline the context of the study, looking at sex work in the Netherlands and Dutch policy on this topic. The third chapter addresses the existing literature and theories on sociological themes and concepts mentioned in the previous paragraphs, namely: group hierarchy in sex work, health risks, risks of physical violence, emotional risks, social capital, individualisation, wellbeing, and structuration theory. Chapter four describes the methodology

of the study by elaborating on the qualitative research design and ethical considerations. This will be followed by a chapter on the findings and the analysis of the data collected during the semi-structured interviews, leading to conclusions in chapter six. After pointing out the main strengths and limitations of the study as well as topics for future research, the final chapter offers policy recommendations.

Chapter 2
THE DUTCH CONTEXT

In order to get a better understanding of the sex work field, this section shall firstly introduce the reader to the Dutch context. Although prostitution is legalised in the Netherlands, one cannot know the exact number of sex workers. This is because the industry continues to possess a hidden element. One can estimate that there are between 25,000 to 30,000 sex workers in the Netherlands. For example, in Amsterdam there is an estimate of 6,750 sex workers (The sex worker, 2015). From this figure, 1,100 persons work behind a window in the Red Light District (Round, 2010). The vast majority (90%) of sex workers within different groups are women (Round, 2010); the remaining 10% are perceived to be equally divided between male sex workers and transgender sex workers. Although it is challenging to have a breakdown of sex workers within different groups, the Dutch policy on prostitution does provides a breakdown of different sex groups in the Netherlands as seen in table 1 below (A survey conducted in 2000, cited in Dutch policy on prostitution, 2012).

Different forms of Prostitution	Percentage
Escort services	15%
Brothels and sex clubs	45%
Window Soliciting	20%
Streetwalkers	5%
Service at home	5%
Other (bars, hotels, massage parlours etc.)	10%

Table 1: Different forms of prostitution in the Netherlands (A survey conducted in 2000, cited in Dutch policy on prostitution, 2012).

2.1 Dutch Policy on Prostitution

The sex industry in the Netherlands went from being tolerated to becoming legalised in the year 2000 (Goggin, 2013; Outshoorn, 2012). This section presents an overview of the Dutch policy on prostitution on a national and municipal level, highlighting the main objectives of the policy and how this study builds on pre-existing policy aims. Additionally, this section continues by stating the focus of policy and where the policy is lacking in light of the current sex industry in the Netherlands.

While prostitution is legal in the whole country, the policy administration and implementation lie in the hands of municipalities (Daalder, 2007). Municipalities together with the Ministry of Security and Justice launched a program called *The national prostitution programme* to facilitate the cooperation of municipalities in terms of policy implementation, particularly to fight against exploitation and human trafficking in a holistic manner (Daalder, 2015), and further to promote independent and safe work conditions (Prostitution program, n.d.). The main objective of prostitution policy is to tackle abuses within the licenced sector, to detect illegality in the sex industry, to care for sex workers by empowering them, and to offer preliminary prevention (Prostitution program, n.d.). The sex workers' conditions of work tend to be reported as unacceptable, with incidents of permit violations and trafficking. This research aims at strengthening the sex workers' position by proposing policy that reflects more comprehensively on the various groups of sex workers and the risks they experience (Prostitution program, n.d.).

Concurrently, the government on a national level plans to tighten the regulations mainly in three directions: firstly, by focusing on mandatory licencing to ensure the health and safety of sex workers; secondly, by carrying out rigorous screening of sex business owners to prevent human trafficking; and thirdly, by raising the sex workers' minimum age from 18 to 21. The aim is to punish clients caught with an underage sex worker rather than the sex worker (Prostitution, n.d.).

The evolvement and improvement of the Dutch prostitution policy in the last two decades is evident. However, sex workers are addressed as a unified group of victims (Daalder, 2015) despite the recognition of various groups of sex workers. Daalder (2015) states that although policies are promising and progressing, they are not explicitly targeting and including the various hierarchical groups in the sex industry. This highlighted limitation is addressed in the current study by exploring if the differences between sex workers' groups is extensive enough for policies to take into account. This may inform the government, particularly as the Ministry of Security and Justice acknowledges that further measures in policies are needed to improve the health and safety of sex workers (Prostitution, n.d.).

Throughout the years, the Dutch policy on prostitution has been effective in improving safety for sex workers (Human trafficking, n.d.; Prostitution, n.d.). The Ministry of Security and Justice outlines that the legislation requires further development to achieve better results (Prostitution, n.d.). The Dutch prostitution policy addresses sex workers as a unified group. Therefore, one way of improving the effectiveness of the current policies could be to address various groups within the hierarchy of sex work, especially if risks experienced evidently differ per group, and particularly if these risks impact their wellbeing. Research on the risks experienced impacting the wellbeing of various groups of sex workers is lacking within the Dutch context (Daalder, 2015).

The outcome of this study aims to feed into current policy and encompasses recommendations on whether policies on prostitution should target different groups or maintain

its unidirectional focus on the eradication of exploitation and human trafficking by addressing sex workers as one group.

2.2 Organisational Context

The activists and professionals who voluntarily accepted to take part in this study are connected with or employed by the following organisations: P&G292, Aidsfonds, Spot46, Lister, Scharlaken Koord, Proud, Liberty, El Roi, and Second Step. In chapter 4 the researcher shall elaborate on the recruitment of the participants. The following table (Table 2) provides a brief description of every organisation from which participants of the study were recruited. However, one should note that data collected in this research does not represent the vision or the voice of the organisations but solely the perspective of every participant.

Name of Organisation	Organisational Role
P&G292	Social workers and nurses offer information, courses, support, and advice to sex workers in the Amsterdam region (About P&G292, n.d.).
Aidsfonds	Campaigns, lobbies and carries out research, both in the Netherlands and internationally (Projects, n.d.). The office participating in this study is in Amsterdam.
Spot46	Social workers offer coaching, information, advice, and support to sex workers in The Hague (Info & advies, n.d.).
Lister	Social experts and counsellors provide assistance to people with severe mental illness and addictions, such as drug addiction (Over Lister, n.d.). In Utrecht Lister has a hostel that hosted twenty-seven people at the time of this study. Around seven women from this group are open about doing street prostitution in order to sustain their addiction (Participant Roos, 2017).
Scharlaken Koord	Provides social workers' support to women and girls in prostitution, respecting their choice, from a Christian lens (Welcome, n.d.). Located in Amsterdam.
Proud	An association by sex workers and for sex workers, located in Amsterdam. Proud welcomes all current sex workers and former sex workers, offers practical and legal support as well as advocacy in the media, and carries out field work (Proud, n.d.).
Liberty	A union and association by sex workers for sex workers in The Hague and surrounding areas (Participant Cobie, 2017; Koop, 2016).
El Roi	A voluntary organisation that looks after women who work in prostitution at the tippel zones, behind the windows and in clubs. The foundation consists of a group of volunteers from different churches in Utrecht (El Roi, n.d.).
Second Step	A second-hand clothing store in Amsterdam, offering a meeting place and day care to women participating in the prostitution exiting program of Scharlaken Koord (Second Step, n.d.).

Table 2: The role of the organisations from which the participants taking part in this study were recruited.

P&G292, Aidsfonds, Spot46, Scharlaken Koord, Proud, Liberty, and El Roi carry out field work by reaching out to sex workers, making them aware of their services should they need them. Sex workers visit professionals within organisations for STD tests, daily queries, assistance, advice, to attend courses, and to purchases necessities for work such as condoms. Lister is a hostel for persons with psychological problems and addiction, while Second Step is a day care for sex workers in the prostitution exiting program. Thus, professionals and non-sex worker activists at these two organisations give advice and assistance to a lesser number of people due to the nature of their roles. Figure 1 below illustrates the research population: health and social professionals are found within P&G292, Aidsfonds, Spot46, Lister and Scharlaken Koord; activists who are current sex workers or former sex workers are members in Proud or Liberty; and activists who are non-sex workers are constituents of El Roi and Second Step.
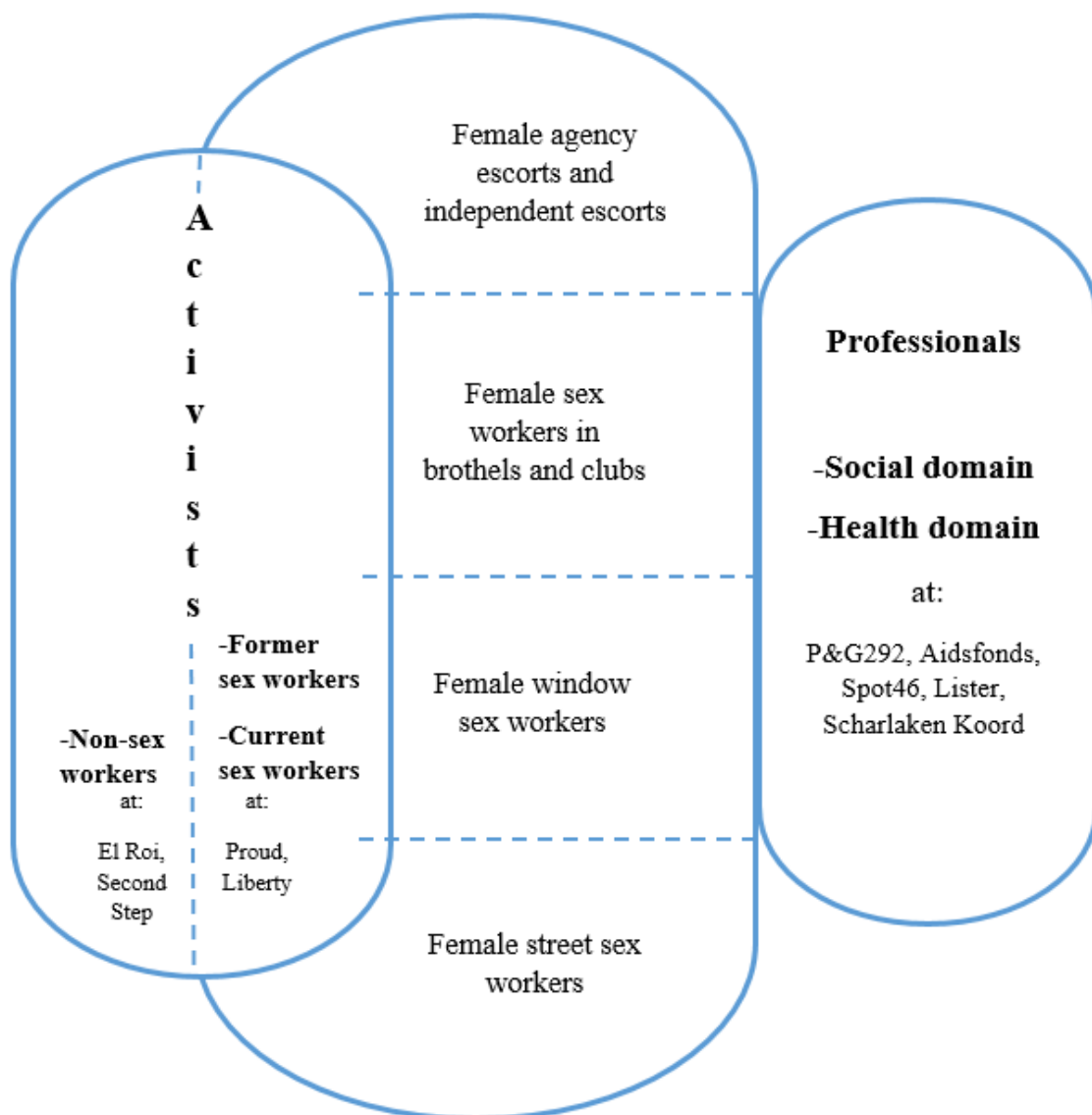

Figure 1: An illustration showing the research population of activists and professionals.

Chapter 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter focuses on the implications and considerations of existing theories and previous research addressing the topic. The first part of the chapter delves into group hierarchy of sex workers. In order to uncover risks being faced by female sex workers, this chapter informs the reader of the different forms of risks, particularly health, physical violence and emotional, and explores the potential of such risks to be experienced differently by the various groups of sex workers. Moreover, this chapter addresses social capital and individualisation, while looking at wellbeing and its possible link to perceived risks. The last part of the chapter shall look into structuration theory as a basis for the policy recommendations in chapter 7.

3.1 Group Hierarchy in Sex Work

Prostitution and sex work might be portrayed as being unified. However, it is evident that the sex industry is characterised by various groups of sex workers. When scholars have addressed the different groups of sex work, groups were either not taken into consideration, or else presented as layered within a hierarchy, referred to as the *hierarchy of normative framework* (Scott, 2011; Weitzer, 1999; Cesario & Chancer, 2009). Street sex workers are seen to be at the bottom of this hierarchy, while brothel and club sex workers tend to be found within the mid-hierarchy. The groups that are perceived to be towards the top, at the highest end of the hierarchy of normative framework, are escort services, entrepreneurial prostitution, and licensed sauna establishments (Sanders, 2004; Scott, 2011).

The current study addresses the sex work field by using the hierarchy of normative framework. Studies in the Netherlands on group hierarchy of sex workers are lacking, thus window sex workers have not been explicitly placed within the hierarchy. Therefore, this study integrates window sex workers within the hierarchy in order to reflect the Dutch context. Due to their working environment—being open to the public, yet within a venue—this study shall regard window sex workers as in the middle part of the hierarchy, between street sex workers and sex workers in brothels, and clubs. In addition, scholarly literature tends to present escorts in one group; however, few scholars recognise that while some escorts work within an agency, others work independently (Sanders, 2008). Figure 2 below explicitly shows which groups are addressed in the current study and where scholars propose that they be placed within the hierarchy, with the addition by the researcher of the window sex workers in line with the current context. The figure does not represent the amount of sex workers in every group but solely the position of every group in the hierarchy. In addition, table 3 below presents the definitions of the groups addressed in the current study.
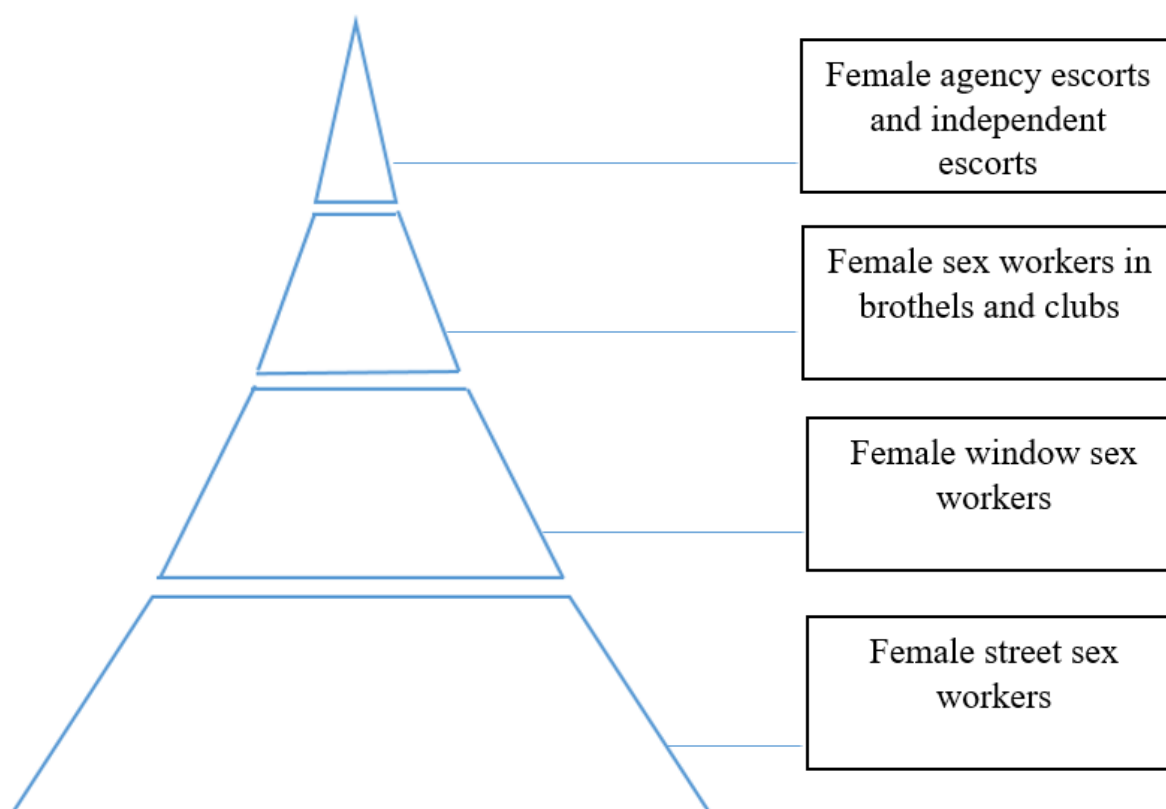
Figure 2: An illustration of the hierarchy of normative framework, adapted for the current study within the Dutch context.

