

Domination, masculine sexuality and prostitution in Spain: why do Spanish men consume paid sex?

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Abstract: This paper focuses on the study of clients of prostitution in Spain in order to understand why these men pay for sex. We analyzed the narratives of clients of prostitution through in-depth semi-directed interviews, group interviews, and discussion groups. This material is given structure by the application of the theory of frame analysis. We obtained four ideal client types of clients were obtained, namely: misogynist (hatred of women), consumerist (everything is for sale), friend (affectionate but abusive), and critic (occasional and repentant). We reach the conclusion that From this point of view the purchase of sex has nothing to do with is not due to the searching for quality sex, fun and hedonistic pleasure, but rather it is a strategy to that reinforces a masculine identity that conforms molded by to the expectations of the peer group.

Key words: gender, prostitution clients, frame analysis, theories of masculinity.

Resumen: Este artículo se centra en el estudio de los clientes de prostitución en España, con el propósito de entender por qué los hombres acuden al sexo de pago. Para responder a esta interrogante, se analizaron los discursos de los hombres consumidores de prostitución mediante entrevistas en profundidad semidirigidas, entrevistas grupales y grupos de discusión. Con el fin de estructurar coherentemente las narraciones obtenidas y clasificarlas en categorías se aplicó el marco teórico del “frame analysis”. Se obtuvieron cuatro tipos ideales de cliente: misógino (odio a la mujer); consumista (todo se compra y vende); amigo (afectivo aunque abusa); y crítico (ocasional y arrepentido). Desde nuestra perspectiva, la compra de sexo de pago no se produce por la búsqueda de sexo de calidad, diversión y disfrute hedonista, sino que es una estrategia de refuerzo de una masculinidad conformada por una identidad que gira en torno a la exhibición frente al grupo de pares.

Palabras clave: género, clientes de prostitución, frame analysis, teorías de la masculinidad.

Introduction

For decades the debate about prostitution has focused on the philosophical-political issue of consent. On the one side, there are those who defend the normalization of sex industry arguing that prostitution is any woman's right; on the other, there are those who state that it is irrational and unfair to seriously argue in favor of consent in a globalized planet, crossed by economic, ethnical and especially gender inequalities.¹

For Sheila Jeffreys (2011), using the term "[female] sex workers" makes men invisible and women the reason for the existence of prostitution. Moreover, the term 'sex worker' gives prostitution the status of "a job like any other job", sending a clear message to society: prostitution does not have a gender, anyone can prostitute themselves (Miguel, 2012). Because of this, Jeffreys proposes using the term "prostituted women" to indicate that the woman does not exist without the other pole of the relationship, which is called prostituting [individual] or prostitution user instead of the term "client", closer to sex industry and sex entrepreneurs.

Prostitution has been legitimized from conservative, liberal and progressive stances, however we also find among these ideologies people opposed to it. Conservative arguments have been based on what is called a double sexual standard: women shall not have sexual relations until marriage; while men must have them. It is taken for granted that men need and it is good for them to have varied sexual relations. From the conservative perspective prostitution is considered a "lesser evil". The "greatest evil" would be that men were not able to satisfy their need for sex (Miguel, 2012).

In the 1970's, the arrival of sexual revolution would end part of the hypocrisy imposed by the double sexual standard. According to the new sexual norms to have many sexual relations is good, modern and transgressing. Well now, sexual revolution criticized the double standard, but not the traditional masculine sexuality; this way, the idea of a whorehouse starts to be idealized (Miguel, 2012). One of the keys for the reconceptualization of prostitution after the seventies was the theory of free choice and consent: if there is consent, individual liberty becomes a determinant factor for its acceptance. The consequences of sexual revolution were, in this particular case, similar to those of the traditional double sexual standard: the market of prostitutes was secured, reinforced and extended.

¹ This study sets off from the conviction that nowadays prostitution is a gendered phenomenon, this is to say, totally crossed by gender, as it is a fact that most of people who prostitute are women, while virtually all prostitution consumers are men.

Nowadays, the neoliberal patriarchy² has made gender violence against women extreme by means of dehumanizing and reifying them, turning women into merchandise that can be transformed in new business opportunities. The new function of prostitution at this neoliberal historic moment is to reinforce the sensation of power and domination that must accompany the hegemonic masculinity by means of the misogynous use of sexuality.

Prostitution is no longer here to sexually satisfy men, but for those who can have a space/body/territory upon which to exercise a determinate sort of masculinity, at a monument of “masculine sexual panic” or “gender vertigo” (Atencio, 2015). Prostitution is an institution that works to preserve the order of gender, as it serves men to underpin their traditional masculinity (naturalized, non-penetrable and dominant) and to extract from it or from its existence a symbolic masculine capital, a sort of gender surplus before women (Connell, 2003).

At present, in Spain we can difference various discursive typologies around this phenomenon. At one end there would be the abolitionists or anti-prostitution, and on the other those in favor of legalization or pro-prostitution (Gómez *et al.*, 2015). The abolitionist discourse states that prostitution is another expression of gender violence, in which victims are largely women in a patriarchal and capitalist context that commoditizes and reifies women. Thereby, clients are accomplices of this sexual exploitation and take advantage of this patriarchal privilege proper to their gender. According to this vision, it is necessary to analytically distinguish the social phenomenon, which prostitution is, from the concrete collective of women who practice it. This distinction will allow criticizing the social reality and the structure of subordination and sexual exploitation that underlies prostitution and have a solidary stance with the victims of this system (Cobo, 2014).

A factor relevant to understand this social practice is economic inequality among the population that offers prostitution and the one that demands it, thus fostering the appearance of a new class of servitude; one in which prostitution becomes one of the few available options for poor women (Sassen, 2003).

