

# Feeling like a *Natural* Woman

Dutch female demand for male supply in the world of Gigoloism



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### **Abstract**

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This explorative study is based on in-depth interviews with female clientele of gigolo's and tangles theoretical and political assumptions about sex work, considering the current international demonization of sex workers clientele in a prostitution-as-violence-against-women paradigm. In this study the roles are turned and it are not the men who seek sexual encounters but the women. Women who differ in age, sexual orientation and marital status seem to have common demands and desires to answer the main research question in this thesis: *What are the demands and (sexual) desires of Dutch female clientele of gigolo's and how do the perceptions of these demands and (sexual) desires reflect the sexual double standard?* Describing and analysing the demands and desires of female clientele of gigolo's - questioning 'why' they book a gigolo - can contribute to important theoretical and political insights concerning the sex market and the dichotomy between male and female sexuality. Especially when the female clientele seem to deconstructed a social stigma theory on a sexual double standard with a new biological imperative that addresses the naturalness of female sexuality. This small explorative study is the first social scientific study about female clientele of gigolo's and I hope it will contribute to a better understanding on the diversity of sex work and a direction towards implementing more qualitative studies on the demand side in the commercial sex industry instead of the prevailing studies on the supply side.

**Keywords:** 'boyfriend experience' – 'gigolo's' – '(female) sexuality' – 'heterosexual reciprocity' – 'prostitution' – 'sex work' – 'sexual double standard' – '(whore) stigma'

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## **Preface**

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Lady of the street, tramp, whore, bawd, lady of pleasure, tart, hooker, rent a dread, beach boy. All different names, for different work that might seem to fall under the same umbrella, namely prostitution. But since the 1980s several prostitute organisations, especially COYOTE (Call Of Your Old Tired Ethics) tried to reframe, redefine and reconceptualise the term prostitute, due to its connotations of shame, unworthiness and wrongdoing they introduced the term ‘sex work’. The term was first coined by Carol Leigh, also known as Scarlot Harlot in 1980, a prostitute, activist and member of COYOTE (Ditmore, 2010: 31). Unlike the word ‘prostitute’, the term ‘sex worker’ tries to suggest an alternative framing that is ironically both a radical sexual identity and a normalization of prostitutes as ‘service workers’ and ‘care-giving professionals’ (Bernstein, 1999: 111). Almost 30 years after Carol Leigh’s recommendations Melissa Ditmore (2010) describes in her book *‘Sex Work Matters’* that: “*sex work is a useful term as it emphasizes the labour employment aspect of paid sex. And at the same time it is an umbrella term which encompasses the diversity of persons who provide a variety of erotic and/or sexual services*”.

Prostitution still has, partly due to its conceptualisation within former and current policies, media debates and its equation to sexual exploitation and human trafficking a negative connotation. More and more researchers, feminist and those that work in the industry adopt the term ‘sex worker’, almost everybody except (inter)national policy makers.

The book of Kempadoo and Doezema (1998), *‘Global Sex Workers: Rights, Resistance and Redefinition’* exemplifies this (scientific and social) shift and the importance of using the term sex workers to understand the market while acknowledging its diversity within the sex industry. And why those that work in the industry resist using terms like ‘prostitute’ and the importance of redefining concepts for their (human) rights and (sexual) agency. As described by Ditmore it are books such as these that signified a shift in the social representation of prostitution by both persons inside the industry and in academic work (Ditmore, 2010: 32). By victimizing prostitutes and criminalizing clientele it seems that moral and sexual standards still guide sex work policy. Although I would like to claim that by victimizing prostitutes, referring to the sex workers as ‘prostitutes’, equating sex work to sexual exploitation and by placing men on the demand side and women on the supply side, notwithstanding the evidence that these sides can be subverted gives us a one-sided view about the industry. I want to make a personal apology in this preface that both ‘sex work’ and ‘prostitution’ will be used simultaneously in this thesis because of a neglect of the full

adaptation of the term ‘sex work’ in theories and policy reports, when I refer to, paraphrase or quote policy reports, certain literature and theories I have to make use of the concept prostitution. I do want to highlight that I personally do not believe that using the term prostitution could ever empower sex workers and remove it’s stigma. A deconstruction of the category ‘prostitute’ is necessary to counter prejudice and to conduct scientifically valid inquiry (Pheterson, 1990: 397). The term ‘gigoloism’, the suffix of ‘gigolo’, refers to the activity of gigolo’s, indicating a characteristic quality. In this thesis I describe gigolo as a male sex worker, although as will be described in this thesis not all of the gigolo’s themselves use the concept to describe their profession, nor do their clients.

With this thesis I would like to claim that it is evidence and not morality that should guide any kind of sex work policy by describing the aims, desires and meaning that both clientele and sex workers attach to sex work. I therefore hope that this explorative thesis can contribute to a better understanding of the diversity of sex work and it’s relation with heterosexual morality.

## ***I Introduction***

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### ***Just a gigolo?***

“*Would you ever book a gigolo?*” became a frequently asked question to all my family, friends, colleagues and those that accidentally bumped into me at a bar just trying to make small talk, while writing this thesis. I never heard a yes, not once. Instead they all replied with: “*I am not going to pay for sex when I can get it for free!*” or “*No, I wouldn't, but would you?*”. And I don't know. The question “*Would you ever?*” was transformed by Dr. Phil in “*Who would ever...*” during his show on the 18<sup>th</sup> of March 2012<sup>1</sup>. During this show he talked with the owner of the high-end male escort service ‘Cowboys 4 Angels’ and some of his top gigolos and one of their clients. Because it is illegal in the US to sell sex, the owner, Garren, claims that: “*We are in the business of selling companionship, not sex. If somebody would call my agency and would be looking for some kind of sexual encounter it is not, and I reply, that is not what we sell! I sell sexual appeal for my product, and this product is companionship*”.