The sex workers' groups forming the hierarchy have different characteristics, in which trends can be identified (Vanwesenbeeck, 1994). There is a likelihood that the highest groups have the following characteristics: earning the most money, having the highest socio-economic status, having the highest level of education, being fluent in languages which are widely spoken in a context (Outshoorn, 2012), and doing sex work as a job alongside another job or study (Weitzer, 2005). Meanwhile, the lower groups of the hierarchy tend to be characterised by: being less lucrative, having the lowest socio-economic status, having minimal education, lacking knowledge of languages (Outshoorn, 2012), and doing sex work as a sole job to earn a living. In turn, the poorest of sex workers tend to solicit in streets for sex work (Sanders, 2004; Harcourt & Donovan, 2005).

Group of Female Sex Workers	Definition
Female agency escorts and independent escorts	Escorts are contacted by clients to receive an escort service, either at the client's room or hotel room. An escort may also accompany the client on a trip abroad, or provide service at the sex workers' premises.
Female sex workers in brothels and clubs	In a club the client goes to the room of the sex worker, whereas in a brothel all the sex workers are introduced, and the client gets to select one sex worker. Sex workers in both brothels and clubs provide service at the same premises, and alcohol is also served at these venues.
Female window sex workers	Window sex workers are on public display behind a window. Service is provided inside a room connected to the window display.
Female street sex workers	Street sex workers are solicited by clients in a public place, generally on a street or in a park, and provide service within the client's vehicle.

Table 3: The hierarchical groups addressed in this study as defined by Harcourt and Donovan (2005), adapted to the Dutch context and the current study.

Being presented with distinct characteristics found within the extreme ends of the hierarchy, Weitzer (2005) states that vertical mobility between groups tends to be rare. For instance, moving from street sex work to being an escort, or vice versa, is unusual and rather improbable. Mobility is more likely to take place within the same level of the hierarchy in a horizontal way, such as moving from being an escort within an agency to being an independent escort (Weitzer, 2005).

3.2 Risks

Generally, a risk is perceived as a calculus (Sanders, 2004), being "the extent of damage multiplied by the probability of occurrence" (Zinn, 2007-2017, p. 3). However, through a sociological lens risk is more complex, particularly within the current times (Sanders, 2004). Douglas (1992) and Beck (1992), believe that risks are socially constructed. In contemporary times society is less concerned about collective dangers, focusing more on the protection of risks faced by individuals (Douglas, 1990). According to Beck (1992), society has become so complex that managing risks through a community approach is difficult. Societies have resorted to complex ways of defining and dealing with risk on an individual basis. In addition, Beck states that by leading certain lifestyles, some individuals may be prone to pervasive or further risks (Tullock & Lupton's, 2003).

Meanwhile, the perception of risks may encompass optimism bias. This bias refers to individuals who believe that while a risky event might happen to others, it is less likely to happen to them. Therefore, when compared to others, they would perceive less risk of experiencing a negative event, believing that they are more in control than others (Helweg-Larsen & Shepperd, 2001; Shepperd, Carroll, Grace, & Terry, 2002).

Therefore, risks are seen not merely as objective but as relative to individual social situations and circumstances (Sanders, 2004). Individuals consider their coping strategies and ways of reacting to risks. Douglas' and Beck's theories of risk address risk in broad terms. However, this study narrows its focus to examine three risks that are reported to be high in frequency in various studies across different countries. This study shall now address health, physical violence, and emotional risks and relate them to the topic of sex workers (James, 1976; Vanwesenbeeck, 1994; Harris et al., 2010).

3.2.1 Health Risks

Sex work tends to be associated with negative perceptions of health in terms of sexually transmitted infections (STDs) and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Sex workers are continuously encouraged to be in control of their behaviour and to set boundaries with their clients by conforming to negotiated modes of working (The sex worker, 2015; Hunnard, Matthews, & Scoular, 2008), such as by clearly stating which sexual acts are not performed by the sex worker and requiring the use of contraception. Sex workers' knowledge on STDs and HIV tends to vary, where only the highest educated workers know all aspects of health-related infections (Auli, Mejia-Lancheros, Berenguera, Pujol-Ribera, & 2015). However, although performing sex by using contraception is portrayed as being essential by health professionals (Hubbard et al., 2008) and sex workers alike (Sanders, 2004; The sex worker, 2015), unsafe sexual practices still take place according to Harris, et al., (2010). In spite of a client who is seen and perceived by sex workers as clean and groomed, sex workers have an increased risk of STDs when performing unprotected sex with such a client, or when contraception leaks, comes off, or breaks (Harris et al., 2010).

Looking at health risks in relation to the different groups, Harcourt and Donovan (2005) state that brothel and club sex workers tend to have medium to low health risks because condoms tend to be used consistently. This seems to be different for street sex workers, as the location in itself makes street sex workers more prone to health risks (Benoit & Millar, 2001). Women who solicit in the street tend to have a high number of clients and/or the absence of condom usage, which in turn amplifies health risks. For this group, health risks are perceived as low only if there is limited genital contact with the client, thus if solely masturbation is involved (Harcourt & Donovan, 2005). Harcourt, Beek, Heslop, McMahon, and Donovan (2001) believe that health professionals and other organisations should pay particular attention to street sex workers, as this specific group tends to have certain dependencies, such as drug addictions, which make it hard to clearly work by boundaries. According to Vanwesenbeeck

(2001), health risks might not be experienced by various groups in the same way as by street sex workers. As a matter of fact, Vanwesenbeeck (2001) states that research is needed to adequately delve into the health issues that each groups experience in the current context.

3.2.2 Risks of Physical Violence

Physical violence from the clients tends to be perceived as a high risk by sex workers (O'Kane, 2002). As a matter of fact, they tend to rely on their intuition, not only to judge whether a client looks clean health-wise but also to prevent physical violence. Sex workers are sophisticated in picking up client cues (Brewis & Linstead, 2000). Sanders (2004) states that they tend to select clients depending on their race. Dark skin clients are frequently perceived as violent through historical racialized perspectives (Brewis & Linstead, 2000). Apart from race, sex workers also pay attention to the following items in order to select clients that seem to not be violent: accent, apparent status, clothing, appearance, age, profession, ethnicity, and the kind of car that is owned. The last-mentioned item is within the context of street sex workers (Cesario & Chancer, 2009).

In Britain violence was reported to be often encountered by sex workers, including intimidation, kidnap, physical assault, and rape (Sanders, 2004). Although in other contexts sex workers may encounter less violence, the fear and awareness of violence preoccupies them (Fonner et al., 2014). Within their limited options and alternatives sex workers do their utmost in preventing risks of physical violence, even before meeting the client face-to-face, by assessing potential risks in the area where they work and creating precautionary principals. These measures tend to be used daily; for instance, to prevent robbery, payment is requested before the sexual practice and is hidden or passed on to a manager/third party/pimp (Sanders, 2004).

When looking at the different groups, escorts working with an agency tend to have low risks due to monitoring of clients by the agency, while independent home workers tend to be at high risk due to the lack of prior monitoring (Harcourt & Donovan, 2005). When addressing groups in the middle of the hierarchy, the work environment depends on the management of the establishment and their regulations. For instance, having or not having a glass barrier between the sex workers and the clients may play a role in their safety and working environment. In establishments such as brothels and clubs, the management tends to have greater responsibility in disciplining the clients (Harcourt & Donovan, 2005). For window sex workers, physical violence tends to be minimal if sufficient money is paid for the sexual act. With regards to street soliciting, the streets tend to be very risky compared to the other groups' venues. Street sex workers tend to be more prone to health effects, police arrest, and police intervention, and also have a higher chance of experiencing violence, especially by their clients (Davis, 1993; Whittaker & Hart, 1996). The client has more control than the sex worker since drug and alcohol addiction often play a role in this form of sex work, thus making the risk high. (Harcourt & Donovan, 2005). With regards to street sex workers, Brewis and Linstead (2000)

state that whenever a sex worker is not impeded by stress related to drug or alcohol addiction, they rely on a combination of intrinsic intuition and previous experience. These strategies serve as a precautionary measure for sex workers and in turn decrease risks of physical violence (Brewis & Linstead, 2000).

3.2.3 Emotional Risks

This form of risk has been given less attention in the past (Jackson et al., 2007). Recently scholars have highlighted the importance of delving deeper to uncover emotional risks being faced by sex workers (Harris et al., 2010). In order to address this form of risk, this study shall look primarily at social stigma.

According to Pheterson (1986), stigma tends to stick to the combination of sex for money, which is considered as immoral by various societies; such stigmatisation is detrimental to a sex worker's emotional health (Abel, Fitzgerald, Healy, & Taylor, 2010). Weitzer (2000) believes that the public is more prone to negatively judge sex workers that are obviously visible, such as window sex workers, rather than those that are more hidden, such as escorts. Negative perceptions of prostitution, mainly based on visible sex workers, tend to be applied to all sex workers across the board, leading to the reinforcement of the social stigma. This is in turn breeds further negative perceptions associated with sex work (Vanwesenbeeck, 1994). Negative labels tend to be given to sex workers by society, not necessarily to exclude them but to distinguish between a group that is marked as problematic—the sex workers—from the whole society composed of 'normal' individuals—the non-sex workers (Scott, 2011; Hayes-Smith & Shekrarkhar, 2010). Women in prostitution are labelled as 'whore' and carry a 'spoiled identity' (Goffman, 2009). Being stigmatised may result in lack of police protection as well as lack of access to services in banks, public offices, hospitals, and other institutions (Rubin, 1984); it may also issue in lack of social acceptability, and thus lack of social contact and networks outside the sex industry (Shur, 1984; Bourdieu, 1989).

Therefore, in order to avoid social stigma, sex workers resort to covering up their occupation as much as possible. This brings about the highest emotional risk, as they continuously fear that relatives and friends will discover what their work is (Sanders, 2004) and thereby discriminate against them by changing their attitude towards them (Jackson et al., 2007). Although stigmatisation is the common reality of all sex workers, street sex workers, who occupy the lowest stratum of the prostitution hierarchy (Scott, 2011), tend to receive the strongest exposure to social stigma (Weitzer, 2000). They tend to be 'double stigmatised' since, in addition to their visible occupation, they are perceived as being drug addicts (Perkins & Bennett, 1985).

Despite the fact that scholars have addressed various notions within emotional risks, this form of risk lacks analysis and reflection based on the experiences of the hierarchical groups of sex workers, which is one of the main contributions of the current study. Also, the experience of emotional, physical violence, and health risks may in turn be perceived differently by sex

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workers if they see themselves as a community who support one another versus perceiving risks in an individualised way.

3.3 Social Capital and Individualisation

The sex workers' experience of various risks might reflect in the wellbeing of sex workers. Additionally, the social network of sex workers, whether within their respective group or with other sex workers in general, could either be beneficial or, if support is lacking, detrimental. Therefore, this section pays attention to whether sex workers resort to social capital in sex work when perceiving daily risks, or if sex workers approach their risks and wellbeing in an individualised manner. This study takes a closer look at the ways social contacts, or the lack of them due to individualisation, play a role in the perceived wellbeing of sex workers.

As sex workers experience different risks, the ways of coping and managing risks might be in collective precautionary principles or individualised coping strategies. The former gives importance to the sex workers' social network (Portes, 1998), while the latter refers to the notion of individualisation. Giddens (1991) believes that we live in 'high modernity', which is characterised by an increase in reflexive thinking and changes in actions undertaken by the individual. The growth of individual decision-making to respond to immediate situations signals social complexity and is termed individualisation.

Putnam (2000, cited in Fonner et al., 2004) defines social capital as "the networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate co-operation for mutual benefit" (p. 1). When addressing risk, the dynamics of social relationships must be included, since the experience of risk might change depending on social relations (Rhodes, 1997). Relationships influence one's behaviour towards risk, since such behaviour is not the outcome of individual choices but of negotiated actions with various actors within a social group (Rhodes, 1997). One type of social capital, as coined by Putnam (2000), is bonding social capital. It refers to intra-group relationships (Fonner et al., 2014; Inglehart & Norris, 2003), such as the relationship between sex workers in this study. Social capital and individualisation are seen as underlying mechanisms that may facilitate or complicate the experience of risks and wellbeing among sex workers, both within and between hierarchical groups. Sex workers' support towards each other versus an individualised approach may play an indirect role in the way wellbeing is perceived, which is the focus of the next section.

3.4 Wellbeing

According to Vanwesenbeeck, (1994), wellbeing is not stable or static: it results from a reciprocal interaction between the environment and the individual experiencing wellbeing. It is the successful management of stressful experiences and life events. A person's high level of wellbeing may be the result of having minimal stressful events, or of having successful coping strategies to manage stressful events. Wellbeing is dependent on an individual's experience

and the subjective meaning attached to a situation. For instance, an event may be perceived by one person as stressful, whereas another person might not see it as impacting their wellbeing. The meaning one attaches to an event generally depends on previous experience of a similar event and forms part of the adapting process.

The wellbeing of sex workers tends to be seen through a physical and emotional lens. Physical and emotional wellbeing are inextricably interwoven, as there is a great likelihood that the better one's physical wellbeing is, the better will be one's emotional wellbeing, and vice versa (Taylor, 1990). Wellbeing is perceived to be determined by, and may differ according to, historic, contextual, and personal factors (Ditmore, Levy, & William, 2010). Sex workers' wellbeing might not be exclusively linked with their occupation or job satisfaction but may also depend on their class and group. For instance, some sex workers who entered prostitution due to poverty might have been vulnerable to poor physical and emotional wellbeing prior to entering sex work (Ditmore et al., 2010). Vanwesenbeeck (1994) believes that lack of wellbeing is related to the most dangerous and least paid venues for prostitution where women have little control on client selection and overall conditions of work, such as in brothels, clubs, and in the streets. On the contrary, working in higher class venues with higher pay and working independently are linked to a higher level of wellbeing.

What is mostly known by scholars about sex workers' wellbeing is related to the physical aspect in the context of relations with clients and pimps (Davidson, 1998). Scholarly research that goes beyond to look at various groups of sex workers and their wellbeing as a reflection of perceived risks seems to be lacking (Davidson, 1998), particularly within the Dutch context. Further research on social relations is needed, such as between sex workers and their families, which might reveal how such relations contribute to their wellbeing, whether positively or negatively (Jackson et al., 2007). Existing literature on wellbeing fails to capture the situation of female sex workers working in different groups of sex work (Jackson et al., 2007). In the current study wellbeing is related to individual sex workers, but it is also examined in light of the various hierarchical groups of sex workers. This study expects that the fewer risks sex workers within one group of the hierarchy experience, the better their wellbeing. Additionally, it is expected that if the intensity of risks is high and the coping strategies of sex workers can overcome such risks, the less such risks will impact their wellbeing.

3.5 Structuration Theory

In order to have a proper understanding of the current study in the present context and time, it is relevant to mention structuration theory, which was coined by Giddens (1984). In this theory, which can be applied to various topics, Giddens states that in order to understand a social phenomenon, one must closely look at the context of the study. Careful observation of the ways agents (individuals) influence structure (institutions), and in turn the ways the structure influences the agents, makes it possible to understand a particular society in time (New Westminster, 2011). This implies that the present context is the result of actions by various

agents that feed into a structure and rapidly shape and reinforce norms. People's actions are necessary to reproduce social structures; if people change their behaviour, the structure also changes. Thus, people's actions can change institutions, with the effect that these institutions then take measures to target situations in a particular context and time. This then renders a change in the current context and the norms upon which individuals act.

Applying this to the current study, in order to understand the risks and wellbeing of sex workers, one must take into account the larger social context of the present day Netherlands in which the sex workers operate. In other words, the risks and wellbeing of sex workers are intimately related to, and depend on, the current context and time in which they exist. However, through gradual changes in behaviour of both sex workers and other individuals or groups in the Netherlands, major changes can be brought about in the larger social context in order to decrease the risks and improve the wellbeing of sex workers. Thus, structuration theory proves to be an important basis for proposing policy recommendations (found in Chapter 7) that may lead to the desired changes in line with improving the wellbeing of sex workers in the Netherlands.