Carole Pateman (1988) conceptualizes prostitution bearing in mind that it is gendered (sexes do not have the same role). It is an institution by means of which society regulates for a price the free access of men to the bodies of women. And it has been and is tolerated because of the legitimization of a patriarchal ideology, now

² The “neoliberal patriarchy” is a term that refers to the current historic moment of occidental societies; it is characterized by the permanence of a concrete model of masculine domination in a context of neoliberal capitalism. These two logics combine in the world of contemporary prostitution: it is a gendered phenomenon, crossed by consumerist logics (buying what is for sale). Others speak of porn-capitalism (Sáez *et al.*, 2015) to underscore the dominant sexual culture that comes from mainstream pornographic stories in a capitalist context.

also neoliberal (Jeffreys, 2011). The normalization of prostitution, according to philosopher Scott A. Anderson (2002), would imply that people (especially women) ended up losing their right to sexual autonomy.

The discursive typology in favor of legalization holds an amoral stance in relation to prostitution: it is neither good nor bad, nor does it harm women, but it is another job, as dignifying as any other. This discourse is placed in the struggle against stigmatization and marginalization of both the prostituted woman and the client, against sex trafficking, exploitation and abuse in the frame of any worker's rights and the use of the empowerment from the exercise of citizenship.

From this discursive typology more complex measures are proposed; those that have to do with a change of mentality in the hegemonic socio-affective culture of our society, in view of ending any relationship of power, domination and exploitation in sexual-affective interactions. In this line we find philosophers such as Martha Nussbaum (1999), who states that problems implied by sex work come from conjuncture factors such as the social stigma that surrounds prostitution.

In this text we intend to contribute to the debate on the phenomenon of prostitution in our country, analyzing an aspect of this reality that has not been sufficiently researched: those who demand prostitution, this is to say, clients.³ Given the complexity of the very concept of prostitution, it is difficult to offer exact figures that help us grasp the actual magnitude of the phenomenon. For the Spanish case, in a 2007 report produced by the Mixed Commission of Woman's Rights and Equal Opportunities of the Congress of the Representatives of the Government of Spain, it is indicated that there are more than 300 000 women who exercise prostitution, being the overwhelming majority poor, immigrant and undocumented, while almost the totality of clients, 99.7%, are men.

Moreover, in this report it is estimated that sex trade in Spain generates some 18 billion Euros a year and the expenditure of Spanish men in prostitution reaches 50 million Euros a day. Indeed, this noticeable expense on prostitution services is also associated to a large number of consumers, as it is demonstrated by another survey carried out by the Center of Sociological Researches in 2009, which estimates that 32.1% of men have paid one time to have sex.

³ "Client" is the main actor that exercises the active role and has the primordial responsibility for the existence and permanence of prostitution, therefore it should be called "prostituting [individual]". However, in this text we will use the mercantile meaning of "client" as it is the most common.

In this article we present the most relevant results from a research that we undertook from 2011 to 2013.⁴ We divided the exposition in four sections: in the first one, we make an outline of the studies on this topic; in the second, we expose the theoretical and methodological grounds; in the third —the core of this work— the study of the client's accounts are approached; finally, in the last section, the results reached are presented and some reflections on them are made.

Forerunners of research on prostitution clients

Researches that analyze —and in some cases classify—prostitution clients are relatively novel. At international level, the pioneer of this topic is Sven-Axel Mansson (2001), who has studied the phenomenon of prostitution as of the 1970's from the viewpoint of men and clientele. In his book *Men's practices in prostitution: the case of Sweden*, he divides the clients of prostitution into four groups. The first comprises men who have the fantasy of a “filthy whore”; the second group is composed of those who want to experience non-usual sexual activities; in the third group there are those who because of fear, shyness, old age or a disability resort to prostitution as a consolation; finally, the fourth group mainly comprises young men who have a vision of sex defined by pornography, publicity and leisure programs.

Another noteworthy research in which a typology of the prostitution clients is carried out is the one performed in France by *Mouvement du Nid*. The studies, led by Saïd Bouamama and Claudine Legardinier (2006), concentrate in the book *Les clients de la prostitution, l'enquête*, in which five sorts of clients are identified.

In the first typology, which encompasses 75% of the cases, one finds men who justify their condition of “prostituting individuals” as a by-product of their own sexual, social and affective insufficiencies. The second typology gathers men who refer to the distrust, fear and hate women produce in them to justify their consumption. The third category includes the “consumers of merchandise”, who assume their condition of “consumers” in order to “buy” what is “on sale”. The fourth category includes those who want to meet an imperative of sexuality, so they pay to avoid problems. Finally, the fifth category groups men addicted to sex.

However, most of the researches who analyze the motivations expressed by men to ask for this sort of service do not produce a typology of these men. This way, Anne Allison (1994) analyzed the consumption of prostitution in Japanese clubs by businessmen in the book *Nightwork: Sexuality, Pleasure, and Corporate Masculinity in a Tokyo Hostess Club*. One of her conclusions is that the consumption of prostitution is rather a ritual to belong to a masculine group, utilized as organized leisure in the

⁴ Project “Consumption of prostitution in Spain: clients and women” [*Consumo de prostitución en España: clientes y mujeres*] (COMPECLIMU). Exp. no. 2/10, (2011-2013). Institute of Women. Head Researcher: A.G.S.

peer group (nights out, meetings, bachelor parties, etc.) Allison affirms that many men feel coerced by the group, thus the consumption of prostitution works as a form of masculine control, to demonstrate to the peer group that they are “fully men”.

A different perspective appears in *Sex Markets*, in which Giusta, Di Tommaso and Strom (2008) explore the offer and demand of prostitution and conclude that most men who use these services are excited by the idea of the illicit, of the transgression: for them, women prostitute themselves because they like it, not because of money.

Sociability, necessity of domination and entertainment are some of the reasons distinguishable in other studies. Sociability as a reason for the client of prostitution is accounted for in the research carried out in Brazil by Elisiane Pasini (2000), in which there is reference to “regular” men to define the client of prostitution.