But what about their provocative posts on the website? His simple answer is: “*Yeah what are they selling? Sex or underwear, who would know? The entire point is to let the client feel special, it's all about them. We provide the client an evening of fun, with no strings attached. I think there is a lot of stigma about escort agencies, they assume the worse and they make it into something dirty which it is not!*” On the website they describe: “*Cowboys male escorts for women are without a doubt the most attractive males in the country, and we are the only male companion service which is for women only*”. But if it is not sex but companionship, why would the cowboy's sexual orientation be of any interest? Which is described explicitly on the website. What exactly is it that makes it so special as Garren is trying to tell the audience of dr. Phill show. Garren replied with: “*It is a form of art. It is a very hard job to do. I can give them the do's and the don'ts but if they do not have the personality to that, then it is not going to happen!*”

Interestingly this was not the first time that Cowboys 4 Angels appeared on the American television, they have been in several shows and even have their own reality show named ‘gigolos’ since 2011. In the teaser of this reality show<sup>2</sup> Steven, an LA gigolo, tells the

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<sup>1</sup> The Dr Phil show of the 18<sup>th</sup> of March 2012 is online on youtube – Cowboys 4 Angels, male escort for women featured on the Dr. Phil show <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a6FjK2LfTkk>

<sup>2</sup> The teaser of the reality show is online on youtube: Gigolo Season 1, Behind the scenes <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zmNinpXHf1U>

viewers: *“I would do anything for my son, anything and anybody”* his friend and colleague Vin Armani ads: *“I just really love women, I always loved women, I love talking with women, flirting with women, picking them up and sex? Off course!”*. A voice over states: *“Men want to be them, women want to do them”*. And indeed in several of their reality shows you explicitly see women who have sex with one or even five gigolo’s during their evening of fun. It is interesting how an escort agency like ‘Cowboys 4 Angels’ keeps telling TV hosts that it is not about sex. Dr Phil cuts it to the chase when he asked one of the regular clients that attended his show if she had ever had sex with one of the gigolo’s: which she answered with: *“what kind of a woman do you think I am dr. Phil?”*. Although we still might wonder and even assume that she did had sex with one of the gigolos she couldn’t have told this to dr. Phil during his show, this would not only make the agency look bad because then their business would be illegal, it would make her look bad as well when she would have paid for sex. Garren, the owner, when being asked if he is ‘a pimp’, replied slightly shocked on this question: *“I do not refer to myself as a pimp. A pimp is a concept being used within the context of prostitution. This is not prostitution!”*.

Since 2009 the Netherlands have their own ‘Cowboys 4 Angels’ agency, called ‘The Mens Company’, although they have comparable websites with descriptions and photographs of the gigolo’s that you can book (online), they are different in the fact that the Dutch website explicitly describes the men’s expertise: from massage to role-play. A year later, Linda de Mol, a famous Dutch television personality, asked the same questions as Dr. Phil, namely: ‘who would book a gigolo’. But she didn’t asked this question to the gigolo’s or the owner of the company, neither to one of their (regular) clients, she asked this question to the readers and new subscribers of her tabloid and lifestyle magazine ‘Linda’. Instead of giving new subscribers an ordinary gift Linda gave them the extraordinary, a 2 hours date with a gigolo. Linda was mainly interested if there would be a market for these gigolo’s in the Netherlands, who would book them? And more important, why would they book a gigolo? But she made the mistake by raising this question to the new subscribers, because they wouldn’t book them, they would get one for free! 25 new subscribers<sup>3</sup> who could tell Linda ‘why they would like to book a gigolo’ would get a date with a gigolo.

7 Months later, in November 2010 Linda Magazine wrote a small evaluative story about how the twenty-five women experienced their date. And frankly the few experiences

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<sup>3</sup> This ‘scoop’ resulted in more than a thousand new subscribers, eight hundred of the new subscribers (eventually) chose the ordinary gift, a bag. 208 Of them preferred to have a date with a gigolo and only 25 of them - probably those who had the best stories ‘why’ they wanted the two-hours sex date- got a sex-date with a gigolo (ad.nl)



that they wrote down weren't that positive: a lot of new subscribers chose Danny, but he seemed to be more occupied with pictures of his girlfriend and children than a promised (sexual) act' and other gigolo's seemed to have a very small penis (ad.nl). The Dutch newspaper Telegraaf had the newspaper headline: 'Linda Gigolo isn't up for the job' (*Linda Gigolo kan er niets van*) (telegraaf.nl). Off course these juicy stories sell better in the world of media, still it was the first time that 'gigolo's' were made into a topic of debate. Linda de Mol herself replied that she did not understand all the commotion, because: "*this is so hypocrite, men are paying for sex for centuries*" (ibid.). But was she doing any good to compare the market of female sex workers with gigolos? The 'why' question, which was supposed to be Linda's starting point to begin with, still seemed unanswered. In this thesis the question 'why do women book a gigolo' takes a central position.

When we look at the commercialized sex industry, whether it is legal or illegal in a country to pay for sex, men are placed on the demand side and women on the supply side. We think of men as sexual active and women as sexual passive, though sexually attractive. This double standard (SDS) has a great influence on the way men and women give meaning to sex, shape their relationships, describe what is appropriate or not and even shape the actual politics about prostitution. Roughly there are two international policy approaches towards prostitution, the prohibitionist<sup>4</sup> and the abolitionist<sup>5</sup>.

In the Netherlands we have a mixture of these policies when since 1999 prostitution was legalized (Outshoorn, 2012: 232). In the law and policy changes the last decade(s), especially in the Netherlands we can see a new system, namely that of regimentation or regulation. In 2000 a new law was introduced: the prorogation of the prohibition of brothels<sup>6</sup> (*opheffing bordeel verbod*), that legalized brothels. Currently a new Dutch law is debated in the First Chamber of the Netherlands that regulates prostitution and combats the atrocities in the sex branche<sup>7</sup> (*wet regulering prostitutie en bestrijding misstanden in de seksbranche*).