In conclusion of this chapter, the reader may note that this research does not focus on a single overarching theory but on related theories, including group hierarchy, risk theory, wellbeing, social capital, individualisation, and structuration theory. The use of multiple theories in research is termed as *theoretical triangulation* (Newman, 2015). This is beneficial as it incorporates different perspectives, assumptions, and concepts. Furthermore, theoretical triangulation avoids speculations of what the research findings might have been (Kelly, 2012).

Chapter 4
METHODOLOGY

Emerging from the research objectives, this chapter discusses the operationalisation of the research methodology adopted for this study. It elaborates on the population and the sampling procedure within a qualitative method. Furthermore, it reviews the data collection process and the research technique. This is followed by the analysis of data and ethical considerations.

4.1 Defining the Population

The chosen sample for this research are activists and professionals that have direct contact with sex workers in the Netherlands. The activists include individuals who are interested in representing the voice and experiences of other sex workers, with the majority being public figures who campaign for political or social change. In this study activists consist of current sex workers, former sex workers, and non-sex workers. The professionals come from the health and social field and include social workers and health professionals. Through the role of the research population, assistance is provided to sex workers in various ways.

This population shall give their perspective on the extent to which they perceive the different hierarchical groups and how, if at all, health, physical violence, and emotional risks along with wellbeing are experienced differently between the groups of female sex workers. While collecting empirical data, activists were asked to focus on a broad perspective of the experiences of the other sex workers they represent. The current and former sex worker activists were also invited to mention some examples from their own experience. Professionals and non-sex worker activists were encouraged to give examples based on the experiences of female sex workers they encounter in their role and career.

4.2 The Sampling Procedure

Participants were recruited on the basis of snowball sampling, which involves gaining new participants within the defined population through their direct or indirect linkages with initial participants (Newman, 2015). The advantage of this sampling procedure is that the researcher could potentially reach a good number of participants through a small number of initial contacts. In addition, the cost of locating and reaching participants tends not to be high. However, the weakness of this sampling procedure is that the researcher has lack of control over the recruited participants and that similar data may be generated. This sampling procedure tends to be used particularly when the research population is hard to reach and when the researcher has limited resources to reach potential participants (Berg, 2004). In order to get a broad spectrum of the experiences of the varied sex workers groups, the researcher aimed at

starting different snowballs in various organisations in order to prevent likeminded opinions on the topic (Newman, 2015).

The researcher targeted outreach to various organisations offering social support and health care to sex workers. In addition, sex worker unions were also approached. In total contact was made with around 100 individuals who either might have known others who could participate or could participate themselves. Through these organisations and unions the researcher was lead to employees, professionals, and activists. The researcher approached various organisations in Amsterdam in person, including the Salvation Army, Proud, Scharlaken Koord, Aidsfonds, and P&G292. Other organisations located elsewhere in the Netherlands were contacted by phone and email, including SHOP, Tussenvoorziening, Stiching Humanitas, GGD, Hvo querido, Spot 46, Lister, Liberty, and Second Step. The research sample includes different professional roles within the health and social domain which could give insight on all the risk types and the wellbeing of sex workers. While gaining insight in the field, the researcher also approached people in academia, policy makers, and others who did not fit within the sample of the study themselves, but who might provide contacts with others who did.

This process proved to be very challenging and time-consuming because to reach the participants, the researcher invested in a tailored approach by striking one's attention and interest in the research in unique ways. For example, one of the tailored approaches was to assist another researcher in an organisation, who in return referred three participants for this study. The researcher reached out to all the organisations and participants in person to explain the study and spark their interest. Once the researcher started interviews, the participants were asked if they knew of other potential participants; this was a good technique but also a lengthy process. After a number of months the interest in the topic increased, and through unexpected further referrals the researcher managed to reach and recruit current sex worker activists related to all the groups covered in this study.

4.3 The Participants

This study incorporates the perspective of twenty-two female participants, of which thirteen are professionals (10 from the social field, 3 from the healthcare field) and nine are activists (5 current sex workers, 2 former sex workers representing each group in the study, and 2 non-sex workers). Participants were recruited until the point of saturation of data had been reached and potential additional interviews most probably would not yield new information. The professionals who provide sex workers with help had a systematic, overarching view in the way they reflected upon experiences of sex workers. Health professionals tend to be acquainted with female sex workers from all the groups on account of the fact that sex workers visit their health organisations for STD testing. The majority of health, social workers and activists carry out outreach programs in clubs, brothels, and window areas, and are thus more acquainted with these groups of sex workers. Street sex workers tend to be reached by health, social

professionals within the tipple zones in a limited number of cities. Sex workers within the higher stratum of the group hierarchy, mostly escorts working independently, are harder for organisations to reach, as their work venues tend to be invisible to the public. However, although limited, organisations also have some contact with these female sex workers, primarily when they do STD testing. Like professionals, non-sex worker activists tend to have more contact with sex workers who work in a visible environment. In this sample, some activists were, or still are, escorts within an agency or independent escorts. Therefore, from each group there is at least one activist who is a current worker. The activists not only come from the different groups, but they also all feel that they can represent a large number of sex workers from the various groups due to their public activism role. Sex worker activists contributed to a fuller picture by providing more tangible experiences that complemented the data from the professionals.

Some participants mentioned that this interview made them reflect on particular issues they had never thought of. For participants who showed further interest in the research being conducted, the researcher offered to provide a soft copy of the finalised research along with other literature and research insights. The table below (Table 4) gives the general information about the activists and professionals recruited for the study.

Name of Participant (Real or Pseudonym)	Age	Activist or Professional	Job Title	Years in the Field	Average Number of Sex Workers in Contact	Represent the Following Groups	City
1. Christa	40-44	Professional	Social Assistant	>1 year	31-40 per week	Mostly windows and clubs, few independent	The Hague
2. Yvette	30-34	Professional	Social Assistant	1-2 years	21-30 per week	Mostly windows and clubs, few independent	The Hague
3. Katia	30-34	Professional	Social Assistant	1-2 years	31-40 per week	Mostly windows and clubs, few independent	The Hague
4. Gaby	35-39	Professional	Social Assistant (Past – Police Europol)	1-2 years	31-40 per week	Mostly windows and clubs, few independent	The Hague
5. Roos	35-39	Professional	Care Coordinator	± 15 years	≥10 per week	All groups particularly street sex workers	Utrecht
6. Mirna	25-29	Professional	Social Personal Coach	± 5 years	≥10 per week	Street sex workers with addiction	Utrecht
7. Rebecca	30-34	Professional	Program officer	± 10 years	31-40 per week	Street sex workers in Utrecht, and other groups	Amsterdam and Utrecht
8. Lina	50-54	Professional	Nurse, Health Professional and Capacity Development Trainer	± 15 years	21-30 per week	All groups	Amsterdam
9. Heleen	40-44	Professional	Confidential Counsellor	± 20 years	31-40 per week	All groups	Amsterdam
10. Annelies	35-39	Professional	Public Health Nurse	± 10 years	31-40 per week	All groups	Amsterdam
11. Petra	40-44	Professional	Social Worker, Project Leader	± 10 years	11-20 per week	All groups, but mostly windows and clubs	Amsterdam
12. Shania	45-49	Professional	Psychiatric Nurse, Diversity Officer	± 10 years	31-40 per week	All groups	Amsterdam
13. Brenda	45-49	Professional	Social Worker	± 25 years	21-30 per week	Majority windows, some clubs and escorts	Amsterdam

Name of Participant (Real or Pseudonym)	Age	Activist or Professional	Role	Years in the Field	Average Number of Sex Workers in Contact	Represent the Following Groups	City
14. Willemijn	25-29	Activist	Non-sex worker, involved in fieldwork and lobbying	3 years as an activist	31-40 per week	Mostly street, windows, clubs	Utrecht and Amsterdam
15. Elizabeth	50-54	Activist	Non-sex worker, involved in fundraising	2.5 years as an activist	≥10 per week	Mostly windows, some clubs and few escorts	Amsterdam
16. Marianne	≤54	Activist	Former sex worker Current board member of the sex workers' union in Amsterdam. (Past: in brothel and escort)	4 years as a sex worker, 17 years as an activist	11-20 per week	All groups	Amsterdam
17. Cobie	50-54	Activist	Former sex worker Current president of the sex workers' union at The Hague (Past: in clubs and windows)	30 years as a sex worker	21-30 per week	All groups	The Hague
18. Janica	50-54	Activist	Current escort sex worker both independently and through an agency. (Past: escort, few days at windows, in a brothel, worked in window rental offices, social work in tolerant zones, in a sex theatre and mature erotic café.)	24 years as a sex worker, 27 years as an activist	11-20 per week	All groups	Amsterdam
19. Maria	45-49	Activist	Current independent sex worker	17 years exclusively as an independent sex worker	11-20 per week	Mostly independent workers, but also other groups	Amsterdam
20. Moira	25-29	Activist	Current prodominatrix club sex worker (Past: webcam, telephone sex, erotic massage studio, BDSM studio, fetish modelling)	8 years as a sex worker, 1 year as an activist	11-20 per week	All groups	Amsterdam
21. Selena	25-29	Activist	Current Street and window sex worker (Past: independent escort, clubs, webcam)	12 years as a sex worker	11-20 per week	All groups, mostly co-workers	Amsterdam and Utrecht
22. Felica Anna	30-34	Activist	Current window sex worker	7 years, exclusively as a window sex worker	11-20 per week	Mostly windows	Amsterdam

Table 4: General information of the participants

4.4 Interview Technique

In this study the interview technique was selected to generate discussion revolving around the major research questions. Data was collected by means of semi-structured interviews, which is similar to a structured conversation. This technique is a labour-efficient and time-efficient way of gathering data. The technique's flexibility is pivotal for conducting this research (Phellas, Bloch, & Seale, 2012). It enabled participants to use their own words in expressing themselves while staying focused on the topic and providing elaboration when needed. Meanwhile, as certain recollections may be sensitive or emotional, this technique allowed the researcher to notice any change in non-verbal gestures, which are critical in the analysis and discussion of the data (Peräkylä & Ruusuori, 2011). Listening attentively and exchanging knowledge on the topic at hand was important, especially so with activists, in order to keep the participants engaged while also gaining trust within the timeframe of the interview.

The interviews generally lasted for around one hour and fifteen minutes, with a few exceptions where they were slightly shorter or longer. When interviewing professionals, flexibility was particularly important in order to avoid intrusion of work activities (Bungay, Oliffe, & Atchison, 2015). The researcher did not plan back-to-back appointments due to anticipation of the organisation's needs in which an interview might have potentially been paused. A handful of interviews were paused due to immediate assistance being needed, either by sex workers who called or visited the organisation, or by other colleagues of the interviewee. These interviews were later resumed and proceeded in a uniform manner.

4.4.1 Interviewing Questions

The co-production of every semi-structured conversation lead to the principle concepts of the research aims. The questions were used as tools to draw participants to recall and reflect on their perspective of risks encountered by female sex workers in various groups and their total wellbeing. Such questions addressed themes which emerged from the literature review.

The researcher prepared a structured interview guide, which began with basic questions followed by more rigorous, in-depth questions. The structure facilitated discussion together with rapport and trust. The flexibility of the technique allowed the researcher to reword certain questions or add probing statements whenever needed to encourage elaboration. Being aware that some participants might only have insights on a limited number of groups, the researcher asked questions in a direct and less intrusive way so that the participants could go in-depth only if they wanted to.

4.4.2 Preparation and Pilot Testing

Before conducting the first interview, the researcher carried out a pilot interview to test the wording of the questions and the structure. This proved to be a beneficial exercise, as the

researcher gained more confidence in asking questions while also ensuring that the questions were understandable by the interviewees. Following pilot testing and after carrying out the first interview, the researcher realised that the diagram that was presented during the interviews could have been improved. The initial diagram presented included several boxes, which might have signalled to the participants that they were to put sex workers into categorical boxes. Therefore, the researcher changed the presentation of the diagram by introducing circles and a different presentation format, which proved to be more inviting for discussion and elaboration by participants. During the interviews notes were also taken to highlight observed reactions, gestures, impressions, and other significant events which may be useful in analysing and interpreting data.

4.5 Data Collection and Data Analysis

After gathering data, the interviews were analysed by means of Thematic Analysis to identify and describe implicit and explicit ideas. The raw data have been analysed by using the software NVivo 11. The process of analysis started by identifying initial codes based on the themes and ideas addressed in Chapter 2 and linking them to raw data such as 'educational attainment', 'socio-economic status', 'mobility', 'control', 'stigma', and 'coping strategies' amongst others. The following step involved going through each transcript to select quotes and match them to the relevant code. Sub-codes were created in the process, as the interviews were very rich in data and mentioned various aspects that were not anticipated. There was also the need to create more codes based on the empirical findings of this study within the Dutch context, such as 'language', 'personal preference', 'stigma from civil servants', 'stigma from police', and 'lack of work places' amongst others. NVivo 11 enabled the researcher to display and collect similarly coded data and to notice patterns for further examination. This method together with the software enabled the researcher to draw out any differences as well as similarities and generated new empirical insights.

4.6 Validity and Reliability

The researcher recruited different professionals from the health and social fields, as well as various activists in line with the research aim to get a complementary overview of the various groups of sex workers through the vantage point of the research population. The researcher gave particular attention to selecting activists who are either non-sex workers, former sex workers, or current sex workers. Special attention was given to have at least one current sex worker from every group in this study. This process was adopted with the aim of having a realistic image of the current Dutch prostitution context that could reflect the greater population of sex workers. While recruiting professionals, various organisations were approached in different cities in the Netherlands in order to increase reliability of the study on the larger sex worker population.

For the collection of data, the researcher asked permission from participants to record the interviews. All twenty-two participants permitted the use of two recording devises to ensure clear and audible recordings were produced (Rudestam & Newton, 2007; Bhatt, 2012). The recordings have been safely stored, allowing the researcher and supervisor to listen again to interviews for any verification of content or interpretation (Bhatt, 2012). The researcher reported the data collected, coded the data, and interpreted and analysed the data in a transparent sociological manner. During the interviews the researcher adopted a technique of recapitulating concepts that were mentioned by the interviewees. In this way, the researcher could instantly check if the interviewees' answers were being understood and interpreted in the ways intended by the participants. The researcher transcribed all the interviews to ensure that no data was lost (Berg, 2004). After carrying out a number of interviews and transcribing them, the researcher started creating codes on NVivo 11. A colleague was asked to select random sections from three random interviews in order to verify if the coding was consistent and reliable. When matching the colleague's codes with the ones of the researcher, they were nearly the same. There were minimal differences in giving names to codes, such as 'covering up' or 'prevention from being discovered', which ultimately referred to the same code. In this case the colleague and researcher discussed which term best explained the data. Furthermore, the codes were also sent to the thesis supervisor for any additional remarks.

4.7 Ethical Considerations

This study adheres to the ethical considerations published by the British Sociological Association (BSA) in March 2002 as the basis for conducting research ethically. Participants have the right to be fully informed about the study. Prior to their agreement, they were entitled to relevant information, including the duration, the methods used, the purpose of the study, and how the data will be used and disseminated.

Confidentiality is another key element of ethical considerations, which ensures total protection of participants by preventing anyone from connecting any participant with the data or outcome (Bowen & Bungay, 2015). By ensuring anonymity, participants remain unidentifiable. This is made possible by assigning pseudonyms instead of using the actual names of participants (Morse & Coulehan, 2015). However, some activists and professionals gave permission to the researcher to use their real name, preferring their data not to be anonymised since they represent other sex workers' voice. While informing the participants about the study, the researcher clarified that their contribution would be considered as their sole opinion rather than explicitly representing their respective organisation's view on the matter.

Participants were informed about the Ombudsman's interest in the field. This study is an exploratory study for Amsterdam's Ombudsman, and some participants questioned his interest. The researcher explained that this study is to inform the Ombudsman on the field of sex work, particularly in relation to the research questions. He is interested in assisting sex workers and

organisations once he knows how he can be of benefit to the field. It was pointed out to participants that their participation is completely voluntary and that they are not bound to participate by the Ombudsman. This study does not serve as a means for the Ombudsman to be critical towards the participants or organisations, but rather provides him the opportunity to praise the work that organisations and activists are doing with sex workers. The researcher ensured that neither the participants' participation nor any part of the study involved deception.