The need to dominate is distinguished in a work on Finn clients published by Anne-Maria Marttila (2003), in which the demand of paid sex is related to the generalized structures of power and to the need to dominate. Entertainment and desire to experience other sexual practices are accounted for the book by Melissa Farley, Julie Bindel and Jacqueline M. Golding (2009) entitled *Men who buy sex. Who they buy and what they know*. From 103 interviews with prostitution clients in England, 54% of the respondents stated that the main reason to pay for sex was immediate satisfaction, entertainment and pleasure, as well as “changing women”.

In Spain, the first work that analyzes the client of prostitution is the one by José L. Solana (2002), who in 2002 publishes the article “Prostitution of immigrant women in the province of Córdoba” [*Prostitución de mujeres inmigrantes en la provincia de Córdoba*], in which he distinguishes two sorts of clients: the ones who objectify and those who personalize. Later on, in 2003, M^a José Barahona and Luís M. García publish the book *An approximation to the profile of the client of feminine prostitution in the Community of Madrid* [*Una aproximación al perfil del cliente de prostitución femenina en la Comunidad de Madrid*]. From 15 interviews with Spanish clients, they inquired on the reasons to pay for sex: dissatisfaction with the relationship with their partners; higher frequency and more variety of sexual relations; power from the fact of paying for sex: live their sexual fantasies; and finally, having a good time (Barahona and García, 2003).

In 2007, Rafael López and David Baringo publish the article “City and heterosexual prostitution in Spain: the viewpoint of the male ‘client’” [*Ciudad y prostitución heterosexual en España: el punto de vista del ‘cliente’ masculino*]. From performing 12 interviews with clients, they establish six categories: men who find it difficult to bond with women; men who go out in group to have fun; married men who wanted to have extramarital sex as a lesser affair; men who have marital crises; men who join because of labor or business; and finally, young men who argued minimal complication and effort (López and Baringo, 2007).

In 2010, M^a José Barahona publishes the book *Study on the information, opinion and attitude of the inhabitants of Álava about the phenomenon of prostitution and an approximation to the profile of the client of feminine prostitution* [*Estudio sobre la información, opinión y actitud de los habitantes de Álava ante el fenómeno de la prostitución y una aproximación al perfil del cliente de prostitución femenina*]. The research was performed with 452 questionnaires distributed in Álava to people older than 18 years. 16.6% of the men who participated in the survey admitted to having paid for sex at some time in their lives. Besides, 30% of the respondents skipped this question, which makes the author of the study think that they also paid for sex, but are unwilling to accept it (Barahona, 2010).

Also in 2010, Carmen Meneses analyzes the motives men have to pay for sex. From 138 interviews, out of the 14 reasons to pay for sex, the three with which men agreed the most are: be able to choose different women every time (56.5%); think paid sex generates fewer complications (46.6%); and, have fast and impersonal sex (41.3%). With the motivations expressed by the clients, Meneses applies a factorial analysis using the method of principal components and obtains six factors that explain 80% of the variance: “company”, “necessity”, “leisure”, “risk”, “domination” and “speed” (Meneses, 2010).

In 2012, Enrique J. Díez publishes the article “The role of men in prostitution...” [*El papel de los hombres en la prostitución...*], in which he states that increasingly there are more men who look for [female] prostitutes to dominate them: men have experienced a loss of power and traditional masculinity, and they are not able to establish relationships of respect and reciprocity with women (Díez, 2012).

Gómez and Pérez publish in 2009 the book *Prostitución: clientes e outros homes*, which deals with young men and the consumption of prostitution in Galicia. In this work, 17 interviews were held with clients, 5 interviews with discussion groups of masculinized collectives,⁵ 6 interviews with women in prostitution, 2 interviews with transsexuals in prostitution, 3 to owners and managers of clubs, 1 to a club worker and 3 to social-services technicians who work with women in prostitution (Gómez and Pérez, 2009).

As it is evident from the various researches we have analyzed, men’s consumption of paid sex comes from a concrete manner to understand “being a man”. If in the past the traditional values of men were responsible paternity and being the breadwinner and protector of the family, nowadays virility is built through a “compulsive sex life” that is boasted in front of the group of male peers.

⁵ Students of electricity, informatics and secondary school; metalwork unionists and medical doctors.

Theoretical and methodological considerations

To develop this work and in view of understanding our study subjects, it was necessary to reflect on the construction of masculinity. Gender is one of the bearers of the central mechanisms by means of which power and resources are allotted in society, and it is by means of them that individuals model the meanings of their lives. Gender studies analyze the asymmetric relations of power and opportunity that each individual has in society in function of their sexual body (Ortner, 1979). Each social group exalts a masculinity model above the rest, which responds to political, economic, social and cultural logics.

In any case, the construction of the masculine social identity is related to the sex-gender system of a society (Otegui, 1999). This system is based, in the first place, on the theories that research the “naturalization” that explain the socially constructed sexual characteristics (Irigaray, 1998; Moore and Gillette, 1993; Chodorow, 1989; Gilligan, 1982; Goldberg, 1973); secondly, on the functionalist theories that appear in order to legitimize the hegemonic socio-sexual orders in occidental societies (Parsons, 1999; Gilmore, 1990); and in the third place, on the theories that emphasize the existence of a diversity in which their own relational component places them at “socio-historical standardization processes of some specific power relations” (Otegui, 1999), such as constructivist (Connell, 2003; Bourdieu, 2000) and queer theories (Preciado, 2002; Butler, 2001).

All in all, the importance of studies on masculinity lies in their capacity to analyze the practices and representations of men from their gender specificities, being such practices part of some social relationships that largely place men at a dominating position. The masculine identity does not respond to a common model, but to a collective construction previously configured in the institutions and is exercised through social practices.