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<sup>4</sup> The prohibitionist approach towards prostitution is the most repressive legal regime. Whereby prostitution is seen as deviant or criminal behaviour. It seeks to prohibit all activities that are related with prostitution and even criminalizes all parties that are involved, even the prostitute (ENMP, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> With the underlying idea that prostitution exist because brothel keepers, pimps and traffickers lure women and children into the prostitution to profit from her earnings. Therefore prostitutes are not seen, like the prohibitionist as deviants or criminals but as victims who should be rescued (ENMP, 2003)

<sup>6</sup> The primary focus of this new law was rooted in two aims. First, it aims to legalize the organization of voluntary prostitution. Second, it aimed to increase the penalties against those involved in the organization of involuntary prostitution (Scott et al. 2005: 336)

<sup>7</sup> This law comes with stricter rules involving a stricter screening of those that own a brothel or agency. One of the rules is the obligation to have a licence another is the rise in minimum age from 18 to 21. It is not sure when the law will be completely implemented as it is currently debated in the First Chambers in the

The Dutch government has a steady lobby in the European Union and they currently participate in a EU-project that guides the development of a European resolution for the victims of human trafficking. This EU-project is the project of Mary Honeyball<sup>8</sup> who equates prostitution with human trafficking and claims that prostitution is both a cause and consequence of gender inequality and promotes the Swedish or 'Nordic Model'. Whereby the person who buys sex, who is, in the eyes of Honeyball, virtually always the man, is committing a criminal offence (European Parliament, 2013). This Swedish model reinforces a prostitution-as-violence-against-women paradigm. Taken the male gender identity as a "given" (Satz, 1995: 79). A focus on this prejudiced gender stereotyped demand side of prostitution is also rendered in the American John schools<sup>9</sup> and Swedish KAST<sup>10</sup> groups.

The prostitution-as-violence-against-women paradigm is too short-sighted when the same policies are built upon a heteronormative discourse and assumptions about male and female sexuality, giving no (sexual) agency to those that work in the sex industry and no agency to those that make use of the services given in the industry. Especially when considering the broader scope of prostitution within a global economy and the growing demand for male sex workers or at least a growing supply. Describing and analysing the demands and desires of female clientele of gigolo's – questioning 'why' they book a gigolo - can contribute to important theoretical and political insights concerning the sex market and the dichotomy between male and female sexuality. Describing the differences between the sexual encounters of male clientele and female clientele will help clarify the impact of gender on the dynamics of paid sex transactions, producing a more nuanced, multidimensional and comprehensive understanding of sex work than that go beyond the scope of current policy restrictions (Weitzer, 2009: 227). In this study the women, the clientele of gigolo's, are considered to be a central source of information, because there has not been a single descriptive qualitative study on their demands and desires. As if women are not allowed to be sexually active, let alone pay for sex. The reason why I don't know if I would pay for a gigolo is not because I can get sex for free. But it is mostly because the women that shared their stories with me taught me that it's not 'just a gigolo' and 'just sex', but that there is so much

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Netherlands, some of the motions that involve the registration of prostitutes and the obligation of clients to be certain that the prostitute is registered (*vergewis plicht*) are already removed from the bill (Rijksoverheid.nl).

<sup>8</sup> Mary Hilda Rosamund Honeyball (1952) is currently a member of the committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality. [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/5846/Mary\\_HONEYBALL\\_home.html](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/5846/Mary_HONEYBALL_home.html)

<sup>9</sup> John schools are usually a diversion program for those being arrested for soliciting the services of a prostitute instead of a prosecution or as a condition of probation. (Monto, 2000: 70).

<sup>10</sup> In respond to the criminalization of clients groups of social workers assist clients through the provision of counselling aimed at launching psychotherapeutic treatment (Serughetti, 2013: 41).

more to it. Although some of them almost talked me into it, it still would not be fair considering their sexual quests and life stories.

The stories of these female clientele are described in full length in chapter five and six of this thesis. But first, in the following chapter, the concepts ‘stigma’, ‘whore stigma’ and the ‘sexual double standard’ will be elaborated as key theoretical concepts in this thesis. Stigma and the sexual double standard can be seen as produced by policies or (re)producing the prostitution policies. These key concepts are incorporated in the sub-questions and main research question that are described in the third, methodology, chapter. In this chapter the qualitative methodologies of this explorative study will be discussed together with some of the main methodological obstacles, insights and ethical dilemmas.

In the fourth chapter, the context, both the political and theoretical context of this research will be described. These context are an important foundation for a research on female clientele of gigolo’s when an emphasis is being placed upon current conceptualisations of clients from sex workers and conceptual leaps in the theoretical understandings of sex work. In both the fifth and the sixth chapter, the research results of this study will be presented to be able to answer the research question: *‘What are the demands and (sexual) desires of Dutch female clientele of gigolo’s and how do the perceptions of these demands and (sexual) desires reflect the sexual double standard?’*. Last but not least the last chapters of this thesis consist out of a conclusion of this research and a discussion with suggestions for further research.

## **2 Theory**

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In this chapter the concepts ‘stigma’, ‘whore-stigma’ and the ‘sexual double standard’ will be elaborated as key theoretical concepts in this thesis. Although these concepts are interrelated we can never know what comes first, policy or morality. Therefore, the sexual double standard is an addition to the subjectification of the gendered whore stigma but also an outcome of the prostitution-as-violence-against-women paradigm.

### ***2.1.1 The concept stigma***

Erving Goffman (1922-1982) a Canadian Sociologist looked at the concept stigma from a sociological perspective.