Informed consent has been the focal point of ethical considerations in this research. The majority of participants were initially reached in person or through the phone. All participants were sent an electronic mail that included enough information on the study to allow potential participants to indicate whether or not they had interest in taking part in the study. Once the participants voluntarily accepted the invitation to take part in the study, they were given options to choose their preferred day, time, and location of the interview.

All the professionals preferred their interview to take place at their office. Activists chose to be interviewed either at the sex workers' union, at the Ombudsman's office, at another organisation, or at their private home. These location arrangements proved to be convenient for the participants and the researcher, as these environments were quiet, comfortable, and private.

After greeting participants at the start of an interview, the researcher verbally introduced the study aims and the research according to the interview protocol (see Appendix). Participants were first given a recruitment letter that they could keep, and were then verbally guided through the consent form and the guarantees. The researcher ensured that participants knew their participation and answering of questions was voluntary; they could stop or postpone the interview, or decide not to participate in the study at any time. At that stage, participants were asked if they had further queries or needed clarification. Once there were no further queries and participants agreed with the research guarantees, both the participant and the researcher signed the consent form, showing that both parties agreed to abide by the ethical considerations listed in the form. After the interview, the researcher gave every participant a box of chocolates as a token of appreciation for taking part in and making time for the study.

Chapter 5
RESULTS

The perspectives of the professionals and the activists have been grouped together because they tend to complement each other. However, it is clearly pointed out when there is a striking difference between what the professionals and the activists stated. This section delves into the empirical findings of this study. Firstly, by looking at the extent to which participants perceive a hierarchy of sex workers, secondly, by looking at the risks they encounter, and lastly, at the risk relation to the wellbeing of sex workers.

5.1 Group Hierarchy in Sex Work

Concerning group hierarchy in sex work, nineteen out of twenty-two interviewees perceived differences between escorts, sex workers in brothels and clubs, window sex workers, and street sex workers.

> *"Yes, of course there is a lot of difference. One can see sex workers as a group but there's differences."* (Katia—Professional)

The remaining three participants pointed out that they do not explicitly perceive extensive distinctions between the groups, but rather that there are minimal differences. The only difference mentioned by one participant was regarding a small subgroup within the group of escorts—'high-end' Dutch escorts with high educational attainment and high social class. Apart from this very small group, the three participants considered that all the sex workers come from diverse backgrounds, and thus that there was no relation between a particular background and a specific group.

The participants were not asked directly if they perceived a hierarchy in order to allow them to explicitly express their own thoughts and perceptions of the groups. Some participants arrived at describing group differences specifically as a 'hierarchy', while others referred to it using other words. The perception of the hierarchy confirms the hierarchy of normative framework (Scott, 2011; Weitzer, 1999; Cesario & Chancer, 2009). The participants' descriptions of the groups also confirmed that within the Dutch context, window sex workers are perceived to be between street sex workers and sex workers in brothels and clubs. For instance, Mirna expressed her perception of groups as a ladder:

> *"I would explain it as a ladder. You start with the escorts on top and then the clubs, then the windows, and you would end up with the street sex workers. It has a different value. For street sex workers to go up or change is harder than for the other ones to go down."* (Mirna—Professional)

Half of the participants mentioned that independent workers, who tend to be advertised by online sources, are increasing in this industry. These independent workers are like agency

escorts in that they tend to go to the client, however some also receive clients at their home or in another location. This study incorporates independent workers into the same group as agency escorts since these have been recognised as one group in previous literature (Sanders, 2008). Some participants mentioned that the characteristics of sex workers doing independent work is unknown because they are more hidden from the public, making it difficult for outreach organizations to locate and reach them.

The majority of the participants mentioned that the difference between sex workers tends not to be in the work they do, as those in the mentioned groups do the same work. The sex workers are seen to be in different groups based on other aspects, such as the characteristics of the sex worker. Street sex workers, who only number around 200 in all of the Netherlands according to Janica, comprise mainly drug addicts, older women, less attractive women, and transsexuals. Selena estimated that "about 51% of them are drug addicts." Street sex workers may have other employment outside sex work; for those with drug addiction it tends to be their sole job. Another aspect that distinguishes sex workers is the number of clients. Window sex workers tend to have around 10 to 30 clients per shift, while escorts only have one client usually for a longer period.

Sex workers are also perceived as belonging to different groups based on the expenses and income related to their work and the amount of money they charge. Street sex workers need a permit to work in the tippel zones[2], which is very hard to get. However, since this kind of work is independent work, the workers keep all the money to themselves. Marianne explained how working at the windows is also independent work. Before their shift they pay their window rent, which ranges between 80 to 225 euros. "They start their shift with debt actually" (Marianne), but the remaining money goes in their pockets. Cobie and Moira explained that brothels and clubs use the 'opting in' method of payment, where the operator/manager/owner gives the sex worker the net pay after deducting the share of the owner and taxes. Agency escorts pay their agent and for everything connected to the service, such as the chauffeur. Marianne and Maria mentioned that there are many sex workers who give a similar service as an agency escort but who work independently; they thus organise their own work and keep all the money for themselves.

Three professionals also mentioned that sex workers tend to work in a group that suits their personality, preference, and needs. Some workers are might not mind being more visible, as is the case with window sex work, while others desire to be less visible to the general public, and thus work in the tippel zones, brothels, and clubs. Escorts often are more discreet and are not easily recognised as being a sex worker. A sex worker who is a mother may prefer working during the day while her children are at school, while a student may choose to work as an escort in order to be invisible to the public. Rebecca and Janica gave examples of one's personality intertwined with the group of work:

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[2] Tippel zones are the areas where street sex workers who have a permit can work legally.

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"Some sex workers used to work behind the window and now work in the street. They say that in the streets it is better, as you just do the blowjob or a fuck and ten minutes later they go out, whereas in the windows you have more space, a lot of touching, not as some want. Also, that you could go for a couple of hours a day. Behind the window you are half naked [...] Not everyone wants this, so others prefer working in a house so only the ones who comes for sex see them. So everyone has their preferences, in some way you can choose and try different places [...] Most of the sex workers are really happy with where they work and think it is the best place they work in." (Rebecca—Professional)

"Some sex workers say 'I don't want to hear all these clients complain about their wife and marriage. I want to get the deal and be out.'" (Janica—Activist)

5.1.1 Educational Attainment

Vanwesenbeeck (1994) believes that groups at the upper end of the hierarchy, such as escorts, tend to have a higher education; this seems to be lacking in groups at the lower end of the hierarchy, such as street sex workers. Six of the participants comprising professionals and activists also pointed out that there is a general trend of escorts being highly educated and of street workers having little or no education. However, the rest of the participants cited varying levels of educational attainment within all the groups being studied, indicating that there is no clear answer about educational attainment being linked to particular groups of workers.

"I think you cannot say if you have little education and don't speak the Dutch language, you might end up on the streets, or if you are an educated Dutch woman you will end up in escort." (Lina—Professional)

For the majority of sex work, education is not a prerequisite. Participants mentioned that the window sex workers they know tend not to have a high education. Not all street sex workers are addicted to drugs; but the ones who are, according to social professionals working directly with them, have no education. Six participants mentioned that educational attainment in sex work is not a necessity, with one exception for a particular escort agency that requires all escorts to have another accompanying job or study. Meanwhile, seven participants, particularly professionals, noted differences in the level of education between the groups, even though it is not a necessity. They also pointed out that streetwise knowledge is more important than academic education. In fact, in relation to streetwise knowledge, three participants referred to differences in the code of conduct between groups of sex workers.

"[...] you need streetwise intelligence; you don't need university education. They are all quite intelligent; they are all quite good business women." (Moira—Activist)

"On the street you need streetwise. People notice you are not used to the streets if you do something wrong: walk wrong, say wrong words. That's a very specific group. But the same if the streets go to the clubs, won't be easily attendant cause she misses the

rules of common behaviour, the language. There are different barriers, different code of conduct.” (Shania—Professional)

Those working in a club should, and need to, animate the client by "talking to them and whatever. You should be socially active and have good social skills. It is not only the sex; sex is a part of the deal," said Marianne. She highlighted that having good education helps the sex workers in clubs and escorts to keep the client interested. A good level of education tends to be important for the ones working independently. "Independent workers are brainier," said Maria. Working independently requires one to carry out administrative tasks, and having a good education is to one's own interest and benefit. For example, independent window sex workers need administrative skills to do their own paperwork, such as taxation paperwork.

"To recruit clients, maintain clients, to market yourself, to deal with all the issues: you can only be higher educated to be able to perform all of these issues and manage everything.” (Maria—Activist)

Willimijn stated that window sex workers who come from another country tend to either lack higher education, or else have an education which is not recognised in the Netherlands. This tends to be one of the main reasons why sex workers may have limited options to doing another job, should they wish to.

5.1.2 Mobility in the Hierarchy

Certain codes of conduct and characteristics that are present in some groups may either allow or hinder mobility from one group to another. Four participants mentioned that switching between groups is easy and possible: some sex workers work in different groups at the same time, whereas others have shifted from one group to another in their career. However, the remaining eighteen participants believed that mobility between groups is not easy.

"I know that some women who are older, or when they are not the average young, relatively beautiful woman, transgender, or not very slim, or not looking like the average sex worker, (which is not true at all, because there isn't a typical look)—some people find it harder. If you go to an escort agency and say you are 40 years, they say, "No, thank you." Say you are young and average looking… it would be easier to move.” (Janica—Activist)

If sex workers change groups, they tend not to make an extensive shift such as from street workers to escorts, or vice versa, but rather a smaller shift such as from window work to brothel work. In line with previous research (Weitzer, 2005), this shows that sex workers from the highest part of the hierarchy tend not to move to the lowest part, but may move to groups in the middle. Five participants remarked that if escorts desire to work in groups perceived lower in the hierarchy, it is possible for them; on the contrary, for street sex workers to shift to being escorts is difficult or even impossible.

I think it is only from the top to the bottom, and not from the bottom to the top, if you take escorts and exclusive clubs at the top and streets at the bottom. I mean, if you do not have any feet anymore because of the drugs, and if you have a lot of scars on your face because of the dope, you are not going to end up in high end clubs. They pay for a beautiful woman and someone they can talk to. Maybe when you go to street prostitution, yeah maybe they can talk, but they are not paying to get a beautiful woman. It's sad but true."
(Roos—Professional)

Another social professional mentioned that certain groups are very restrictive and specific in the choice of who can work with them, making mobility more difficult.

"Some escort services really want a wide variety: young, old, skinny, less skinny – like chubby, white, black. They want to have everything. So they might say, Okay, I am looking for young blonde North European looking, so they would be looking for some certain types. So you would really have to apply for a job. There is a threshold, you must be good enough. Whereas when you work in the window, you are your own boss. Nobody tells you how you should look." (Gaby—Professional)

In addition, although the option to work in another group might be present, seven participants mentioned that sex workers might not consider changing. "Theoretically, sex workers can move, but they don't really move" (Maria). Sometimes sex workers tend to stay within their group since change brings about many uncertainties: "Will it work out? Will I get enough money?" (Moira). Selena stated that personality is key, which is why some sex workers may change groups, while others may work in more than one group in the same period of time. Generally speaking though, once sex workers find the group that suits their needs and personality, they tend to stick to that group. Furthermore, as mentioned by six participants and in particular by Rebecca and Felicia Anna, it is often the case that once a sex worker has found a group that suits them, they highlight that group as being the best place to work within this industry.

Three participants suggested that if sex workers would want to move to another group, they could be restricted by governmental bureaucracies, which indirectly make them stay in their own place. One example of this is not being able to get a permit for street sex work in the tippel zones; this is due to the fact that the governmental entity that issues the permits limits the number of permits granted and tends to prioritize them for certain sex workers who cannot find work elsewhere, such as those with drug addictions.

5.1.3 The Dutch Language

Twenty participants mentioned the role of language in this industry, referring to proficiency in the Dutch language, or the lack of it, throughout the interview. Although previous research mentions the general importance of language in sex work, the current research found that language is not only important in a general way, but is one of the most crucial empowering factors in this work. Not knowing Dutch tends to be restricting to all sex workers, not only if

they want to do other work outside the sex industry, but also within the field of sex work. This supports previous research regarding the importance of knowing the native language of the country (Outshoorn, 2012). Professionals in organisations highlighted how empowering it is to know the Dutch language within the context. Annelies shared that not knowing the language exposes sex workers to more risks when compared to others who know the language. Marianne stated that if the sex worker does not know the main language spoken, the worker becomes more vulnerable and can be manipulated more easily. Shania suggested that knowing the language places sex workers in the best position when compared to others who lack the Dutch language.

"In Holland you need to speak proper Dutch; with the English you are not always allowed to work in a club. It depends on how gorgeous you are, but if you are one of a million girls, they prefer hiring someone who speaks Dutch. Speaking good Dutch, the cultural codes. No matter what skin tone you have, you are in the highest scale, and all falls below." (Shania—Professional)

Lacking knowledge of the Dutch language tends to also be one of the main reasons why women of other nationalities enter into the sex work industry, as it earns more money than other low-pay jobs where the Dutch language is not required. Willimijn mentioned that sex workers who need to support family in their home country, and who lack knowledge of the Dutch language, have opted to do sex work since it provides a more solid income than other alternatives, such as being a cleaner. While the Dutch language tends to be important for all the sex workers groups, for some groups language might be more important. For instance, in some municipalities window sex workers need to pass an intake (interview) with a component covering the spoken language. Shania stated that window sex workers in Amsterdam need to speak basic Dutch. In brothels, clubs, and even more so in escort, sex workers spend more time with clients and are required to speak Dutch. Therefore, not knowing the Dutch language might limit sex workers from being in groups higher in the hierarchy where a sex worker is expected to be more fluent in the Dutch language in order to hold conversations with clients.

5.1.4 Socio-economic Status and Background

While seven participants highlighted that most sex workers tend to have a lower socio-economic status, one of the participants pointed out a distinction between higher groups and lower groups by stating that street and window sex workers have a lower socio-economic status:

"The window girls and street worker girls are from the very low social class, otherwise you don't stand behind the window. You must be really desperate right? You must be poor. If you were any kind of smart you would manage it differently than being in the street visible to everyone." (Maria—Activist)

Certain statements made by activists revealed that even sex workers themselves make distinctions between sex workers' groups, perceiving one to be better than another. For

instance, when a group's work entails other aspects besides sex (e.g., talking, entertaining, messaging, having dinner), these sex workers are seen as being better than 'the other prostitutes' who solely do sexual intercourse.

Meanwhile, all the participants mentioned that sex workers are in this job as they need quick money, many times to reach another goal. This aspect is not directly related to hierarchy, as suggested by Sanders (2004), but rather to their personal wants and needs. For instance, Annelies stated that while "some sex workers need money to go on their fifth holiday, others need money to survive; but the main reason is money." Another example given was concerning sex workers who need or want to earn a lot of quick money, whether for personal use or to send to their family, which they could not earn through another job in such a timely manner.

> *"I have Romanian friends who should not be here working—they don't need it. They are high educated people with a high job back home; they can pay anything. Society thinks that because you do this, you must be fucking poor. Before I came here I had a normal job and had anything that I needed, I just needed more. I could buy different things, but I could not buy a 500 euro pair of shoes, which I can buy now. There are some who are trafficked, but not the majority."* (Felicia Anna—Activist)

> *"One of my colleagues works two or three days and she gets some extra money to spend with her husband. He pays the bills with his full-time job, and with her money they do the fun stuff, like going on holidays."* (Moira—Activist)

> *"The sex industry is fast money. You can have debts, or you leant to pay for your studies, or you want to but a fast car. You make a decision in the morning, and in the evening here you come. You get the money."* (Marianne—Activist)

5.2 Risks Encountered by Sex Workers

The participants were asked about the day-to-day risks sex workers encounter. Health risks, particularly the lack of condom use, was mentioned by seven participants. The risks of physical violence were addressed by eight participants in speaking about violence, rape, sexual abuse, and aggression. Twenty participants indicated that emotional risks are by far the biggest risks sex workers encounter, including discrimination, exclusion from the whole society, stress from leading a double life, mental issues, and stigma, with the latter being mentioned by all participants. Additional risks stated by some interviewees included being paid with false money, robbery, not earning enough to pay the rent, being in debt, not being able to get a mortgage, and not fitting into the governmental system in order to apply for benefits.