The consumption of prostitution highlights such characteristics, where in the same cultural context there exist various masculinity models that operate with differenced gender mandates and where sexuality is an expression of exercising domination and power over the bodies of women in our society. Due to the heterogeneity of the clients' sociological profile, in this work we opted to classify them in function of the story produced from their experience and perception of prostitution.

In order to analyze their narrations we resorted to the use of frame analysis (Gerhards, 1995; Goffman, 1974) in order to coherently structure their stories and classify them in categories to improve their handling and comprehension. At present, this research method is widely utilized to analyze how people understand situations and activities from multiple disciplines. With this sort of analyses it is proposed to identify the inner logic of the dominant “interpretative frameworks”, stressing the

various representations social actors perform by means of an organizing principle that turns fragmentary information into a structured and significant political problem. Therefore, frames are constructions that provide such reality with meaning and structure its comprehension (Snow *et al.*, 1993; Tarrow, 1997).

In the following section we describe the central framing dimensions of the ideological discourse of prostitution clients in our country and their claims to legitimize objectives, interests and ideologies from the declarations taken in the individual and group interviews with them. To do so, we held semi-directed in-depth interviews with 29 clients,⁶ 13 women in prostitution,⁷ 3 owners of clubs and/or flats, 4 workers of these places, and 23 social technicians, academicians and/or professionals of social services; moreover, three group interviews were held with men in nine Spanish autonomous communities. Our objective is to establish a typology of prostitution clients from the analysis of their discourses, which makes this research different from previous ones.

Clients' discourses

In this section we classify prostitution clients from their discourses, analyzed by means of frame analysis (Goffman, 1974). The result was the identification of four sorts of clients which we have called: "misogynic client", "consumer client", "friendly client" and "critical client" (see figure 1⁸). The sociologic profile of prostitution clients we have analyzed is broad and heterogeneous in relation to age, marital status, education and/or profession (see table 1); therefore, the classification produced by this research might be extrapolated to the whole of prostitution clients.

a. Misogynic client

In this group we find men of every age and sentimental situations. None of them holds higher education degrees and all of them are hired in labors associated with low wages. As for their ideology, we did not find anyone who identified with the center or the left. For these clients the existence of prostitution services is something normal and necessary. They do not observe any "dark space" in this business, they adopt a

⁶ Structural scientific samples in qualitative research are chosen using criteria of socio-structural representation. The representativeness of the structural technique is not supported on the probability of choosing a proportional sample, but a representative one. In this case, to select the interviewees, we resorted to the "snowball" strategy (García Ferrando *et al.*, 2000).

⁷ Most of the women who practice prostitution in Spain are foreigners with an irregular migratory status, and depending on their nationality, they have various perception of their clients: sub-Saharan women do not see the client as a "human being", but rather as "another"; Latin American women consider they are impolite, dirty and rude; Rumanian women deem them less chauvinist than their countrymen. Finally, among the few Spanish women who practice prostitution, those who have worked "a lifetime" generate a friendship or trust in them, and those who practice it because of the current economic crisis, reject and criticize them (Gómez and Pérez, 2009).

⁸ The figure and table are at the Annex, at the end of the present text (editor's note).

fully uncritical and unreflective attitude and naturalize the existence of prostitution as they deem it consubstantial to humanity.

I: What is your opinion of prostitution? C: it seems that they offer a service necessary to society and more demanded than some people want admit (waiter, 21 years, single, Ourense, 2012).

They share the perception that all women are “whores”, as in their actions and sexual-affective relations women have an economic and material interest. Their imaginary on the “feminine world” is loaded with negative connotations about women: they consider woman a perverse, false and materialistic being.

I believe that if a woman looks for sex, she looks for something else, always! Marriage or money, or benefits... (Serviceman, 56 years, divorced —marriage annulment—, Zaragoza, 2011).

The image they have of prostitution is banal. They pay for prostitution services because this is their only way to have sex with a woman. They see themselves as victims of a system in which women’s material ambition forces men to spend their money. Ironically, they point out that prostitution is more economical than marriage:

I: Then, for you sex is almost always paid? more or less? C: Yes, I believe so, thing is marriage is more expensive than sex (Serviceman, 56 years, divorced —marriage annulment—, Zaragoza, 2011).

Some men have always imagined that prostitutes are free to choose them and to feel real pleasure with them. It is a sexual fantasy they create and maintain to reinforce their own hegemonic masculinity. This idea serves them to eroticize the practice of prostitution:⁹

They enjoy and some are there because they want... I like to go because of the “ways of seduction” I find there, they enjoy “giving pleasure” because “giving pleasure is a pleasure” and also because there is something spiritual, transcendental in that relation: not always, but sometimes it happens (secondary professor, 56 year, married, Madrid, 2012).

For this client’s profile women prostitute themselves because they want, because they have a comfortable job with which they make a lot of money, with no greater effort:

If she gets laid¹⁰ it is because of the money, it’s crystal clear (...). I’m sure that if many of the prostitutes there were given the chance to work for 900 Euros a month, they wouldn’t do it (...) (Serviceman, 56 years, divorced —marriage annulment—, Zaragoza, 2011)

If misogynic clients perceive women as materialistic beings, conversely they consider men to be “sexed beings”, genetically promiscuous. They call on certain pseudoscientific theories to demonstrate this unavoidable tendency of men to sexuality:

⁹ The masculine collective imaginary refers to the ideal vision that indicates the desirable masculine behavior and is constructed as follows: men do not pay for an orgasm, they pay for a fantasy of masculinity that includes a supposed and unlimited capability to give pleasure to every woman (Gimeno, 2012).

¹⁰ “*Follar*” in the original text in Spanish is the term used in Spain to refer to sexual intercourse, it is similar to ‘get laid’ in the English language.