Stigma is a Greek word (στίγμα) that refers to a type of marking that was cut or burned into the skin of deviants like criminals and slaves in order to visibly identify them as deviant persons, to show that he or she must be contaminated or unchaste and that you'd better – especially in public- avoid them. It seems that in its contemporary use the term 'stigma' still resembles this Greek meaning although it's emphasis is more placed upon the reasoning that someone is not excepted and less emphasis is placed upon the physical marks. When we first see someone, we tend to value a person by something that you could see in an instant, a certain characteristic (Goffman, 1963: 10). For Goffman the stigma is the relationship between a characteristic and a stereotype. Goffman identified three types of conditions which may stigmatize the individual: physical deformities or handicaps, membership in a minority racial or ethnic group or blemishes of character, which refers to an individual that is perceived to have moral deficits (ibid.). This last category involves sex workers and their clientele.

Goffman proposed that stigmatized individuals often struggle to maintain a positive identity in spite of the negative assumptions society makes about them (Goffman, 1963 in: Koken et al, 2004: 16). Stigma arises from a fundamental phenomenon in our society, namely, stereotypification or a generalization of our normative expectations about behaviour and characteristics (Goffman, 1963: 54). If someone has a stigma he or she has an undesirable difference with what we would expect according to 'a norm'. We could only speak of a stigma when there is a general agreement that there is a norm that everybody should convey to. This leads to certain expectations about the characteristics, characteristics that are almost separate from the individuals that might be stigmatized. But there is a difference between using this norm and actually living up to the standards of this norm.

According to Goffman, individual identity may be dual in nature: one possesses both a virtual and an actual social identity. A virtual identity is comprised by the characteristics that one is assumed to have, the actual social identity is what he or she truly possesses (Goffman, 1963 in: Koken et al, 2014: 16-17). In the process of socializing with others, Goffman describes that for those that are stigmatized the 'moral career' – in which he learns and acknowledges the viewpoints of the 'normal people' and internalizes them as such. In this process of socialization he or she is accepting the stigma and will be learning the all it's consequences into detail (Goffman, 1963: 36). This socialization process pressures the stigmatized into different relationships with other (normal) people (ibid.:40). Visibility, in this extend is of great importance. When does one show it's stigma? When does one see ones stigma? Ultimately you might say that stigma is about social control, the fact is that it is a necessarily social phenomena in itself. Without a society, one cannot have a stigma. To have a

stigma, one must have a norm where it deviates from. Stigma to this extent is a dynamic and social relationship. Stigma is entirely dependent on social, economic, and political power – it takes power to stigmatize. In some instances the role of power is obvious. However, the role of power in stigma is frequently overlooked because in many instances power differences are so taken for granted as to seem unproblematic (Link and Phelan, 2001: 375).

Must be mentioned that certain stigma's are easy to hide from the outside and would therefore not be of any influence on someone's personal relations. But the fact that you have to 'hide' it, because you know that it's not perceived as a norm makes you aware of the stigma (Goffman, 1963: 57). When there is no social acceptance of one's stigma, he or she inevitably seeks people, or a community, who would have a common 'stigma' or at least where the stigma might be accepted, understood and tolerated. To give some kind of foundation to build a life embracing being 'different'. Besides building a community, there will always be institutions, persons and representatives of certain stigmata. The task that these representatives inevitably have is to shed light on certain stigma's and to move society beyond their internalized social judgements (Goffman, 1963: 26-29). One of these spokespersons for sex workers is Gail Pheterson. Ghail Pheterson, a social psychologist a former sex worker and current researcher, activist and writer with a profound interest and aim to demystify international prostitution dynamics.

### ***2.1.2 The whore stigma: the prostitute as the prototype of unchaste women***

In line with Goffman, Gail Pheterson explores the stigma of sex workers, the so-called whore stigma and its paradigms. This whore stigma is the stigma that is being reproduced by the prostitution-as-violence-against-women paradigm. For Pheterson 'the prostitute' is the prototype of the stigmatized woman. Pheterson describes that the adjective meaning of whore is 'unchaste'. And unchaste is defined as 'indulging in unlawful or immoral sexual intercourse; lacking in purity, virginity, decency (of speech), restraint and simplicity; defiled (i.e. polluted, corrupted). Any woman who is suspected of such unchaste behaviour is likely to acquire the social status of 'prostitute' (Pheterson, 1990: 398).

Pheterson aims to represent prostitutes because prostitution remains an abstraction when personal experiences and/or identification with the prostitution scenarios are taboo. The dishonour of whores and unworthiness of whore associates would mark those (as a stigma) who disclose prostitution experiences as 'politically incorrect' or worse. Pheterson defines the

whore stigma in line with the stigma conceptualisation of Goffman: *'a mark of shame or disease on an unchaste female slave or criminal'*. Whore means prostitute, and a prostitute is a woman who offers to hire her body for indiscriminate sexual intercourse. When Pheterson comes up all the definitions<sup>11</sup> of a prostitute, a prostitute becomes one who sells her honour by offering to hire her body for base gain or for an unworthy doing, specifically sexual intercourse (Pheterson, 1996: 37). The prostitute is the prototype of every stigmatized woman, she is both named and dishonoured by the word whore (ibid.: 65).