The participants discussed how the ability to accept certain clients and refuse the ones who might not seem 'right' affects risks. Christa explained how sex workers follow their instinct with regards to who seems dangerous or not. If a sex worker feels to refuse a particular client but has other factors that limit her from doing so, accepting the client may increase her risks. The majority of participants mentioned that refusing clients is a luxury; not every sex

worker is in a position to refuse clients. Legally, every sex worker is free to say no to every person or to a particular act, but certain circumstances make it hard to say no, Selena explained. Five participants commented how a sex worker has difficulty saying no if she is forced to provide service either by someone directly, such as a lover boy or a pimp, or by a situation indirectly, such as needing to send money to family.

Client selection for street sex workers in the current context is not always based on learning through experience as it tends to be for the other groups. This is in contrast with previous research which states that street sex workers select clients based on certain signals, such as the type of car the client drives (Cesario & Chancer, 2009). Women who are addicted to drugs tend to be less aware of which situations are right, said Mirna. At times, sex workers might not be in a position to select clients due to their circumstances.

"If you are good, popular, who is really appealing among clients, earn a lot, it is pretty easy to say no to basically everything. But if you don't have enough clients…it is different.…Yesterday someone said, "Oh you owe me many money," and you have a bad day, shit. "I can say no, but then what do I eat?" It is another extreme, but it happens also. If you do not have many alternatives, you are not very appealing, or have an addiction which costs a lot of money, those factors can be tempting to say yes to something you would have refused, but you have always the choice of course." (Selena—Activist)

Unless window sex workers have a pimp who dictates to the sex worker to accept clients, they are free to ignore or reject clients. When it comes to brothels and clubs, sex workers tend to be chosen by clients, and once chosen it is hard to reject the client. Therefore, if the sex worker does not like a particular client, they tend to act uninterested towards the client and portray themselves as being less appealing. However, the owner of the premises may also influence the sex worker's will in accepting clients, said four activists. For escorts, they generally only see the client after they travel. Thus, although at that point they can refuse him, it is unlikely to happen. This is because the escorts would consider other aspects such as travel time, travel costs, and losing trust from the agency, resulting in having less clients in the future.

The researcher delved deeper into three main categories of risks—health, physical violence, and emotional—by looking at the way these risks are encountered by different groups of sex workers and their potential link to group hierarchy.

5.2.1 Health Risks

In terms of encountering health risks, Christa stated that sex workers tend to think, "It won't happen to me. It would happen to somebody else, but not to me." Such an example supports previous research about having an optimism bias (Shepperd, Patrick, Jodi, & Meredith, 2002). Lina mentioned that although sex workers tend to rely on perception and gut feeling, it may also go wrong when the sex workers says, "This guy looks clean, he won't give me an STD," or "Well, I did it already several times without a condom, and I never have

anything." A client who looks clean and groomed does not necessarily mean that he is harmless or less likely to have an STD (Harris et al., 2010).

Hunnard, et al., (2008) state that sex workers tend to be continuously reminded to care for themselves. Professionals and activists in general agree that sex workers within the groups of study who work legally tend to be reached by organisations and are within strategies of control by the city councils and police. As a result, the legal sex workers tend to have marginal health risks. They are aware of the importance of having protective sex and getting STD check-ups, and they tend to voluntarily go to clinics for such check-ups since they are concerned about diseases. Petra went through the statistics of P&G292 in Amsterdam, which is presented in table 5 below.

Sex worker groups	Number of STD tests per group	Number of STD tests that were positive (had an STD)	Prevalence
Escorts	319	31	9.7%
Brothels and Clubs	416	28	6.7%
Windows	645	41	6.4%
Streets*	n/a	n/a	n/a
*No numbers are given for sex workers working in the streets, since there are no tippel zones in Amsterdam.			

Table 5: Statistics by P&G292 of the tests of female sex workers by group for the year 2016.

"What we see in general is that the STD prevalence within our groups is much, much lower than the regular STD clinics that you and I go to." (Petra—Professional)

The table show that although the number of clients window sex workers have is higher than that of sex workers in brothels, clubs, and escorts, they tend to have the least prevalence of contracting an STD.

When addressing escorts, one should consider two sectors: the escorts who work through an agency and escorts who work independently. According to the majority of participants, the former tend to have low health risks because the agencies might require sex workers to carry out STD tests regularly. This group is very much taken care of by the owner of the agency. The independent escorts are seen as having higher health risks by the majority of participants, mostly because they need to take care of health checks on their own initiative and are less likely to be reached by aid workers, being difficult to identify and find. In addition, since independent work is illegal in some cities, this may restrict some sex workers from reaching out for assistance and STD checks.

In brothels and clubs STD checks might be encouraged or agreed upon by the owner of the venue. Participants stated that brothels and clubs tend to have common standards, such as that only safe sex is allowed on the premises (Harcourt & Donovan, 2005). However, some professionals mentioned that there might be implicit expectations that sex workers occasionally have unsafe sex, especially if the client pays good money. Half of the participants mentioned that owners would want to keep the clients satisfied, and if this entails unsafe sex, the sex workers might be pressured. According to Shania, a sex worker can act uninterested before being chosen, but once chosen, it is harder to refuse the client. If the owner knows a client does not treat some sex workers right, he might act as if he did not see anything and proceed with business, said Willimijn. Moira had a personal example in this regards:

"Saying no to clients can be made impossible. It happened to me at my last working place. There were some clients, I didn't want to work with them anymore, and they made the appointments anyway. That's what happens, and you don't say anything about it because you know they will close the whole building, the whole licence, and there is less and less and less places to work for yourself and your colleagues." (Moira—Activist)

"I can see how in different groups, control is being influenced by the specific system they operate in." (Janica—Activist)

More than half of the activists and professionals believed that groups that work legally tend to have a low risk of STDs. While the figures above (Table 5) indicate that window sex workers comprise the group of legal sex workers with the least prevalence of STDs, seven participants, particularly professionals, still highlighted their concern about sex workers providing service without protection. In fact, this topic was the current main concern of all participants from one particular organisation. The professionals working at the Hague unanimously expressed their concern that more and more sex workers are doing their work without protection. Also, window sex workers tend to have the most number of clients in a day, and some professionals state that this might negatively impact the female's intimate parts. The sex workers may underestimate the implications, but Christa also said that they are closing an eye to their boundaries because the industry is not doing as well as in the past, and unless they do their work without protection, they would not have enough money to pay the window rent, let alone have profit. There is also the influence of other sex workers, where if one is taking less money or not using protection, others would feel they need to do the same to maintain income. Cobie recalled conversations with window sex workers:

"I tell them, 'What are you doing? Why do you do it without condom?', and they say, 'The client pays me more', and I say, "NO, this is your life, it is your body!!!". At the time you make more money, but after three months it's finished. Because even the client wakes up and realises, 'Okay, I can do you without condom, but I also want to go home and make love with my own wife', and that is dangerous. When they are horney, they pay." (Cobie—Activist)

When it comes to street sex workers, Gaby mentioned that due to the location, "there is no basic facility for sex workers to clean themselves". Previous research also suggests that the location where this group solicits increases health risks (Benoit & Millar, 2001). Selena expressed her personal experience in the streets, where daily one out of every ten clients she saw would have an STD, which seldom occurs in other groups. When addressing street sex workers as a group, one should distinguish between two realities: the sex workers with an addiction, and those without an addiction who either prefer this location, or who are transgender, older sex workers, or less appealing than workers in clubs, explained Selena. These workers may be highly influenced by other workers in setting their own boundaries and price. Aid workers tend to mainly reach workers that are in the tippel zones, thus the ones who work outside the zones tend to have higher health risks. Some professionals mentioned that sex workers with a drug addiction have a higher risk of STDs in particular, as they have a higher chance that sexual service is given without protection. Clients tend to offer more money for sex without protection, and to sustain the drug addiction, the sex worker tends to accept.

"When you are really sick and you need dope, you lower your standards. So that is also a risk that comes with it, because you go with clients that maybe if you were not so sick because of the drugs, you wouldn't have gotten to the car. By being on dope, you cannot make good picture of the situation if it is safe or not. When you are not on dope, you can feel better if it is a good situation." (Roos—Professional)

5.2.2 Risks of Physical Violence

Similar to health risks, legal groups of sex workers tend to be more protected when it comes to risks of physical violence, although this protection and surveillance are closely related to the venue as well as other aspects, such as the owner and the working environment. O'Kane (2002) believes that sex workers tend to perceive risks of physical violence as being high in comparison with other employees outside the sex industry. The majority of activists and some professionals referred to extreme violence and murder, stating that the latter seldom happens, although the thought that "it might happen to you" is continuously present, as is also documented in previous research (Fonner et al., 2014).

When referring to escorts, the majority of the participants elaborated on escorts working within an agency, who have everything arranged for them. However, regarding independent escorts, some participants believed that the physical risks can be high or low depending on the sex worker's own way of organising safety measures around work. Such a finding delves deeper into the situation as studied previously by Harcourt and Donovan (2005), which stated that independent escorts are always at high risk since they lack prior monitoring of the client. In general, escorts tend to have a high physical risk, as they tend not to know who the client will be until they meet. Janica explained that agencies work professionally: they give an overview of the client, which does not include a picture, and the escort says if they would like

to take the client. A sex worker can still refuse once at the appointment; however, the worker takes a number of things into consideration:

"An escort sees the client one she arrives at the place. You don't know the person, so at the door you have to say, 'Oh, no, I am not going in'. But you might take into consideration that you have been traveling for one hour to get to the client, and you think 'Okay, if I reject him, I would have lost 2 hours of my time', so you take it into consideration." (Janica—Activist)

Escorts within an agency tend to have everything organised, including a chauffeur, said Marianne. However, independent escorts need to arrange everything for their appointment themselves in order to decrease risks. Because working as an independent escort in some cities is illegal, some sex workers are even more hesitant to call the police if they feel in danger, according to Gaby.

In terms of brothels and clubs, the premises tend to be protected and monitored by the owner and security, who are always present. The clients tend to be monitored, and it is considered as a safe environment. Cases of a violent client are often unheard of. One participant mentioned that sometimes the owner may act aggressively towards the sex workers, but the workers tend to keep such acts secret.

Meanwhile, behind every window, there is a room where the window sex workers provide service. Sex workers tend to rely on their personal experiences and learned behaviour. They get a sense of who to let in their room or not. According to Sanders (2004), sex workers select clients according to their race, such as not accepting dark skin clients (Brewis & Linstead, 2000). Some professionals and activists mentioned that window sex workers tend to reject potential clients who have an Arabic cultural background, who are Moroccan, or who are drunk. Some prefer tourists rather than Dutch men, as the former in general will pay more. They do not necessarily accept clients that wear smart clothing, since they have heard of cases where such clients were suspicious and also tried to murder their colleagues. Thus, they tend to accept simple looking men while knowing that they can never be completely sure if it is safe.

"You get an instinct on who to let in and who you don't. But sometimes it can get completely wrong too. You can see a small and shy guy in the streets, and think he will never make any problems, but he might end up giving you the most problems." (Felicia Anna—Activist)

Some professionals mentioned a few cases of extreme violence where a window sex worker was beaten up. Janica stated that there is approximately one murder every year or less. Professionals mentioned that violence is traumatic for the victims as well as for other sex workers who fear it can happen also to them. The rooms have a panic button that sex workers can press if they feel in danger; it is a loud alarm that can be heard in the streets. Willimijn stated that it takes around ten minutes before the police arrive, while Felicia Anna mentioned that sex workers hardly ever use the button since the reporting process takes time and limits

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the number of clients. Nevertheless, this venue tends to be the easiest way to reject unwanted clients by ignoring them and not opening the window.

When it comes to street sex work, seven participants mentioned that this group is the least safe of all sex workers because workers might not be aware where the client is taking them, supporting previous studies (Davis, 1993; Whittaker & Hart, 1996). The tippel zones are equipped with cameras for surveillance and security purposes, but street sex work may also take place outside the specific zones, which increases the risk of violence, rape, abuse, and aggression. Four participants mentioned that they knew of or heard of a murder taking place within this group. As a safety measure, Roos mentioned that in the tippel zones "you pull in the car on the driver's side; he cannot get out, and the women can get out". Marianne mentioned that street sex workers tend to have a system of control between themselves:

> *"Let's say we are both street sex workers. I give you my number, the client's phone number, the car registration. We inform each other. We take care for each other. I make an appointment at 3 p.m., and I tell you I am leaving at 2 p.m. If I am not back at 4 p.m. call me; if I am not back at 5 p.m., call the police."* (Marianne—Activist)

5.2.2.1 Interactions with Police Officials

Seven professionals mentioned that they value the work the police officers do, but sex workers themselves and activists have a different perspective. Several participants mentioned that they know of sex workers, mostly street sex workers and window sex workers, who went to the police station to report a rape and received a negative response:

> *"I know a woman who went to the police from the street sex work. She reported she was raped, and the police officer said, 'Is that really rape if you are a sex worker?'. She feels offended and not taken seriously as every other woman who would go to the police to report that. So, they are not likely to go to the police station, as they see them as just sex workers, and it is part of the job."* (Willimijn—Activist)

Mirna once accompanied a sex worker to press charges for rape, and the police mentioned that it was really hard to proceed with her case as a lot of questions would be asked. The police said that he was only preparing the sex worker with what would happen once she proceeded with the case, but Mirna felt that he was discouraging her because he said that "it is a shady deal already". Mirna was sad at the system and how hard it is to press charges.

If sex workers have the perception and experience that the police will question their word if they report something strange or dangerous happening to them, they will feel insecure, unsafe, and will not resort to reporting. Felicia Anna stated that window sex workers have a red button they can press if they experience a dangerous situation with a client. However, she said that they hardly press the button, even in a risky situation, because reporting is time consuming and they would lose business if they pressed the button in every risky situation. If clients know that sex workers would not report to the police, they might take advantage of the

situation, which would further increase risks, said Willimijn. This is in line with previous research that states that perceptions and public discourse on sex workers reinforce further risks (Harris et al., 2010).

Moira mentioned that in the case of independent escorts working from home, whose work is not legal, there is even more tendency to not go to the police in case of danger. She added that sometimes the police would even make 'appointments' with these sex workers in an effort to catch them. When the sex worker would open her door, there would be six police officers there to interrogate her and inspect her home. If she was found to be working illegally, she could also be thrown out of her house and lose everything. A participant mentioned that the police can also be corrupt by asking for a free service in return for not arresting the sex worker.

5.2.3 Emotional Risks

The participants agreed unanimously that every sex worker faces emotional risks. While sex workers can, to a certain extent, take precautionary measures to account for health and physical violence risks, emotional risks are difficult, if not impossible, to account for. Emotional risks that participants mentioned include mental damage, switching off feelings, post-traumatic stress disorder, covering up your job from relatives and friends, and stigma. The latter not only comes from society generally, but also from family, friends, clients, other sex workers, police, and other organisations.

Although escorts tend to be seen as classy and sexy, and although this form of sex work is the most invisible of all sex work and the easiest to hide from relatives, six professionals stated that escorts' emotional risks tend to be higher than that of others as they spend a number of hours, even a number of days, with a client.

> *"Emotional risks as well are high. In female escorts, you see so many clients during the day, you go into their houses. The way a house is decorated says a lot about the client. You can have until 6 or 7 clients in a day in their private space, which can be hard. One might be very sad, one's partner dies, one is on a divorce, one has his wife at work and says he is with the kids. All these bring emotional risks. They drop their emotions with you, have sex, give money, and you are gone. It gets into your emotions if they are speaking about the suicide of their wife, or say they don't want to have sex with anyone but you, as you look so much like someone."* (Shania—Professional)

Within brothels and clubs there is direct competition between sex workers. This means that some workers might be client favourites while others are not chosen, which can cause stress and tension. Four participants, mostly activists, mentioned that if a sex worker at a brothel or club decides to leave, the owner tends to complicate the matter by demanding extra money from the worker before she could leave. In other cases, if the owner knows a sex worker who left and is later working as an independent escort, they might ask the city council to investigate the specific neighbourhood of the sex worker in order to detect illegal sex work. These participants mentioned that sometimes the owner threatens to blackmail the sex worker

if she insists on leaving, or they threaten the sex worker about outing them, uncovering their work to others.

"They tell you, 'If you leave, I will call your parents and tell them you are a sex worker'." (Selena—Activist)

Window sex workers tend not to get emotionally involved with clients, as the service tends to last only 15 minutes. In fact, Shania stated that "such workers tend to become emotionless, harsh, and non-reflective after three days of work". Their venue also makes them the most visible to people in general, not only to the ones interested in buying sex.