I firmly believe in the theory of... this friend of mine... Darwin, Charles Darwin, then I believe man is somewhat genetically predisposed to procreation, for procreation, then I am sure that man definitively, apart from a pleasurable sensation, is genetically predisposed to sex... (Serviceman, 56 years, divorced —marriage annulation—, Zaragoza, 2011)

Among the most recurrent motivations for misogynic clients distinguishable are the search for “quality sex”, change the routine of married life and satisfy physiological needs to maintain physical and mental health:

Pleasure! (categorical) (...) lack of love... lack of sex... some time when I didn't have a girl, when I was younger [ha ha] I wanted to have a good time and went there... now I go rather for a change... otherwise, all the time the same [woman] is boring (worker, elementary studies, 28 years, married, Ourense, 2012).

Another motivation wielded to justify their consumption is the perception that many women are not as sexually active as them:

I'm unable but I have friends, pals who are all day here and... and we say it, he's the typical Spanish macho, has a woman, lovers, goes to the whorehouse, I mean, I want to say, we can't... can't label... there are women who (...) are very prudish and they don't like sex (medical doctor, 40 approx., divorced, Zaragoza, 2011).

Sexual experiences with women from other countries give these relations an added value, establishing a category of affective-sexual cultures:

South American women are normally hotter than women from the east for example, much hotter... Brazilian, Colombian, much sexier, because of their culture or they way they think, aren't they? (Serviceman, 56 years, divorced —marriage annulation—, Zaragoza, 2011).

As it will be the case in other client profiles, consuming sex with a group of colleagues or friends is the most frequent, and in many cases it is considered in the “protocol” of the very labor relations with customers or workmates:

I: Then, is it pretty usual to end up in a club? C: I think it is! What I have... 70% of the people! ha! I: and, why do you think this happens? C: (...) You get three, one works here, the other there and another in that and that's it, 90% of the people say, isn't there a club around? Well, yes, there is one, let's go to drink something, this or that... (Salesman, agricultural equipment, 25 years, single, Ponferrada, 2012).

An uncritical and conformist attitude toward prostitution leads to a bid to legalize and regularize this activity:

Now that they are here, at least let them have social security and that stuff (worker, elementary education, 28 years, married, Ourense, 2012)

They recognize the existence of sexual exploitation and abuses, but they do not value them. They also verify police connivance (bribes and “free pass”: free sex). They think that with legalization, these practices will be over:

I'm surely convinced there are... bah! If you pull that cord... you'll get scared, it is they are afraid, they won't tell, that other won't tell you either (the owner of the flat) but I'm sure that this (...) if it was legalized, that's it (Serviceman, 56 years, divorced —marriage annulment—, Zaragoza, 2011)-

This client's profile adopt a sexist stance, against gender equality policies; they even display a skeptical attitude toward the cases of macho violence against women:

[As for gender equality] I think this is hoax pulled by leftist governments to generate job posts... posts to have fun, in reality we'll never be equal, because two identical things can't be distinguished, and a man and a woman are totally distinguishable (...) I think that mistreatment is another hoax they are also setting up (hotel owner, secondary education, 53 years, single, Ourense, 2012).

Misogynic clients see prostitution in the sphere in which they can maintain their position of masculine power, which according to them, has been eroded by the policies on equality:

[On prostitution] (...) something they sell and we buy (...) but it is like a relation of power, I mean, I pay and so you do as I say, don't you? (...) (Martial arts teacher, 50 years, divorced with a partner, A Coruña, 2011).

b. Consumer client

In our research we obtained a hegemonic discourse of commonplaces from young people, a discourse of an explicit non-sexist nature and critical to the chauvinist inheritance from the past. In this group people younger than 40 years are the majority. All of them hold university or secondary studies.

Regarding their ideology, none identifies with the right. They are youths, by and large, educated and informed, who share consumeristic hedonistic ethics and who largely have a weak material and dependent base, as most of them live with their families. They consider that nowadays there is greater freedom in relations, including sex. They opine that the beliefs that women only look for affection, while men only for sex are diluting; for them, both sexes look for the same.

It is always that prejudice: men always want it, sex I mean, and women want affection, but I think that is nothing but a prejudice, really (GD2, Economics students, Cordoba, 2011).

They see woman as a peer. In their opinion, both sexes are active in all spheres (social, labor and sexual), even though they recognize women still experience certain discrimination and inequality:

I really think things are much better than some years ago, however we can find some differences, mainly in the labor sphere, in the others, in sexuality or society there are barely some differences (administrative worker, professional training, 29 single with a partner, Ourense, 2012).

However, they recognize that women's sexual freedom is more harshly punished than men's, something they consider unfair:

Yeah, that is still there: the man who dates a lot is a champion, while the woman who sleeps with many guys¹¹ is a whore. And I don't know how long they will take to quit that, but it is very unfair (GD2, Economics students, Cordoba, 2011).

The consumer client intuits the existence of sexually exploited women, a situation that is solved from the consumerist standpoint: "buying what is for sale":

Most of the women in prostitution, I believe, are exploited (...) they are in a position that I think they wouldn't take if they were given the chance (...) but no, I don't see it bad either (functionary, master degree, 35 years, single, Ourense, 2012).

In some clients of this group one notices a defense of gender equality, which makes them criticize macho attitudes in other men. However, their freedom and rights as consumers are above other sort of ethical or ideological considerations:

I believe there should be gender equality, but I also think that nowadays it isn't something that can be easily noticed in society (secondary teacher, 43 years, married, Ourense, 2012).

Among these young men there is a non-sexist vision, less chauvinist than that observed in previous masculine generations, nevertheless paradoxically, they do not apply this perspective on gender equality to prostitution. One notices a contradiction in them: they look for a feminine peer as a partner...

The ideal woman, physically... I have to like her physically, but... she has to be in synchrony with my ideas... and with how I am, because her body can be one thing now, but later (...) that you can talk with her about anything, and that she isn't a flowerpot (functionary, master degree, 35 years, single, Ourense, 2012).