The whore stigma, described by Pheterson is specifically a female gender stigma. For those that actually are a prostitute, the prostitute is not only a subjectification of the stigma but an embodiment as well, they are whores. This gendered stigma is regulated through society, speaking of prostitution we can't go beyond a certain gender asymmetry in society. According to Pheterson there are four key institutions that regulate relations between women and men, and are 'obligatory'. In the sense as Goffman would argue that it are social prescriptions when placed in certain categories and behaving like one is supposed to behave when ascribed to a certain category, acting out a norm. For Pheterson these key institutions are: heterosexuality, marriage, reproduction and prostitution. Because each of these institutions are asymmetric when: (1) the class men have more authority, autonomy, rights, access to resources, money and status than the class women; (2) women must provide services to men (3) male violence (or threat of violence) functions to intimidate, control and appropriate women. While heterosexuality, marriage and reproduction are the basis of female legitimacy, the prostitution prism would have us believe that women are either legitimate or illegitimate. A heterosexual married mother could not possibly be a whore, and that a whore is necessarily a perverted non-wife and non-mother. In reality both whore as prostitute and whore as unchaste are stigmas that apply to the general pattern of female lives (ibid.: 14).

To become a stigma there is a need of certain categorizations and characteristics, whether these characteristics are visible or not, these characteristics are often symbolic and do not need a physical body.

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<sup>11</sup> Gail Pheterson found other definitions of 'prostitute'. Prostitute is further defined as a verb: to prostitute oneself is to sell ones honour for base gain or to put ones abilities to infamous use. Other descriptions include men secondarily in the noun definition and specify in the verb definition the shame attached to dishonour and the unworthiness and wrongdoing attached to infamous use. The noun clearly denotes a person, especially a woman, offering sex, in particular intercourse, for money; the verb denotes any persons activity which need not be sexual, put to uncommendable use. Those meanings are likely to conform to popular opinions except that many people collapse the second definition into the first. (Pheterson, 1996: 37).

For Pheterson the whore stigma is a signifier for those that are suspected of being or acting like a prostitute, including typifications<sup>12</sup> of female dishonour (Pheterson, 1990: 397). Sexual initiative, sexual knowledge and sexual skills are signs of female dishonour and are considered unchaste. Experience is commonly assumed to elevate a man and spoil a woman (Pheterson, 1996: 65). When a woman is a slut, a man is considered a stud. (ibid.: 76).

This label, the whore stigma, has much more to do with gender codes and female decency than it has to do with the actual commerce of sexuality. As Pheterson described the prostitute is the prototype of the stigmatized woman, when acting unchaste she is subjectified by the term ‘whore’.

Taking a next step to the actual embodiment of the stigma, gender codes are even more relevant. Pheterson describes that almost exclusively men pay for sex and largely women provide sex. And significantly, those who explicitly provide sex are defined by their activity as prostitutes while those that buy sex are neither defined nor branded by engagement in the same activity. (Pheterson, 1996: 27). We can question this argument of Pheterson when considering the prostitution-as-violence-against-women paradigm itself problematizing the current criminalization of male clients and the pathologization of normal heterosexual relationships given the different international policy restrictions. Pheterson, while describing the whore stigma and the ‘prostitute’ as gendered phenomena, does raise an important question, in line with my thesis: ‘Why does the variable ‘gender’ rarely appear in prostitution research?’. And while asking it she is already stating her answer. Her answer is “*that being a sex client is not a social status but rather an activity of dominant persons who are more or less free from medical, legal and social control*”. “*But..*”, and she continues: “*Perhaps if more women had the money, sexual license and psychological inclination to buy sex, ‘prostitute client’ would become an additional stigmatized status attached to the female gender*” (Pheterson, 1996: 30). That being a female client of sex workers will generate a double stigma for women might be a possibility but that is not because of an additional stigma of ‘prostitute client’, I would like to claim that it might be the inability to be seen as a client that doubles the stigma, when the ‘prostitute client’ is still and only considered to be male in current policy debates.

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<sup>12</sup> In 1993 Pheterson wrote down 7 activities of unchaste and/or dishonored behavior that would stigmatize a woman as a whore: 1. Engaging in sex with strangers; 2. Engaging in sex with money; 3. As a woman, taking sexual initiative, controlling sexual encounters and being an expert on sex; 4. Asking for money in exchange for sex; 5. As a woman, using ones energy and abilities to satisfy impersonal male lust and sexual fantasies; 6. As a woman, being out at night alone, on dark streets, dressed to attract male desire; 7. As a woman, being in situations with supposedly brash, drunk or abusive men whom one either can handle (uppity or vulgar women) or cannot handle (victimized women) (Pheterson, 1993: 46)

### **2.1.3 How to manage an unchaste stigma**

Taking the gendered stigma of 'prostitute' into account when we would look at gigolo's then who exactly is unchaste? Are those that pay for the service unchaste, the women, or those that are paid and actually literally embody the stigma? And is it something that they can relate to or act upon? What if the tables were turned. Will both the female client and the male sex worker experience stigma? And how would they both, the gigolo and the female client, associate with, manipulate and manage the 'whore' stigma as both an embodiment and subjectification of dishonoured and unchaste behaviour? Goffman assumes that it would have many advantages to be considered as 'normal'. And anybody who would have the ability to pass as normal would take this chance, no matter the type or visibility of the stigma.

When there are a lot of people that know about the stigma or none at all, persons simply live a 'double-life'. This double life contains people that know the stigma, the secret, both sides of the double life and on the other hand people that do not know it at all. For example a man who has an extramarital affair, which only some of his closest friends know about, lives a double life (Goffman, 1963: 80). When someone knows that his stigma is not the norm he or she could employ different types of strategies, Goffman refers to them as 'information management strategies', to manage the information that one tells about herself to pass as 'normal'. One of the most common techniques is covering, to deliberately conceal signs that are commonly considered stigma symbols (ibid.:98). A second strategy is compartmentalization, where individuals divide their own world into two separated social worlds; a small and intimate one wherein they are able to reveal their stigma, and a larger group, the group from which they not only derive their stigma from but also conceal their stigma for. A third technique is distancing oneself literally from other people to make sure that the risk that someone would find out about the stigma is as small as possible (Goffman, 1963: 101). Another information management strategy is simply embracing ones stigma. (ibid.:102). A last strategy that I would like to mention is dimming, but it could be seen more as a mechanism than a strategy in itself. This mechanism can be employed for all four strategies. Dimming is a mechanism that has to do with how much information you exactly would tell and to whom without causing any damage, to yourself, or to others. Dimming is linked with someone's shortages that are indirectly related to the stigma (Goffman, 1963: 104).