"There's a lot of tourists who laugh at you, or look like 'Ah, you're such a victim'. They [window sex workers] feel like they are in a zoo, and people watch them and talk about them, but they do nothing." (Willimijn—Activist)

Due to their job being visible to the general public, window sex workers tend to worry when they hear that their relatives and friends are going to the city, and they may decide not to work to avoid being outed. Gaby shared some current cases of window sex workers who worry about being revealed:

"They have teenage kids and are really scared because they know from the kids that their classmates sometimes go to the streets just for fun to look at the prostitutes, because it is not allowed by their parents, so it is a sort of adventure. So they go to the red light, and the prostitutes are so scared: 'Oh my god what if they see me?' or 'My daughter sees me, then I really have some explaining to do'." (Gaby—Professional)

When it comes to street sex workers, eighteen participants mentioned that this group is the least respected and is seen as "the lowest of the lowest" (Elizabeth). Roos stated that there is a certain level of adaptation over the years, that one gets used to doing this job, which is also suggested in previous research (Vanwesenbeeck, 1994).

Stigma was mentioned by all twenty-two participants as being continuously present on many levels. Lina said that stigma can be experienced on a daily basis within sex workers' personal environments, such as with family, friends, and clients. In addition, stigma could also be experienced at other levels, such as within institutions when a sex worker needs to open a bank account, to get a mortgage, to find a different job, to find child care, or to apply for welfare amongst others. Brenda stated that "prostitution is legalised in the Netherlands, but at the same time it is not regarded as a normal job, so there is a tension". In broad terms, Selena explained that there are two stigmas:

"There are two stigmas. One of them is that girls are dirty, no self-respect, deserve it in some way, are just bad women. The other stigma is of being so sad, a victim, that they never tell the truth that they are victims, they are brainwashed. If they don't admit it, you should put them in a safe place whether they want it or not. These two stigmas are two extremes, but the reality is somewhere in between, with some exceptions that like the jobs. Please don't look at the two stigmas at both sides, but look at the reality. Usually

there is some sadness. Most girls don't have a particular story you want to trade with, but they are just making the best of their circumstances. It is not only victims. They mainly want to do this—don't take this away. But if you want to do something, create alternatives, not take this away. They already have very few options." (Selena—Activist)

While all sex workers experience stigma according to the participants, four of the interviewees believed that all sex workers are labelled in the same way.

"For all sex workers, it is all equal; it does not matter which group you work from. A whore is a whore. No one says, 'Oh you are an escort, so you fly to Abudabi, so you are of quality' ... no, no. There is no value." (Shania—Professional)

Weitzer (2000) believes that groups of sex workers that are visible to the public tend to be more stigmatised when compared to the groups that work indoors. For instance, as suggested by Scott (2001), Perkins and Bennett (1985), street sex workers are double stigmatised by virtue of being at the lowest part of the hierarchy as well as being labelled as drug addicts. In the current study, eighteen participants believed that stigma is experienced according to the group that sex workers work in, with the groups being viewed according to the work venue.

"I would refer back to the hierarchy. If you go to a street sex worker, you will be more ashamed than an escort, because escorts are more glamorous and more expensive. Brothels and clubs are not seen as something you should be ashamed of. Windows are similar to street, but seen a bit better than street. Street sex workers have double stigma, as they are seen as the lowest of society, very poor, definitely not someone you would want as a girlfriend. But an escort might seem sexy and hot to have as a girlfriend." (Willimijn—Activist)

"The window and the street sex workers, I think, face higher stigma and discrimination, because the street sex workers, when you hear about them in the news, they are all addicted. The stigma is that they are dirty, they are working on the streets, doing it really cheap in the car. It's like: 'Nobody ever had sex in a car, it's only cheap when you get paid for it'. And they see them as all addicts of course, because: 'Why else would you ever sell your body on the street?!' So, they are addicted and in debt. Window sex workers—most of them are seen as a tourist attraction because they show themselves openly. They're also more open to risks of outing and people filming them. They are seen as a tourist attraction and not like normal people trying to do their fucking job, and that's terrible! With windows, there is also the idea that most of those women are trafficked and migrants, that they come from foreign countries, immigrants. I think that stigma with the escorts is less. Agencies in the Netherlands tried to provide luxury, and the windows is not that luxury. So there is some kind of difference. Escorts in the Netherlands, especially the high class escort, are seen as the gorgeous blonde model woman who go for a weekend on a yacht with a sugar daddy or something. That is the image that the escorts have." (Moira—Activist)

A number of participants mentioned that because of stigma, sex workers keep their job hidden from other people and lead a double life. "The danger usually is from the outside world that thinks it is an awful job and it is a wrong job", said Janica. "People talk to me normally and they like me, and once they discover about sex work—oh, I'm trash", said Cobie. Sex workers are looked down upon as well as their families; therefore, many sex workers feel that they should not involve their family in their circumstances since they do not want them to suffer the stigma.

"It is difficult, my mum will never accept it. She will forgive me, but I will have to quit. Your family loves you, so they will forgive you someday. But you always have the people around which don't understand. People around will not just judge you, but they also judge your family. I don't want my mother to suffer for my choices. This is my choice. She has her problems, doesn't need to have my problems. Not even my best friends know, not even a best friend who is like my sister. I will never tell anyone." (Felicia Anna—Activist)

5.2.4 Coping Strategies

Beck (1992) states that in an individualised society, individuals try to take control of dangerous risk events; they try to manage uncertain situations. The current finding substantiates Beck's (1992) individualisation thesis, as activists unanimously stated that sex workers get very creative in the ways they cope with the risks. For instance, Felicia Anna stated that her coping mechanism is simple: she never seems scared of a client, and when a client is getting aggressive, she takes hold of the situation and screams first. Five professionals mentioned that sex workers in general are good business women who know how to negotiate with clients and who also learn self-defence, not only to defend themselves against physical harm but also to learn how to set and communicate their boundaries with their clients. Lina stated that some of their strategies come from their instincts, such as knowing that street sex workers should not go in a car with three clients, as this invites increased risks. Roos stated that to feel secure, street sex workers may sometimes carry a weapon, such as a small knife, as they might end up in unknown places. Gaby gave two examples of coping strategies:

"I know a woman who uses sponges. These sponges are like tampons that one would insert in her vagina to keep working during that particular time of the month. So one of the women told me that she always works with a sponge, regardless of the time of the month. She says she needs to have something between her and the guy! It is really simple, but for her it is like a barrier, which makes her feel emotionally better. Then there was another woman with health issues, rash everywhere. She washes herself 15 to 20 times a day, after every client, with Dettol [anti-bacterial detergent]. This was her coping mechanism for a time." (Gaby—Professional)

All professionals stated that sex workers tend not to open up with their family and friends, but find it hard to keep their daily experiences to themselves. Talking to someone about their

day is important. These professionals mentioned that they are always there to listen and advise sex workers through individual talks as well as group counselling. Cobie mentioned that she was open about her work and used to talk about it every day. For this reason, she could keep working in the sex industry for 30 years. However, the majority of sex workers avoid opening up and prevent being outed with people they know due to the way people look at them once they know they are sex workers. The precautionary measures sex workers take to limit risks, the experience of risks, and the coping strategies all tend to be influential on the wellbeing of sex workers.

5.3 The Wellbeing of Sex Workers

From the twenty-two professionals and activists in this study, nineteen mentioned that they see a link between the risks sex workers face and their wellbeing. The remaining three participants did not mention that the link is missing, but rather said that one's wellbeing depends on how the individual feels and their personality. One of the sex worker activists mentioned that she has personally become more aware of her wellbeing since starting sex work.

The majority of participants suggested that the more risks sex workers encounter, the poorer their wellbeing. Nine participants, seven of which are professionals, saw the hierarchy corresponding to risks, and risks reflecting in wellbeing. They stated that street sex workers are exposed to more health, physical violence, and emotional risks and therefore have the lowest wellbeing of all the groups. The higher in the hierarchy a group is, the less are the risks encountered, which in turn results in a better wellbeing when compared to the groups lowest in the hierarchy. Street sex workers with an addiction tend to have a poor wellbeing, according to some participants; it is not necessarily from the work, but is more related to the addiction. Window sex workers may have a worse wellbeing due to their visible work location and to being one of the most stigmatised along with street sex workers. The wellbeing of sex workers, according to Vanwesenbeeck (1994), could be linked to the particular group of which they form a part. However, the majority of participants stated that there are other aspects that play an extensive role in the wellbeing of sex workers, including their personality and coping strategies amongst others.

The participants who believed that there is a direct link between risks experienced by sex workers and their wellbeing backed up their perceptions with some illustrations. For instance, some participants mentioned that the wellbeing of sex workers could be poor not because of the job itself, but because of what is around it: the stigma and discrimination. Sex workers generally keep their job in secret, and due to stigma they also do not talk about their daily experiences with others. This in itself influences one's wellbeing, according to five participants. In addition, the work entails high stress and emotions, which stick to their personality and remain with them even after stopping such work, according to Roos.

"It will affect you to a point where you will not recover forever, it will always be a part of you. It is ok not to be in prostitution anymore, but it will remain part of you." (Roos—Professional)

Two participants mentioned that what might be seen by professionals as a poor wellbeing might not be perceived in the same way by sex workers themselves. According to Vanwesenbeeck, (1994), one of the reasons could be that sex workers adapt to their risks and poor wellbeing by seeing it as normal. Other participants mentioned that sex workers might survive the situations they are in and convince themselves that they are doing well.

Janica mentioned that the risk is part of the job, and at times it is the adventure and excitement it entails that keeps her attracted to the job. A number of professionals mentioned that this kind of response may depend on the nationality of the sex worker. While the Dutch sex workers know the system and the society and tend to negotiate everything around sex work in an efficient manner, foreign sex workers may face a different situation. They come from different cultures and have different norms; they also have to get acquainted with the system, which in itself may create stress and affect their wellbeing. Some participants mentioned other factors that influence sex workers' wellbeing. Maria believed that sex workers' wellbeing is negatively impacted by institutions, such as the city council, that treat them like half criminals. "How can you have a good wellbeing if you are treated as a criminal?", said Maria.

"A lot of sex workers are stressed, some even on the burnout level, because they cannot afford to stop working, and then they don't get any securities or any money from anything. This is a risk and of course reflects on their wellbeing." (Moira—Activist)

Another aspect that influences one's wellbeing, according to three participants, is if sex work is their sole job or is done in addition to another job or study.

"It is hard to say, but linked to what I said earlier, most of them has this as a full-time job. Whereas escorts have another job and might be able to just not do the job for 2 weeks or a month, and go on a vacation or do something else. They are not as relying on this as much. If you are not relying on it this much, then it does not affect your wellbeing that much." (Gaby—Professional)

According to Selena, the wellbeing of sex workers depends on how appealing they are to clients, in the way they look, their behaviour, and the way they communicate with clients. Once they feel they are not appealing, their wellbeing suffers. As long as sex workers have clients, their wellbeing is good, but once they would not have any more clients, they may enter in debt and experiences stress related to their situation.

Some participants mentioned that a number of sex workers have some sort of psychological condition that was present before entering sex work, not as a result of the work. This finding is also substantiated by previous research (Ditmore, et al., 2010). Moira mentioned that mental instability may limit these workers from working in clubs and windows if they cannot pass the municipal intake. Therefore, there is a tendency that they work independently

and illegally, which may aggravate their state of depression or bipolarism and their wellbeing as a whole. Three participants mentioned post-traumatic stress:

"Yes, because the number of girls who suffer from post-traumatic stress syndrome says something about wellbeing and also connected to their risk. The combination of the risk and their health, in combination, is making them suffer from post-traumatic stress syndrome, which tends to happen to women who works more than 5 years in sex work. This syndrome is the same as the syndrome soldiers who went to Vietnam war had." (Willimijn—Activist)

"When leading a double life by not revealing and talking about your work, you can never relax. You have to be in one way here, and in another way somewhere else. Two different worlds." (Christa—Professional)

5.3.1 Social Relations between Sex Workers

When reflecting on the relations between sex workers, nineteen participants indicated that although sex workers know other sex workers, they do not consider each other as friends, because one's colleague or neighbour is a competitor in the end. Felicia Anna explained the relations between sex workers by means of an analogy:

"It is similar to a school. When you are in a school, you are in one group or in another group. Some groups have fights with each other, and the red light gets to know. It is like one big school with different classes, all having different groups. If something happens, everyone gets to know, news travels very fast. Some would move here together, or they would know each other from their own country." (Felicia Anna—Activist)

Many times the relations between sex workers might be related to the setting they work in. Escorts, in general, do not meet each other since they all go to different clients in different locations; thus, it is difficult for them to have social relations with other escorts or sex workers. In brothels and clubs, sex workers' relations depend on the operation and the way the premises are run. The competitive setting may manifest in clubs, six participants mentioned, because sex workers within the same environment can be very envious towards each other. Janica called this "a toxic environment". The owners may stimulate a competitive feeling between workers, not only among those working within the same venue but also towards sex workers in other groups. For instance, if sex workers in brothels and clubs get fewer clients, they will blame independent escorts for this fact, said Moira. On the contrary, sex workers in some brothels and clubs are very closely knit and have good relations. Moira explained her relationship with her colleagues:

"I am really lucky in my current workplace. My boss is like a big sister helping with all my stuff. All my colleagues are cute and lovely, and everybody just helps each other. Within my own happy bubble of people we are all supportive of each other, but outside of it, it is different." (Moira—Activist)

In the lower sectors of the hierarchy—windows and streets—sex workers tend to scream, fight, and steal clients from each other. According to Willimijn, "If a client goes to your colleague, it means one less client to you". Such behaviour and competition tends to be justified between sex workers, because while one might get many clients, others might get no clients at all, which invites jealousy. In certain venues, such as streets and windows, if a client stays long with a sex worker who is popular with clients, other sex workers question "Why? What is she doing? She is probably working without a condom!", said Janica. As window sex workers are independent workers within their own window, they tend to connect less with other window sex workers despite having a shared corridor with a few other sex workers.

Four professionals mentioned that some sex workers introduce their co-workers and other sex workers to the professionals within the organisations that offer health and social aid to sex workers. Many times, the sex workers attend a course and go for health checks together. Thus, by being referred and accompanied by fellow sex workers, one's trust increases in the organisations. Ultimately, by helping and caring for one another, the sex workers experience improved wellbeing. Rebecca stated that when there is a good connection between sex workers, "they can give advice on how to handle risks and share experiences as sex workers, exchange tips about negotiating with clients."

Activists who are former sex workers and other participants mentioned that in the past, sex workers were a very close community, caring for one another. Cobie recounted that twenty years ago, when there was a new window sex worker, the sex workers of the area would get to know her, and vice versa. They would give her tips on setting boundaries and communicate certain agreed upon standards, of which Marianne cited an example: "We never do anal; if we had to do anal, never below €150". Cobie stated that she and other sex workers who used to work for a long time in the field still reach out to sex workers to give some tips, but she stated that the current window sex workers are different: "The new group walk like snobs, they think they know everything on their own, but it is not true". She mentioned that her approach towards the new sex workers depends on their attitude. If the new workers insist that they can care for themselves by themselves, Cobie would say, "Okay, after few years you will fall and you will come". Cobie aims to restore the community feeling that she experienced in the past since she believes that being together is very important.

Cobie's explanation for the way sex workers were closely connected and negotiated their boundaries together manifests Giddens' (1984) structuration theory. Their practices in the past resulted in norms within a context and time. In the past, having sex without protection would not cross the clients' minds, as sex workers were very clear in communicating their community negotiated boundaries. In contemporary society, where sex workers are becoming more individualised (Giddens 1991), they now tend to set their own boundaries, while new sex workers may lack the setting of boundaries. Negotiated actions among sex workers in dealing with risk (Rhodes, 1997) tends to be missing in the current cohort of sex workers. Although in general the price charged by some workers is similar, the service given tends to differ, and the

risks the workers are exposed to have become more unpredictable. The current practices by agents feed into the structure, and in turn result in a negotiated norm of what clients can expect within the current Dutch sex industry. Notwithstanding, sex workers still feel united in some instances. Three participants mentioned that although sex workers tend to be competitors and generally individualistic, they stick together in serious situations, such as during incidents of violence or when protesting for political or social change.