... And at the same time, women in prostitution are treated as merchandise, another product to be consumed in McSex: fast, frugal, poor in quality and uncommitted. This way, they manage to conciliate non-sexist visions with paid sex: for them, the sphere of prostitution is another consumption market.

This mercantilist vision is completed by a system of values in which individualistic hedonism and the search for pleasure turn into their lives' drive:

[Sexual practices] It was normally all the same, they did their job, like pros, they are like (...) they also make their part to get you going (master degree, 35 years, single, Ourense, 2012).

It is quite frequent that sex consumption occurs from social aspects, emulating the groups of friends. This reason relates to a sort of a masculine unionist subculture: the group provides you with your masculine identity (Connell, 2003):¹²

¹¹ "Tios" in the original text in Spanish. It is the term used in Spain to refer to people; it is similar to 'guys' in the English language.

¹² Connell (2003) defines masculinity as a position in gender relations. To describe the masculinity's construction processes, the author focuses his analysis on relationships among men, rather than on man-woman relationships.

I got there [clubs] to be with my friends (...) one time, at a bachelor party, I knew there were things related to prostitution, I didn't take part in the evening and I didn't touch the woman either (secondary teacher, 43 years, married, Ourense, 2012).

In many cases, these group practices are performed as rites of passage to “become men”:

It has been in group celebrations (...) I supposed we went to have fun, but come on! I didn't go motivated by sex, I suppose that some friends of mine did, but I didn't; and not as a fantasy (...) I remember it now as something like a rite of passage (secondary teacher, 43 years, married, Ourense, 2012).

In some of their discourses there appears certain self-criticism to their past as clients: they did so, because they “were young”:

We would go once or twice a year (...) that was for some years, I don't know, four... five... pre-adult nonsense¹³ (laughs) (secondary teacher, 43 years, married, Ourense, 2012).

Eventually, the union of this partially non-sexist vision and mercantilist-consumeristic leads to a position in favor of legalizing prostitution, since it would guarantee the “hygienic and sanitary quality of the product” to be bought:

In a free market society, this activity shall be regulated to secure adequate conditions to perform the job and also to guarantee minimal security conditions for clients, regarding the hygiene and physical security for both (computer store manager, 34 years, single, Ourense, 2012).

In the typology of the consumer client we have located a minority discourse with a more political, critical, transparent, respectful, committed and ethical vision toward paid sex:

I never went to a whorehouse, ever (...) I'm not curious about that... besides, I feel a bit... erm... I'll some day... when I know that women there are free and pay social security and their right to be there (hotel owner, 37 years, with a partner, Santiago de Compostela, 2012).

His discourse refers to a left-wing perspective, feminine and anticapitalistic. With the purchase of sex, he intends to broaden his sensorial, affective, erotic experiences, from a complex and sophisticated approach to sexuality, which is understood with open-mindedness from a pansexual perspective, from a more oriental perspective than the Judeo-Christian cultural matrix or the occidental biomedical one.

I don't... I thought a lot of time that a role in which I was in command would be fun, and other times... I had a sensation yeah! Super pleasurable taking a role in which a woman dominated me, right? Because I played everything yeah... it is sex, then I had a good... good time (hotel owner, 37 years, with a partner, Santiago de Compostela, 2012).

His ideological and responsible commitment makes him criticize the media in relation to prostitution: most of the papers publish items on gender violence, and at the same time prostitution advertises:

¹³ “*Chorradas*” in the original text, the term is equivalent to ‘nonsense (stupidity)’ in English.

Yeah yeah... I think it is incredible that it is denounced... that in the same paper... there are honorable exceptions... public of course, right! There is this paper that doesn't publish prostitution ads (...) buuut... all right... other papers like *El Mundo* o *El País*, it is the same to me, suddenly they make a denounce... gender violence, and at the same time they are... probably financing it (hotel owner, 37 years, with a partner, Santiago de Compostela, 2012).

c. Friendly client

In this profile men under 40 years are the majority. All education levels and professions are represented. Moreover, among them there is a clear prevalence of left-wing ideologies. In the typology of the friendly client one finds those men who adopt a “kind” attitude when they pay for sex. These clients are capable of humanizing women in prostitution and “sympathize” with them. For them women who prostitute themselves do it because they do not have other alternative.

I pity the women who have to do this, but if they do they do it as a last resort, and obviously, it is better than stealing (RENFE operator, elementary education, 45 years, widower, Ourense, 2011).

They think that their good performance as lovers makes them different from other clients, because they know how to produce pleasure in prostitutes. They see themselves as luxury clients, as they make women who practice prostitution have a good time, because they treat them well and make them enjoy. This attitude takes, in some cases, to establish affective bonds that create links that come from “casual dating” at weekends or the beginning of a love relationship:

Some of them really liked it, well the typical thing... they gave you their number and “call me one day and we’ll go out” (...) there was even one who had a kind of crush on me (martial arts teacher, 50 years, divorced with a partner, A Coruña, 2011).

In the context of prostitution there is certain “dramatization” of the courtship by women, and of a sexual intercourse in which they make the client believe he has exceptional qualities that make women enjoy and have orgasms, but everything is fake and dramatized so that the client feels good, as an “excellent lover”.

Although the client believes it, and I attest to that because I have heard it, the woman gets laid because of money, not because of affection, love not even to have sex, and probably she really wants to be sick (interview with a social technician, Érguete Muller Project, Ourense, 2011).

Even though sexual needs are listed in their reasons, there are others such as covering more affective aspects, like company or friendship:

I was married for more than 20 years, no kids, I feel the need of affection, I have some affective needs, this way I can cover them, at least temporarily (RENFE operator, elementary education, 45 years, widower, Ourense, 2011).