As mentioned there is or might be a big difference between a prostitute's virtual reality and her (or his) actual reality. Differences or similarities might also be found between the



strategies that female sex workers, male sex workers and their clientele would employ to cope with the stigma of selling or paying for forms of what is considered not normal, but illicit sex. In her study about female escort's strategies for coping with sex work related stigma, Juline Koken interviewed independent female escorts who advertise online in the United States. Through the narratives of these women she was able to qualitatively explore the stigma strategies that these women employ and how they have an impact on their personal relationships (Koken, 2012: 224). Many of these women engaged in the skilful information management strategy of 'covering' and 'compartmentalization'. They made selective judgments with whom they would share information, when to disclose this information and how to 'spin' their involvement with sex work. Like one of her interviewees explains: "*You know I have what I call my 'normal friends'. The ones that don't even understand the whole concept of being an escort. I don't talk about it with them. They have no idea and I don't plan on telling them only because I know what they're like*". Her choice of the word 'normal' aptly captures the divisions created in her mind regarding her stigmatized identity, i.e. 'people who are not sex workers are normal' and by implication 'I am not normal' (ibid.: 221-222).

In an earlier study of Juliene Koken on male sex workers, 56% of them expressed a high level of awareness of society's proscription(s) against sex work. Many of the interviewees responded to the stigma associated with being a 'prostitute' by dissociating their activities as a male sex worker from that word. Describing that: "*Prostitute still has an icky stain...*" or they rephrase it by "*escorting, that sounds better than prostitute*" (Koken et al. 2004: 21). They all employed information management techniques as a way of minimizing personal exposure to the stigma. Koken et al. describe that these strategies assisted the male sex workers in maintaining a healthy sense of their actual identities, while protecting themselves from the negative virtual identity of a prostitute (ibid.:23). Even though these male sex workers do not embody the whore stigma as Pheterson defines it, being a female gender stigma, avoiding being labelled a 'whore' or 'prostitute' suggest that sex work related stigma is very powerful. In the next paragraph the outcome and (re)production of the stigma is being described as the sexual double standard.

### ***2.2.1 The sexual double standard: the stud and the slut***

In contemporary society it is widely believed that women and men are held to different standards of sexual behaviour, a man who is successful with many women is likely to be seen

as just that – successful, [whereas] a woman known to have ‘success’ with many men is likely to be known as a slut. The view that men are socially rewarded and women socially derogated for sexual activity has been labelled the sexual double standard (Marks and Fraley, 2005: 175). The expression of female desire can therefore be a risky enterprise for women. The sexual double standard is regulated through the tool of sexual reputation, that is the negative labelling of an active, desiring female sexuality and positive labelling of active male sexuality (Jackson and Cram, 2003: 114). This ‘sexual double standard’ is in line with Pheterson’s ‘whore stigma’ as the stereotype of the unchaste woman and the different adjective meanings of unchaste. The sexual double standard is about deviating the norm of certain heterosexual scripts in society.

The sexual double standard (SDS) is conceptualised as: ‘the acceptance of different criteria to assess the sexuality of men and women’ (Sagebin and Sperb, 2013: 686-687). Other researchers conceptualise SDS more descriptive: positing that men have greater sexual freedom to men than women (Gentry, M.: 1998; Jonason, P.k. and Marks, M.J: 2009; Muehlenhard and McCoy, M.L.: 1991; Rudmann et al.: 2012).

The term ‘sexual double standard’ was first coined by Ira L. Reis an anthropologist and philosopher in 1960 in his study ‘Premarital Sexual Standards in America’. He defines the sexual double standard as: ‘*the process wherein men are evaluated more positively or less negatively than women who have similar sexual histories*’ (Reis: 1960, in: Jonason and Marks, 2009: 357).

Although the term was first coined by Reis, it were the feminist campaigns against the Contagious Diseases Act in 1864<sup>13</sup>, led by Josephine Butler, who argued that women were being unfairly stigmatized by a ‘double standard of sexual morality’. This ‘double standard’ referred to the understanding that men had compelling, sexual needs and that women could not be held responsible for trying to satisfy them by using prostitutes (Rahman and Jackson, 2010: 21). Throughout his career, Reiss raised several hypotheses to be tested on the double standard regarding premarital sexual intercourse. He compared black and white populations, adult and adolescent populations, and people with different social statuses. Already in 1967 Reiss suggested that there was a reduction of the double standard and a trend towards ‘equality’ in sexual (permissive) behaviour. The choices of individuals started to involve degrees of equalitarianism, since he found a tendency in his sample that premarital sexual

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<sup>13</sup> The Contagious Diseases Act were introduced in 1864 in England to regulate sexually transmitted diseases among military personnel. However both the framing and implementation of the law focused on women as the problem – allowing police to arrest any women suspected of being a prostitute and force them to undergo medical examination. (Rahman and Jackson, 2010: 21).

behaviour began to be more common instead of believe about a permissive standard for men and in abstinence for women (Sagebin and Sperb, 2013: 687).

Cultural and societal norms have changed over time and sex before marriage is probably more common nowadays than (female) abstinence before marriage. Standards have changed and so have 'norms', this nevertheless does not mean that this passage into different set of norms show that women and men are treated equal in their sexual behaviour. Contexts simply changed, but social forces are still relevant. Even in modern society, as Rudman et al. point out, women's sexual behaviours are more circumscribed than men's. Because the sexual double standard is a social force that controls women and contributes to gender inequality. Understanding its motivational underpinnings is still an important research agenda (Rudman et al, 2012: 253).