> *"We don't feel like a community anymore; we are no longer group minded. BUT, we are one community when shit happens. Us against the world."* (Marianne—Activist)

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This research has explored the experiences of female sex workers in hierarchical groups in how they encounter health, physical violence, and emotional risks. Furthermore, this research investigated the link between risks and the wellbeing of female sex workers in streets, windows, brothels and clubs, and escort services through the perspective of activists and professionals. This chapter shall answer the three research questions posed by this study, followed by a discussion on the considerations, strengths, and weaknesses of the study and suggestions for future research in the field.

6.1 Main Conclusions

To what extent do activists and professionals who are in direct contact with sex workers
perceive various hierarchical groups of female sex workers
in the Netherlands?

This research concludes that there are perceived differences, which tend to be explained as hierarchical, between female sex workers in the streets, at the windows, in brothels and clubs, and in escort services. The hierarchy perceived by participants is in line with the hierarchy of normative framework presented in chapter 3, with one exception of the mention of independent workers/escorts. In previous studies independent escorts are seen to be within the same group as agency escorts (Sanders, 2008). The current study concludes that independent workers/escorts might not have the group characteristics of the top end of the hierarchy as the characteristics might vary. Less is known of these independent workers since they are not easily reached by professionals and their venue of operation tends to be more hidden. Different cities regard independent workers working from home to be illegal, which tends to be the reality experienced by women who do not manage to get a licence to work within a legal group. Apart from this group, the majority of activists and professionals perceived street sex workers to be at the lowest end of the hierarchy, window sex workers to occupy the next place, sex workers in brothels and clubs to be in the mid-top part, and finally agency escorts to be at the pinnacle. Thus, this finding is in line with the hierarchical expectation of Scott (2011), Weitzer (1999), and Cesario and Chancer (2009), with the adaptation to the local context in adding window sex workers in the middle-low part of the model.

The interviewed activists and professionals did see a general trend of street sex workers being drug addicts and having no education, and of window sex workers having little education. However, interviewees did not perceive a striking educational difference between the groups. They believe that there is a variety of educational levels in all the groups. The current study concludes that sex workers' groups are perceived to be hierarchical mostly based on their

streetwise knowledge, appearance, personality and social skills related to the group venue rather than their educational attainment and socio-economic status (Vanwesenbeeck, 1994; Weitzer, 2005). In relation to socio-economic status, the majority of sex workers tend to have a low socio-economic status. The participants mentioned that all sex workers do the job for the money it gives, and while some workers need the money to survive, others need the money to lead a comfortable lifestyle. Socio-economic status might be linked to the hierarchical model, but was not explicitly highlighted by the research sample.

Initial studies on mobility between hierarchal groups were determined to be a matter of socio-economic status and educational attainment (Scott, 2011). Weitzer (2005) believes that upward mobility between groups tends to be hard due to the differences in educational level and socio-economic status. However, the current study concludes that upward mobility is not impossible or very difficult, but it can be rather challenging to sex workers who do not have the looks and skills related to the venue where they would want to work. For instance, the majority of street sex workers tend to be less appealing, older, transgender, or have a drug addiction. Thus, a street sex worker might face challenges should she desire to work as an escort, because many times the mentioned characteristics are not the ones agencies search for nor the ones clients expect from escorts. The participants mentioned that most sex workers generally stick to their initial group, as changing implies different rules to abide by or the need to get a permit, amongst other procedures, which are reported to be a difficult process.

This research concludes that the Dutch language is important for all the groups of sex workers. Knowing the local language empowers sex workers, not only in the groups at the high end of the hierarchy but also in all the other groups (Outshoorn, 2012). For instance, window sex workers must pass an intake (interview process), which has a language component, before being rented a window.

From the perspective of activists and professionals who are in direct contact with sex workers, how do different hierarchical groups of female sex workers in the Netherlands encounter risks?

Managing health risks tend to be attributed to individual sex workers' ways of caring for their health by using protection as well as to their work venue, which depends on which group they work in. However, being in the lowest groups of the hierarchy exposes sex workers to the most health risks. For instance, they may lack a basic facility to clean themselves between clients (Benoit & Millar, 2001), and may have more clients who have an STD when compared to other groups. Independent workers/escorts tend not to be reached by professionals, therefore the participants expressed their concern that these workers need to take initiative themselves to do an STD test.

Safety measures also differ in relation to the workplace, therefore the likelihood of physical violence risks is connected to the hierarchical group. The legal sector tends to have various safety measures, such as cameras and police patrol. However, those who work in the illegal sector, such as street sex workers outside the tippel zones and independent workers, are

at the greatest risk for physical violence since the client takes them to places they might not know. Window sex workers have a panic button as well as police patrol, although they rarely resort to making use of the button since this would lead to a lengthy procedure when reporting the case to the police. The groups towards the higher end of the hierarchy tend to be extensively monitored (Harcourt & Donovan, 2005). In brothels and clubs, there are owners and security officials who ensure safety. Agencies monitor their clients prior to arranging a meeting with escorts, and escorts tend to be contacted by the agencies as a follow up to ensure safety. Thus, physical violence and safety measures in general tend to be linked to differences between hierarchical groups: the higher a group features in the hierarchy, the less is the physical violence encountered.

Emotional risks are less likely to be seen as being linked to the hierarchy, however, since all sex workers tend to cover up their work from relatives and friends. They experience anxiety and stress in having to continuously lie about their work and in keeping their work-related experiences to themselves in order to avoid being outed. At times, sex workers may be threatened through blackmail by clients or, in the case of brothel and club sex workers, by the owners. Escorts tend to experience greater emotional stress and risks, as they spend more time with the client and carry the emotional stories of their clients.

The most highlighted risk that sex workers experience is stigmatisation. They are either seen as deserving to be in that situation or as victims. While all the groups of study are stigmatised, the groups featuring at the lowest end of the hierarchy tend to be double stigmatised (Perkins & Bennett, 1985). Apart from the general stigma, window sex workers are seen as foreigners who are trafficked and exploited, while street sex workers are labelled as drug addicts. Stigma is also experienced by all sex workers when it comes to contacting institutions, such as the city council, the taxation department, bankers, and even the police. The majority of activists and professionals stated that the police tend not to take sex workers' reports of rape seriously; this is because the police may not consider that the particular sexual act reported as rape was done against the sex worker's consent. While emotional risks have previously been given minimal scholarly attention, this study concludes that emotional risks are by far the greatest risks experienced in the sex work field, at least within the legal branch of sex workers. The intensity and likelihood of risks is shown to be connected to the hierarchical groups in which sex workers operate. In turn, according to the majority of participants, the more risks one encounters, the poorer will be one's wellbeing.

From the perspective of activists and professionals who are in direct contact with sex workers, in what ways, if at all, are risks related to the wellbeing of female sex workers in the Netherlands?

In conclusion, this research finds out that almost all the participants see a direct link between the risks sex workers encounter and their wellbeing. The more risks sex workers experience, and the more intense the risks, the poorer is their perceived wellbeing. With groups lower in the hierarchy experiencing more risks, the research concludes that this is detrimental to their

wellbeing. According to both literature and some participants, psychological disorders play a role in the wellbeing of sex workers, whether they were present before starting sex work or resulted from sex work (Ditmore et al., 2010). In both cases, it is believed that sex work affects the disorders in a negative way, thus affecting their wellbeing. Sex workers, particularly those working individually (i.e., window sex workers and escorts), tend to have very limited social connections with other sex workers. In general, all sex workers tend to experience competition, and this might be detrimental to developing and maintaining social networks. Regarding this, some participants concluded that sex workers should restore the community feeling that was present in the past decades. This often brought about different benefits to the sex workers, as they could set up common boundaries and share their knowledge with other workers on various aspects, including health services available to them. In this way, they might decrease risks encountered and improve their wellbeing. It is conclusive that the group in which the sex worker operates plays a pivotal role in the likelihood and intensity of risks that she will encounter, which in turn reflects in her wellbeing.

6.2 Considerations, Strengths, and Weaknesses of the Study

This research addressed different literature gaps by looking at various sex workers' groups within the Dutch context. Research with this focus is lacking in the Netherlands, especially through the perspective of activists and professionals whose vantage point in this study provided insightful examples and elaboration in response to the questions. The researcher aimed at offering a realistic image of the current Dutch prostitution context by recruiting participants that would inform as much as possible about the greater population of sex workers. To do so, the researcher reached out to various organisation in a number of cities in the Netherlands. While the empirical findings are directed towards the larger sex worker population, one should keep in mind that the number of sex workers in the Netherlands is not fixed, but ranges between 25,000 to 30,000 sex workers (The sex worker, 2015). This implies that although the researcher took measures to increase reliability, it was not possible to ensure complete reliability and reflection on the whole group of sex workers.

This research field proved to be very challenging to reach, particularly when the researcher had very few initial contacts, is not a sex worker herself, and had a timeframe of a limited number of months. Gaining trust in the field required good communication skills and creative strategies to elicit interest. While gathering the activists' sample through snowball technique, the researcher also started selecting participants by means of purposive sampling. In this way, the researcher ensured that all the groups being studied were represented by at least one current sex worker activist. If this study lacks reliability due to the nature of qualitative research, the researcher managed to make the study as representative as possible within the given situations.

In order for the reader to get a better understanding of the challenge in reaching respondents, for comparison one can look at the number of respondents reached for another

study being carried out during these months. A professional organisation in Amsterdam recruited ten sex workers and trained them to be research assistants. While the organisation estimated that they would reach 300 respondents by April 2017, in the end they had only managed to reach 40 participants in total. This indicates the challenge of gaining access to sex workers. This example also highlights the value of the current study in reaching a good number of participants, which encompasses current and former sex workers as well as professionals within the social and health domain. The researcher contacted around 100 individuals who either might have known others who could participate or could participate themselves. Reaching a sample of twenty-two participants is rewarding within this field when one considers the difficulty of reaching sex workers as well as the professionals who support them (due to their workload). Thus, given the demographic characteristic of the subject and the topic, the number of participants in the current study is substantial.

The researcher is non-Dutch. Coming from an international setting carries advantages and disadvantages. In terms of the former, the researcher was not politically influenced by common perceptions in the current context. The researcher started discovering the field with 'a blank slate'. At the same time, the researcher thought that coming from a country where sex work is illegal could carry implicit biases that may be different to other people in the Dutch context where sex work is legal. Therefore, the researcher had spent the first months of the study pre-understanding the field and the Dutch context, realising that although sex work is legal, the industry is very stigmatised. In the process the researcher worked on gaining access to the field and key informants. At the interviews, the researcher tried to be as objective as possible while being informed. She did not address the participants through stigma, as victims, as trafficked, as exploited, or as voluntarily choosing this work, but carried out every interview with the idea to uncover the real image of groups of sex workers in contemporary Netherlands. The research was carried out in the English language and the majority of the participants interviewed are native Dutch speakers. Initial language challenges in expressing oneself were present both with activists and professionals. The researcher gave participants all the time they required and recapitulated her understanding of what was being stated by the interviewees to ensure proper interpretation. Thus, in hindsight, language did not seem to be a noticeable issue.

While the health professionals, are in contact with sex workers coming from the various groups, the social professionals tend to have greater contact with sex workers in crises. In order to account for this aspect, the researcher recruited social professionals who participate in fieldwork, thus are in contact with workers from the various groups and also workers who are not in crises. In addition, the representation was balanced by half of the activists who are public voices, as they represent organisations that primarily speak for sex workers who voluntarily choose sex work as their job and are not in crises.

Both the professionals and the activists gave insights on the various groups addressed in this study. The professionals were very informative on the topic. The activists also provided information, but mostly complemented the perspective of the professionals through their

examples. The former and current sex workers activists continuously referred to their personal experiences as well as to the experiences of other sex workers. Thus, when combining the responses, the professionals provided more of the general information, while the activists contextualised the topic through examples.

The study incorporated the perspective of activists and professionals operating in The Hague, Amsterdam and Utrecht. The findings from the interviews were very similar to each other. In fact, the researcher grouped all the participants' responses together, as there was only one main difference that was noticed. The professionals in The Hague unanimously expressed their concern that window sex workers are not using protection, pointing out that this is a high health risk. In Utrecht and Amsterdam, the participants mentioned that sex workers in the legal sphere tend to make more use of protection against STDs. Apart from this finding, the other responses on the likelihood and intensity of risks and their link to wellbeing were combined

All the professionals and a few activists were reached via the organisations they work for. These organisations tend to have contact with some or all of the groups of study. One should note that two non-sex worker activists as well as one social professional are part of organisations with a Christian ideology. The former and current sex worker activists are part of sex workers' unions, while the remaining four organisations from which professionals were recruited do not follow a particular ideology.

6.3 Suggestions for Future Research

The research findings may serve as a root and route for a larger study in the current context, this time by focusing only on sex workers who work within illegal environments. In a more comprehensive study, one may extend the methodology to other countries to compare the extent to which legal and illegal contexts change the encountering of risks and wellbeing.

In addition, while this study focuses on female sex workers, one of the recommendations is to use a similar methodology with male and transgender sex workers. Such a study should include the perspective of professionals and activists.

Future studies may serve as an offshoot from this study by going beyond the groups that were initially identified by the hierarchy of normative framework to focus on independent workers in the Netherlands. This group varies extensively. Some workers might be seen as very high class, while others could be working in a house with poor conditions of work. Many municipalities do not legalise this group of work, and therefore the fact that it is still done illegally may have extensive risks. Therefore, an exploratory research on the risks and wellbeing of independent workers in the Netherlands is needed. This could be done by asking organisations to link workers to the research, while explaining to the workers that the process would be fully anonymous and would contribute towards organisations increasing their awareness in order to assist illegal workers in minimising their risks.

Emotional risks are seen as an area that requires attention. In addressing emotions and stigma, a study may incorporate the stand point and perceptions of the police, the city council, bankers, and tax officials in addition to sex workers. Future studies in this regard explore a deeper level of the risk that is seen to be the highest risk encountered by sex workers. This could be done by getting a fuller picture through the diverse perspectives of officials coming from organisations and institutions that communicate with sex workers.

Chapter 7

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions from the research in Chapter 6, this chapter addresses policy advice by giving two policy recommendations. In Chapter 6, six points of concern were identified:

1. Mobility between groups depends on the skills and knowledge related to the venues.
2. Managing health risks depends on sex workers' awareness of the risks and is generally the responsibility of every sex worker.
3. Risks of physical violence depend extensively on the venue and group characteristics, and pressing charges and reporting of abuse, including rape, are problematic.
4. All sex workers encounter emotional risks and stress resulting from job-related matters.
5. Stigma is by far the greatest risk experienced by all sex workers.
6. A lack of network among sex workers is detrimental to wellbeing.

In addition to the above six conclusions drawn from the research, the recommendations also take into consideration the responses of the participants concerning the changes they would like to see implemented in relation to this topic. Their responses did not constitute part of the findings, but are highlighted here with a view towards the policy recommendations:

1. Address institutional stigma so that sex workers feel they have a normal job.
2. Increase awareness on where to go for assistance when encountering risks.
3. Have an Ombudsvrow (Ombudswoman) who would have access to higher levels of power and authority to represent sex workers.
4. Create clear and understandable taxation forms.

The policy advice below is formulated on the basis of the empirical findings of this research in relation to the three research questions together with the additional points highlighted by participants. Experts in the field as well as the Ombudsman's office[3] were consulted with regards to the practicality of the advice given below, and their feedback has been incorporated. These recommendations are in line with the current policy aims set by the Ministry of Security and Justice: to offer preliminary prevention and to care for sex workers by empowering them (Prostitution program, n.d.).

7.1 Align Perceptions through Dialogue in the Form of Round Table Discussions

One cannot assume that everyone's understanding of a problem is universal. In the first place, some people might not see an issue as a problem, while others recognise the problem from a

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[3] Marielle Kloek, *Field researcher*, Soa Aids Nederland
Sofie Sloot, *Junior Advisor*, Municipality of Amsterdam
May Pastoors, *Manager*, Ombudsman Metropool Amsterdam

different angle (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2016). In order to deal with the complexity resulting from having different perceptions, one should focus on a problem-solving cycle by first clarifying the problem, followed by devising an optimal solution, and finally by implementing changes to reach the solution (Hogwood & Gunn, 1984); such changes involve aligning perceptions through joint image building and a cross-learning framework (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2016).