Sometimes they even recognize that consuming prostitution is not a decision that makes them proud. The friendly client usually argues that consumption occurs in gatherings or parties with friends or colleagues:

I went, I didn't participate, I drank something but no... (breaths in) but this is about dinners in which you get laid... go to dinners with friends "let's go there, let's go there!!" (...). I go and all (...) but I don't like dropping by there (unemployed, secondary education, 47 years, divorced, Barbadas, 2012).

These clients usually support regulatory stances on prostitution, however they deem its regulation complicated.

Regularizing this activity, including medical inspections, would reduce the incidence of these effects that can even affect the family life of men who use this service as a consequence of STD (medical doctor, divorced, Ourense, 2011).

d. Critical client

In this profile we find men about 30 years; the most representative in this group is that everyone defines as leftist. The narrative profile of the critical or regretting client is the least abundant out of the respondents. There is a critical perspective, in which the existence of inequality between genders and the injustice experienced by women in a patriarchal and capitalist context are recognized. For them, this inequality is aggravated to the extent we descend the socioeconomic ladder, the origin and legal status of women in prostitution. Because of this, the critical client considers that prostituted women are one of the most vulnerable social collectives. According to them, women prostitute out of need, being in some cases victims of mafia:

Prostitution is a social reality that was never faced in the right way, because it is a problem, a situation, a hard reality. It is a very complex job, there is no legislation, it produces a lot of money, with mafias involved and some of these women are enslaved, suffer aggressions, extortions, blackmails... (insurance intermediary, 48 years, married, Ourense 2011).

The critical client considers there are more privileges for men than for women and that there is besides a greater control of the emotional and sexual life of women:

I: what was your impression of the women working there? C: Pfff I never thought of it there, but later... what a shitty life! Basically because they were enslaved, not because of other thing, I was impressed because one had marks on her face, some scar and such (carpenter, 28 years, with a partner, A Pobra do Caramiñal, 2011).

They state that motivations to consume paid sex are not the ones men indicate, but there are other hidden reasons related to the power they have in the prostitution context and that allow them to release their quotidian frustrations by humiliating and abusing these women:

If you feel low or such, you have one chance there to feel superior and to do what you really want (...) we joined some of them... I didn't fancy that,¹⁴ because I noticed a vibe like superiority (carpenter, 28 years, with a partner, A Pobra do Caramiñal, 2011).

¹⁴ "Moló" [molar (verb)] in the original text in Spanish; it is a colloquial term to like something.

They develop a narrative in which other motivation of the men who pay for sex is noticed: the increment of the commoditization of human relationships, which makes sex and affection be sought, in many cases, separately:

You look for someone who gives you a blowjob for 15 euros, that's it... then people look for that, those five or ten minutes and the guy is relieved (trader, 50 years married, Santiago de Compostela, 2012).

Conclusions

In occidental contemporary societies the mass consumption of prostitution by male population is one of the most significant indicators of a way to understand, live and feel sexuality, to glimpse the norm that regulates the affections and sexuality of our historic time.

Contrary to expectations, prostitution has acquired unsuspected and unpredictable relevance in the context of sexual liberation, which suggested a progressive disappearance. We say “unsuspected” because commitment to equality, joined with the new sexual liberty, enjoyed by several generations, generated the blurry idea that prostitution would end up becoming a residual and marginal phenomenon.

Prostitution has expanded and diversified, it has become a practice legitimized by the very post-capitalist system, in a context of exploitation and pauperization increasingly normalized. From an outline over the existing scientific production and also empirical research, this paper in Spain focuses on the study of the client, trying to understand why men —the largest consumer of prostitution in our country— resort to paid sex.

The typologies obtained in this research coincide with many of those presented in similar works in this field. However, in our research we have taken one step further, as we have characterized the clients of each typology. In the profile of the misogynic client, men who have poor schooling and identify with the right are the majority prevail. At the opposite end, men with a critical profile, distinguishable are those with better education and self-identified with the left.

The analyzed individuals unfolded their emic perspective (i.e., the vision of the researched subjects), particular for their reasons, causes and impressions on prostitution; however, it is from the etic perspective (i.e., the vision “from the outside” of the researched subjects) that they can be complemented and fully understood. Through the theoretical perspective of “frame analysis” and the sociological significances, this reality has been comprehended.

To sum up, this research identifies a series of sexual and extra-sexual reasons to consume paid sex: the search for domination, entertainment, affection, sociability, the desire of trying new “merchandise”, etc. In none of the discourses did we find pleasure for its own sake as a transcending act.

The causes and motivations are other, and from our viewpoint, these relate to the construction of a dominant and patriarchal masculinity that is still hegemonic in our societies, and that directly matches with the homosocial link (Gilmore, 1990; Connell, 2003): the relationship with the masculine peer group (then, it is usual that they go to the place of prostitution as a group).

Buying sex responds to a patriarchal mandate and to a strategy, not necessarily conscious, to reinforce a masculinity shaped by an identity that revolves around the exhibition before the peer group, the “use of the phallus” and frequent sexual relations with women.

In our work hypothesis we consider that buying sex is directly related to contemporary masculinities, build on compulsive sexual activities and with other men as witness so that there is public testimony of that underpinning and reinforcement of their masculinity. The dominant masculine identity centers on a narcissistic phallogocentrism¹⁵ that displaces the traditional model (father-protector-provider) and is build in relation to the “other” men. And it is in prostitution spaces that this sort of masculine identity shelters, reproduces and legitimizes.

The elements on which this dimension seats are collective consumption, a pact of silence shared by consumers of prostitution and groups of friends —this way, what occurs in the club is never revealed— and the presence-use of the phallus. These elements produce an impeccable code shared by the masculinized subjects, the “prostituting subculture”, which can be considered another exponent of the violation of human rights and gender violence.