The past 50 years different social scientists have done research on SDS using different methods and different perspectives, like the evolutionary perspective (or biological imperative), wherein evolutionary theorists use biological explanations to account for gender differences in sexual behaviours. According to these theorists the sexual behaviours of men and women have developed throughout the human evolution to support the reproductive functioning. Another theoretical underpinning is that of scripting theorists who postulate that every society has its own sexual scripts delineating suitable sexual conduct for each gender (Jonason and Marks, 2009: 64). Another theory is the social exchange theory, this theory offers a good reason for women to suppress their sexuality, because restricting the supply of sex will raise the price (in terms of commitment, attention, and other resources) that women can get for their sexual favours (Rudman et al, 2012: 198). The interesting part about this notion would be that women themselves would be the main proximal influence to restrain female sexuality. Two other contexts when women do have casual sex, premarital sex, illicit sex or more sex are (of course) 'social stigma' and the pleasure theory. The pleasure theory involves the perception that women are less likely than men to enjoy a casual sex encounter. Social stigma involves the notion that having multiple sex partners could spoil a woman's reputation (Rudman et al, 2012: 253).

### ***2.2.2 The sexual double standard: fact or fiction***

In their overview of the literature about the sexual double standard between 2001 and 2010 Sagebin and Sperb (2013) describe that several researchers indicated that they found proof of

the existence of SDS but there were some that clearly indicated that there was no such thing as a 'sexual double standard'. One of those studies, was the quantitative study of Marks and Fraley in 2005 about the attitudes and evaluations of sexual behaviour. Their conceptualisation of sexual behaviour included general beliefs about the norms of the culture, personal decisions about when sex is permissible, and the perceived appropriateness of certain sexual behaviours. Evaluations concerned real judgements about specific people who engage in sexual activities. They describe that attitudes might be independent of the way people actually evaluate one another. In this line they hypothesized that the existence of a sexual double standard may conflict with the results of the evaluations of others behaviour, taking into account the notion that men and women would be evaluated differently depending on their social experience. Their data revealed virtually none of this and therefore they argue that the sexual double standard is more a cultural illusion than an actual phenomenon (Sagebin and Sperb, 2013: 177; 282). Although I do not want to doubt their outcomes and their methodology, I do want to sensitize that 'a cultural illusion' does have an influence on the way people act while taking into account that their 'sexual permissiveness' is not the norm, or at least what they might think is the norm. Simply because 'permissive sex' is not an airy-fairy topic of conversation.

When studies couldn't always detect a heterosexual double standard, Crawford and Popp (2003) suggested that the differences between the results of the studies in this field were influenced by the methods used in terms of data collection and techniques, conceptual definitions and the context of the sexual double standard. As described the context of the sexual double standard has varied along the last 54 years because the context of sexuality changed. Gentry (1998) also highlighted the importance of context while discussing whether the sexual double standard is a fact or fiction. He states that: *'before proclaiming the death of the double standard, it would seem prudent for researchers to conduct more qualitative and open-ended studies to examine if the sexual double standard still operates in contexts or ways that are not being captured in the more traditional methodological approaches to this topic'* (Gentry, 1998: 511).

In their review on literature about the sexual double standard Sagebin and Sperb describe that in the most qualitative or experimental interpretative studies that were collected involved more diffuse, less closed and less abstract questions than those used in quantitative studies, showing evidence of the sexual double standard and suggested the influence of contextual factors (Sagebin and Sperb, 2013: 688). In comparison, Sagebin and Sperb found six quantitative studies that used scales, like a Likert scale, that made no distinction between

one's personal acceptance of the sexual double standard and the perception of its societal existence (ibid.:696). This last point might seem crucial, one may normalize one's own sexual encounters while knowing it is against the norm. Or in regards to its stigma employs strategies to be able to pass as normal. Therefore there might be a discrepancy between one's personal perception of the sexual double standard and the societal perception. In this extend it is still important to study the sexual double standard because of the impact of individuals sexual histories affect the perception and treatment of men and women, and the impact this information has on peoples personal and social lives.

In regards to the concept, it's theoretical and methodological implications while implementing the operationalization of stigma as deviating from a norm, I would like to redefine the sexual double standard as: 'men are evaluated more positively or less negatively than women when deviating from a sexual norm'. When deviating from a sexual norm in heterosexual encounters seems to be a necessary condition to be able to highlight a discrepancy between a personal and social level it seems obvious that the uncommon sexual act need to be described as well. Deviating from the sexual norm could entail the number of sexual partners but also paying for sex.

In the following chapter, the methodology of this thesis, the theoretical concepts and the several mechanisms that one might employ to manage a stigma will be considered as a framework within this qualitative study. Different sub questions will be addressed according these concepts while implementing different methodological insights gained from former research on the sexual double standard, placing a great emphasis on the context that might influence their personal perceptions and their conceived stigma.

### ***Theory Summary***

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For Goffman stigma is the relationship between a characteristic and a stereotype (Goffman, 1963: 10). We can only speak of a stigma when there is a general agreement that there is a norm that everybody should convey to. Therefore stigma is entirely dependent on social, economic and political power – it takes power to stigmatize. Gail Pheterson explores these power structures of sex workers, 'whore stigma', which she describes as a 'gendered stigma' with the adjective meaning of 'unchaste'. Every woman who is suspect of unchaste behaviour is likely to acquire the social status of prostitute. Sexual initiative, sexual knowledge and

sexual skills are signs of unchaste sexual behaviour or experience. Experience is commonly assumed to elevate a man and spoil a woman (Pheterson, 1996: 65). This is the theoretical perspective of social stigma about the sexual double standard. Different studies have been done to look for the existence of a sexual double standard. Crawford and Popp (2003) suggested that the differences between the results of the studies in this field were influenced by the methods used in terms of data collection and techniques, conceptual definitions and the context of the sexual double standard. Not only is the context important to be able to see a discrepancy between one's personal perceptions and one's social perception of a given stigma. Context is also important when considering the different information management strategies one might employ to manage a stigma.