In applying this problem-solving cycle to the current study, the problems related to sex workers' risks and wellbeing have been detailed in Chapter 6 and outlined above. The optimal solution is to decrease risks and optimise wellbeing for every group of sex workers in this study (street sex workers, window sex workers, brothel and club sex workers, and escorts). The first recommendation towards this solution is to initiate dialogue among members or representatives from four parties that were identified in the research findings: sex workers, supporting organisations, the police, and the taxation institution. The cross-learning that occurs through dialogue would work towards aligning the perceptions of these parties regarding the risks encountered by sex workers. The aim is that these parties could then frame the problems concerning this matter, thereby having a way to implement changes towards a unified solution.

Plan of Action: Monthly Round Table Discussions

In concrete terms, aligning perceptions can be reached by inviting the above-mentioned parties to monthly round table discussions. The initial meeting could be led by the Ombudsman in Amsterdam and the researcher together with an employee at the Ombudsman's office who could continue to carry the main responsibility for the monthly discussions. As the meetings progress, other parties and institutions beyond these initial four could be brought into the discussions as needed.

The First Meeting: Discussion on Stigma and Staff Training

Chapter 6 highlights that stigma is the greatest risk encountered by sex workers, therefore it is recommended that the first round table discussion focus on this issue of stigma to bring about more awareness among all the parties. In order to understand the sex workers' point of view in this matter, the sex workers could present examples of scenarios where they feel stigmatised, such as not being taken seriously when reporting rape to the police. Every party would have an opportunity to express their perspective, allowing each party to empathise with the others and to put themselves into the others' shoes. The parties could also discuss ways to raise awareness of implicit biases towards sex workers and offer cost-effective training for staff (police and tax officials) who may encounter sex workers in their job roles. One possible way of training staff to treat sex workers the same as other persons would be to incorporate a short awareness training into a regular morning meeting, identifying the perspective of the sex workers and biased perceptions that staff members may have.

The Second Meeting: Follow-up and Formation of Subgroups

The second round table discussion could first follow-up on the progress or challenges in training staff regarding stigma against sex workers. After this discussion, three subgroups could be formed where at least one sex worker would be present in each: supporting

organisations, police officials, and tax officials. The purpose of these groupings would be to target more specific internal changes within each sector that could decrease risks and optimise wellbeing for specific groups of sex workers in practical terms. After an hour of discussion within the subgroups, everyone would reconvene to report their specific plans of action to each other based on what they discussed.

For example, the supporting organisations could combine their knowledge to create informative leaflets with information on their specific services available to sex workers as well as information on municipal policy differences on sex work. These could be distributed to sex workers when carrying out outreach. Leaflets containing such valuable and comprehensive information in a concise format would empower and equip sex workers with the knowledge to deal with health, physical violence, and emotional risks as well as to increase mobility between groups and different cities.

The subgroup consisting of police officials and sex workers could identify and resolve issues that may hinder sex workers from calling on the police for help when encountering physical violence. One point in this regard is concerning the lack of use of the red panic button installed in the rooms of window sex workers. This subgroup could consider how to increase the likelihood of workers pressing the button when encountering danger. One consideration could be to change how the police respond, namely that they could make the venue safe immediately but allow the worker to fill out the report of abuse after her shift so she doesn't lose time, business, or income.

The subgroup comprising tax officials and sex workers could identify and resolve issues that hinder sex workers from filling out taxation forms. Together they could discuss how forms could be made more user-friendly by making them available in the English language. In addition, the forms could be modified to take into account the fact that sex workers receive all their income in cash and may not have a bank account.

The Third Meeting: Follow-up and Further Developments

The third meeting could again begin with follow-up regarding the changes made based on the first two meetings aimed at reducing the risks and improving the wellbeing of sex workers. Discussion of what has been accomplished, what has been successful, and what pitfalls have been faced is key in finetuning the process. As the monthly meetings progress, there should be a sense of building upon previous meetings, covering one problem and moving on to the next. In this way the multifaceted problems and risks that sex workers face can be tackled one by one towards improving their wellbeing.

7.2 Assigning an Impartial and Neutral Process Manager

The second policy advice is to assign an employee within the Ombudsman's office who could function as a process manager with three principal responsibilities:

- To coordinate and drive the monthly round table discussions in order for the initiative to continue;
- To stay acquainted with current issues related to the sex work industry in order to monitor risks faced by sex workers and improve their wellbeing; and
- To investigate ways of supporting sex workers' wellbeing and strengthening social networks, such as through developing a bread fund.

This recommendation attempts to incorporate the feedback from the sex worker participants in this study, which was to have an Ombudsvrouw (Ombudswoman) with a higher level of authority and power representing their voice. Because of potential financial and political implications, the advice is not to install an Ombudsvrouw but rather to assign a process manager from within the Ombudsman's office.

According to scholarly literature, a process manager should be an impartial person trusted by the different parties involved, competent (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2016), equipped with sufficient resources to carry out the role, perceived as authoritative (Lynn, 1981), and able to communicate effectively (Williams, 2002). Additionally, this role is responsible for managing activities by proposing and assigning individual projects to other parties and for giving place to the development of ideas and decisions during the interaction process with the various parties (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2016). The process manager in the Ombudsman's office should have the qualities listed above as well as certain other competencies, which entail bridging perceptions related to sex work and having an adequate knowledge of the sex work industry and policies in the Netherlands. The process manager should also be empathetic and understanding towards all the parties contacted through this job role.

The first primary responsibility of the process manager involves being the driving force behind the monthly round table discussions and ensuring that progress is continually being made through the discussions. The second responsibility involves getting acquainted and staying up-to-date with various current issues related to sex work in order to be an authoritative resource to organisations and sex worker unions who support sex workers. This should include knowing the status of the national legislation on prostitution that is currently held up in the first Chamber of Commerce, the privacy matters related to sex workers exiting the industry and the ambiguity of what happens with their identity, the status and development of the number of licensed spaces for sex workers, and the possibility of offering shelter for sex workers who are interested in exiting sex work but are not trafficked.

The third responsibility involves working together with the sex worker union in Amsterdam to discuss how the social network among sex workers can be strengthened. This is in line with the research findings, which demonstrated that having a social network has a positive impact on the wellbeing of sex workers. The process manager and the sex worker

union could explore the possibility of setting up a bread fund as a way to encourage a social network among workers as well as to provide benefits to workers when they become ill or injured. A bread fund is built on mutual trust and solidarity between a small number of workers and involves members paying monthly contributions into a joint fund, out from which they can receive monetary support based on their contributions when they are not able to work. An additional possibility, as an expansion of the original aim of the bread fund, would be to provide compensation for those wanting to make a shift to another group or exit the industry altogether.

To recapitulate, this study gives two recommendations: first, to align perceptions through dialogue in the form of round table discussions, and second, to assign an impartial and neutral process manager. Consideration should be given to the costs and benefits of these two recommendations. In terms of the former, because the parties concerned lie horizontally, none of the parties have direct influence or power over the actions of the others. This may lead to potential disadvantages to this approach. First, a party might not identify the matter as a problem, or they may be unwilling to align their perceptions. Second, as a result, the process of aligning perceptions could be lengthy and time-consuming, which could affect the implementing of changes towards the solution. However, as long as the parties identify the matter as a problem and are willing to build a joint image, this approach is time-efficient and could result in comprehensive changes towards the solution. Bringing these parties into dialogue versus approaching them one by one also makes this approach more time-efficient, while providing the opportunity for each party to learn from and be empathetic towards the others.

Regarding the second recommendation for a process manager, from the view of sex workers, it may be considered a disadvantage that the assigned person would not be chosen by sex workers. However, having a process manager assigned by the Ombudsman's office could be seen as a benefit because of the established authority that the Ombudsman's office carries. Another benefit is that once such a designated role within the Ombudsman's office in Amsterdam is developed and established, it could serve as a model for other cities to implement.

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APPENDIX

Interview Protocol

Introducing the topic

Recruitment letter (to be given to the participant)

Consent form (to be signed prior the interview starts and kept by the researcher)

Interview Guide (also, a sheet to be given to the participants to follow or write down points)

Introducing the topic and the interview

- ➢ My role as a student at UU and an intern at the Ombudsman office.
- ➢ My topic and interest: Different hierarchical groups of female sex workers, to explore the differences between groups in terms of the risks experienced, also in the way it could impact one's wellbeing. If differences are extensive, incorporate a recommendation for future policies to account for the different groups.
- ➢ Ombudsman's interest in exploring the field, and how different sex workers might need help from him.
- ➢ Also, the Ombudsman could take the findings of the study on a higher level of politics, to inform future Dutch policies on prostitution.
- ➢ Ethical considerations: I would like to inform you that your participation is strictly voluntarily. All data collected during the interview shall be kept confidential, used only for this study by this researcher. Anonymity is guaranteed by allocating false names.

- ➢ Do you have any questions at this stage?
- ➢ Let me give you the recruitment letter, which you may keep, while going through the consent form.
- ➢ Shall I proceed with starting the interview?

Recruitment Letter

Dear Participant,

I would like to invite you to participate in a research study carried out by myself as part fulfilment of the requirements to obtain a Master Degree in Sociology from Utrecht University. Primarily, this study is to get an in-depth understanding of the ways risks are experienced by different hierarchical groups of female sex workers, and its potential direct or indirect impact reflected on the wellbeing of sex workers which could differ between groups, through the perspective of activists and professionals offering support and assistance to sex workers. This exploratory study also aims at informing the Ombudsman in Amsterdam, about potential assistance needed in the field, linked to inform future Dutch policies.

For the purpose of this research, I would like to interview participants having direct contact with sex workers through their profession or informal role. I would like to inform you that your participation is strictly voluntarily. Additionally, all data collected during the interview shall be kept confidential, used only for this study by this researcher. Anonymity is guaranteed by allocating false names. Apart from the thesis, the findings of the study may also be reported to policy makers, reports or publications, always maintaining anonymity and confidentiality of participants.

Should you wish to give your consent, the interview will take place at a place and time, preferred by the participant. The interview takes approximately one hour, and the session would be recorded by an electronic device, solely for transcription by the interviewer. Once the research is finalised, the participant may access the results.

Your participation would be greatly appreciated. Meanwhile, if you require further information about this research, please do not hesitate to contact me on b.borg@students.uu.nl .

While thanking you in advance,

I give you my best regards,

—————————————

Bridget Borg

Researcher

Consent Form

Researcher contact details: Bridget Borg,   E-mail: b.borg@students.uu.nl

Statement of purpose of the study: This research shall explore the experienced risks by the different hierarchical female sex worker's groups, potentially reflecting their wellbeing, from the perspectives of format and informal actors having direct contact with sex workers. Thus, this study shall inform the Ombudsman about potential assistance and, inform future Dutch policies. You can choose whether you would or would not like to elaborate on the ombudsman's potential role in the field.

Methods of data collection: The data shall be collected through semi-structured, interviews by means of an electronic device.

Use made of the information: The data collected through the interviews shall be transcribed and used for analytical purposes in an attempt to answer the research questions that the study set out to explore. Thus, the information shall be used explicitly for the thesis, with the possibility of other reports and publications, always maintaining confidentiality and anonymity.

Guarantees:

I will abide by the following conditions:

I.   You have been informed about the purpose of this research.
II. Your real name will not be used in the study; therefore, your data will be referred to by using a false name.
III. Only the researcher and the university thesis supervisor will have access to the data collected.
IV. Your participation is voluntarily therefore; you will remain free to stop or postpone the interview.
V.   Deception in the data collection process will not be used.
VI. The interview session will be recorded by means of an electronic device. The recording shall be kept by the researcher only for few months, and then would be deleted.
VII. You will have access to the results of the research once the study is finalised.

If you agree with the conditions of this study and would give the researcher your consent, please sign below.

Name of Participant: ⸻⸻⸻⸻⸻

Signature: ⸻⸻⸻⸻⸻   Date: ⸻⸻⸻⸻⸻

⸻⸻⸻⸻

Researcher

Bridget Borg

Interview Guide

Introductory part: I would like to start by going through the interview structure. Firstly, I will be taking note of some general information, and then I will delve into the topics of groups hierarchy, different risks, wellbeing, and concluding with insights for the ombudsman.

General information

- o   Name given to the participant:
- o   Organisation:
- o   City:
- o   Age:
- o   Sex:
- o   Profession/role in the field of sex work:
- o   Years of experience:
- o   How many sex workers on average do you encounter every week/month?
- o   From which hierarchical sex worker's groups are your clients?
- o   Could you kindly briefly explain your work experiences?

Group Hierarchy

There are different debates about sex work being targeted as one group, or having a look and one group and project findings to all sex workers. It is also evident that there are various groups of sex workers and they also tend to be seen within a hierarchy. For instance, having escorts at the top, followed by clubs, then window and street sex workers at the bottom of the hierarchy.

1) From your experience with sex workers, what are the differences you notice between the groups? Do you perceive this difference?
2) In relation to the different hierarchical groups, please comment on the following:
    a. Educational attainment,
    b. Socio economic status,
    c. Sole job/ a job in combination with studies or other work
3) Could you elaborate on the easiness or difficulty to moving from working within one group of sex work, to another? (vertical/horizontal mobility)

Risks

There are various risks people experience in life, but for the matter of this interview we shall focus on health risks, risks of physical violence, and emotional risk.

4) How do different groups of sex workers, experience risk on a day-to-day basis?

5) How would you define the following risks?
       a. Health risks
       b. Physical risks
       c. Emotional risks

6) If you had to address health, physical and emotional risks for each group, what are your observations for your perspective? (Give out the sheet for participant, so they could refer to it and we fill in the picture below).

RISKS

HIERARCHICAL GROUPS	Health Risks	Risks of Physical violence	Emotional Risks
Female agency escorts and independent escorts	a.	b.	c.
Female sex workers in brothel and clubs	d.	e.	f.
Female window sex workers	g.	h.	i.
Female street sex workers	j.	k.	l.

[Keywords - social stigma, covering up to relatives or friends being a sex worker, use of contraception, occupational measures]

A) Female Escorts
Independent   within agency
Health Risks
Physical Risks
Emotional Risks

B) Female sex workers in Brothel, Bars, Clubs
Health Risks
Physical Risks
Emotional Risks

C) Female Window sex workers
Health Risks
Physical Risks
Emotional Risks

D) Female Street sex workers
Health Risks
Physical Risks
Emotional Risks

7) If it does, how does *control* differ among the various groups? (client selection, being in control with clients)

8) When sex workers approach you/ or you approach them, which form of risk are they generally concerned about?
       a. Do you notice any trends of risk concerns that may differ between groups?

9) To what extent are sex workers aware of risks related to health, physical, and emotional?
10) What are the dilemmas or questions sex workers have in relation to health risks, risks of physical violence, and emotional risks?
11) How do the sex workers cope with/manage their risks?
12) What are the precautionary measures or ways of managing risks, that you recommend to the sex workers?
13) Do you think that some groups could learn from other groups on dealing with risks? If so, please elaborate on your opinion.

Wellbeing

14) Do you think the wellbeing of sex workers is closely linked to their experienced risks?
15) If you had to reflect on the general wellbeing of females from the different groups, do you notice if their wellbeing differs? If so, how? (financial aspect, demographic aspects – background, working conditions, stigma)
16) Are some groups restricted from the full potential to care for themselves?
17) Do you think that some groups could learn from the other groups on wellbeing? If so, please elaborate on your perspective.
18) What is the relation between sex workers of the same group? (very supportive, there for each other, individualised)
19) How about the relation between the different groups?

Ombudsman's Interest, Assistance and Future Developments

20) In your opinion, how could/should the ombudsman assist sex workers from different groups?
21) What do you feel is missing from the government within the field? What kind of help would sex workers need from the ombudsman?
22) Are there any other particular problems faced by sex workers, apart from risk, that you would like to inform the ombudsman of?
23) What changes would you like to see in the near future to better improve the wellbeing of sex workers?

[keywords: Education, having a gap in the CV, health, security, alternative options to earning a living, passports]

Concluding part: Is there anything you would like to add to the interview, or have some points to clarity? Do you have further remarks that you would like to share?

Thank you very much for making time for this interview. Your participation is greatly appreciated. Should you know of some colleagues or contacts who might be willing to participate in this study, please contact me. (Give a box of chocolates as a gesture to thank the participant).

A) **Female Escorts**

Independent   within agency

Health Risks

Physical Risks

Emotional Risks

B) **Female sex workers in Brothels and Clubs**

Health Risks

Physical Risks

Emotional Risks

C) **Female Window sex workers**

Health Risks

Physical Risks

Emotional Risks

D) **Female Street sex workers**

Health Risks

Physical Risks

Emotional Risks