Prostitution appears as another element of the leisure industry at a socio-historical time of banalization of sexuality, hyper-valuing of pleasure and commoditization of human relationships (Han, 2014). There are bodies, such as those of some poor women, whose value in the labor market is almost null; their bodies are mistreated and even assassinated, turned into symbolical marks of the power of a determinate masculinity (Atencio, 2015). They are the propitiating victims of femicides, in a context of neoliberal capitalism.

The perverse and pernicious effects of the excess of commodification and reification of human beings would be rejected in other identity models in which other forms of “masculinity”, based on the integral personal development, physical, psychical and social of men are reinforced through the practice of a pleasurable and healthful sex life that develops in the frame of respectful, egalitarian, fair and solidary social relations with other men and also with women.

¹⁵ With this expression we refer to a misogynic sexuality in which only the pleasure of man is relevant and woman as an individual is ignored, there is only an instrumental use of her for the “greater glory” of the man (Atencio *et al.*, 2015).

In our opinion, in an ever globalized world it is necessary to reflect on human sexuality. There exist other forms to interpret affection, gender and sexuality to be able to produce an alternative “epistemology” that helps build a fairer and more egalitarian world.

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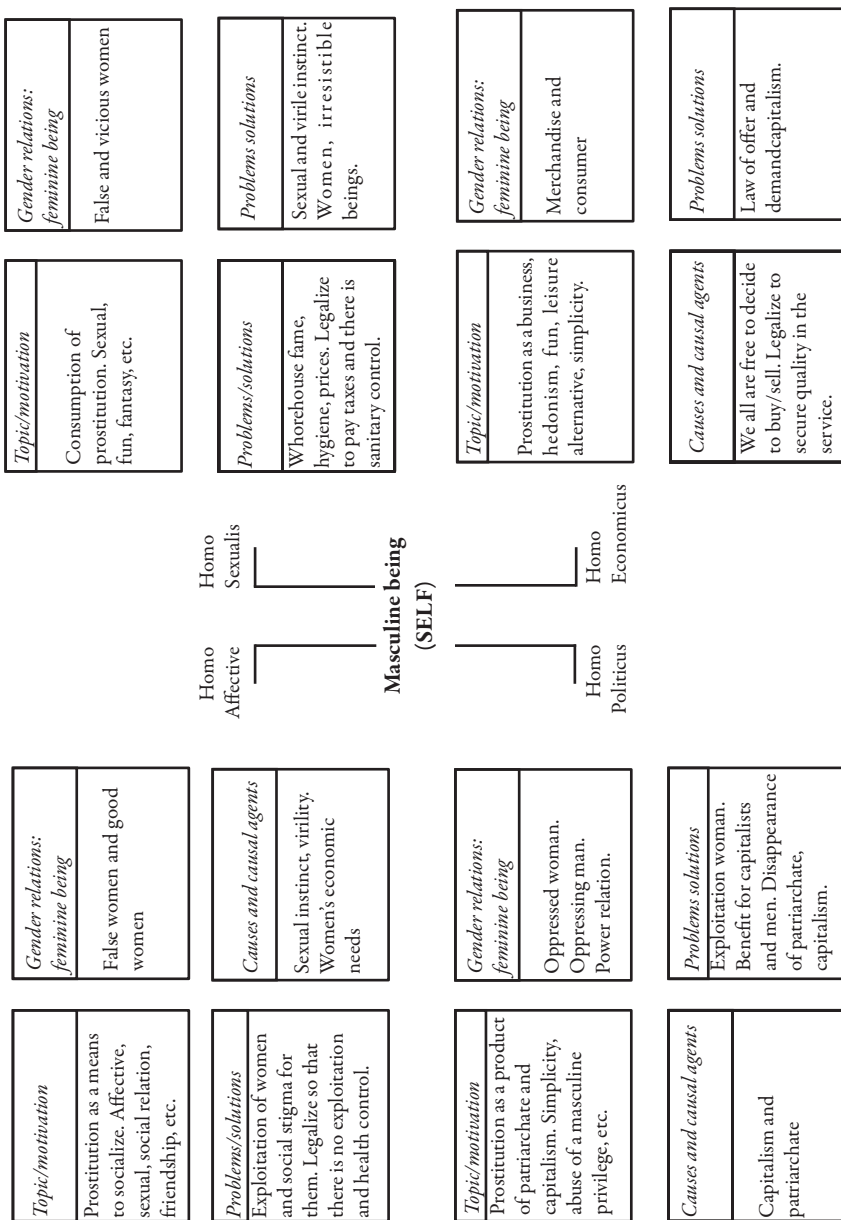
Table 1

Profile of the 29 respondents

	Misogynie (6 clients)	Consumer (10 clients)	Friendly (8 clients)	Critical (5 clients)
Age	25, 28, 36, 43, 53, 56	24, 29, 32, 33, 34, 35, 37, 43, 50, 57	21, 28, 32, 40, 45, 47(2), 48	28, 30, 32, 48, 50
Marital status	single (3), married (2), divorced (1)	single (3), with a partner (3), married (3)	single (2), married (1), divorced (3), widower (1)	Single (2) With a partner (1) Married (2)
Education	elementary (1), secondary (2)	secondary (3), higher education (4)	elementary (2), secondary (1), higher education (3)	Secondary (3) Higher education (2)
Profession	worker (1), trader (1), hotel owner (1), admin worker (1), military police (1), serviceman (1)	trader (1), store manager (1), martial arts teacher (1), administrative (1), secretary (1), secondary teacher (3)	unemployed (2), waiter (1), worker (1), administrative (1), medical doctor (2)	Unemployed (2) Trader (2) Carpenter (1)
Ideology	right (1), liberal (1), independent (1), apolitical (1)	social-democrat (1) Left (4)	liberal (1), progressive (1) left (2)	progressive (2), left (3)

Source: own elaboration from the fieldwork.

Figure 1
Schema of the four typologies of prostitution clients



Source: own elaboration.

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