### **3 Methodology**

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#### ***3.1 Design cycle***

In order to understand the world of gigolo's from within, through the eyes of their female clientele this study needed to be qualitative. With a qualitative study I would be able to ask female clientele 'why' they booked a gigolo. A qualitative study would give these women the space to talk, what would be needed in an explorative study like this. With semi-structured interviews I could guide and probe some questions, but more importantly give the women the opportunity to tell their stories. This understanding which is in the social sciences referred to as *Verstehen*, 'studying people's life experiences which occur in a specific historical and social context', (Hennink et al, 2013: 17) does not only acknowledge the perspectives of those being studied but also incorporates the context in which their perspectives, whether personal or societal, are being constructed and reflected upon. Knowing that I might be the only one whom they had ever talked with about their motivations and desires to book a gigolo. The context from where they derived their perceptions from would be very important to get an emic understanding (ibid.: 18). Nobody has given these women the voices that in my opinion needed to be heard to get a better understanding, not only about gigolo's but also about assumptions about sex work and female sexuality. About sexual reciprocity and the meaning of giving and receiving during sexual intercourse. These insights are a welcome addition to theoretical and conceptual leaps in current sex worker debates and could improve (inter)national policy descriptions about the comprehensive field of sexual commerce.

This study starts out deductive building on theories that start out as an explorative map to guide this even more explorative study, because there is little or no actual scientific literature about the desires and motivations of (Dutch) female clientele of gigolo's. Embedding this research within existing literature or existing theory is a necessity to guide the data collection (ibid.: 42). It evolves in an explorative inductive research design when analysing the data in a greater detail when collected, which led me to go back and forth to existing literature to be able to get a better understanding of the interpretations, experiences and perceptions within the Dutch context of the informal and formal commercialised sex industry of those being studied. Because of the importance of the context, the next chapter will be completely devoted to the context of the commercialised sex industry from research agenda's to current (inter)national policy debates and their stigmatizing implications on (fe)male clientele of sex-workers.

Besides that the theories serve as an interpretative guide it logically followed from paradigms underlying this research, namely the international policy shift to victimize sex workers and criminalize clients, leading to a neglect of agency and a further stigmatization of both parties without incorporating interpretative insights on the motivations and desires of clients and sex workers and the meanings they give to the market.

### ***3.2 Research Questions***

Incorporating the concepts that were derived from existing literature about sex work and sexuality to explore the world of gigoloism from an emic perspective in this explorative study resulted in the following main research question:

*What are the demands and (sexual) desires of Dutch female clientele of gigolo's and how do the perceptions of these demands and (sexual) desires reflect the sexual double standard?*

In order to be able to answer this main question, different sub-questions needed to be answered accordingly to address all the different angles of this explorative study.

- 1. What are the demands and (sexual) desires of female clientele?*
- 2. What are the do's and don'ts of their demands and desires?*
- 3. What are their perceptions of the fulfilment of their desires?*
- 4. Is their desire stigmatized?*

5. *How do the societal perceptions of a sexual double standard influence the personal perceptions of their desires?*
6. *How do the female clients conceptualize gigolo's?*
7. *How do the gigolos describe their occupation in relation to the desires of their female clientele?*

The first three explorative sub-questions, asking 'what', will be addressed in the first chapter of the analysis, chapter 5. The last four sub-questions, asking 'how', will be answered in the second chapter of the analysis, chapter 6. All the sub-questions will be addressed in the same order as they are phrased.

### **3.3 Data collection**

A qualitative study, as mentioned, would give me the opportunity to address all the stated research questions, but where would I be able to find these female clientele and gigolo's? In the next two paragraphs I will describe the qualitative methods to gather the data of this thesis but I also liked to share the obstacles, difficulties and ethical considerations I was confronted with and needed to overcome in able to gather this data.

In March 2014 I had contact with the owner of the high-end agency 'The Mens Company' (TMC) because he seems to be the biggest player in the field of gigolo's I thought it would be the best way to start. With him by my side as the gatekeeper in the world of gigolo's I thought he would be able to introduce me to his high-end escorts and maybe even to some of his clients. Unfortunately this has only led to a meeting and some small phone calls. During this meeting he told me that he would be more than willing to cooperate, but that I wouldn't be able to find female clientele. Because of discretion they would not be willing to talk to me. And it would be troublesome to see any shared desires or descriptions of their experiences with clientele. I was not willing to take these notions for granted. There simply had to be a way to get into contact with women who would want to share their experiences with booking a gigolo with me, since 'having booked a gigolo once or multiple times' was my only criteria I left the possibility to cooperate with the owner of TMC for what it was: a nice conversation about his interpretations of the Dutch context of gigolo's.

I eventually discovered the world all by myself with the help of our World Wide Web, which resulted in some knowledge about the field, which will be elaborated in the next



chapter. Most importantly, the internet seemed to be a medium for women to talk about their sexuality, including blogs, descriptions and references of gigolo's on different websites. Because of the strict policies that these forums employ concerning 'research' inducted by students or journalist I contacted the online editorial offices, explaining my motivations and asking for assistance in my search for female clientele of gigolo's. Since the Linda scoop of 2010 more and more media attention was given to the phenomena of 'gigolo's' so I even asked the lifestyle and tabloid magazine Linda if they could be of any help. Almost none of the offline and online editorial offices replied and for those that did reply I got the simple answer that they are not willing to cooperate with 'a student'. A month had passed and I still did not had a connection with 'the field'. That is when I decided to reply on comments of women on forums and post a call for respondents on different female forums like SheSpot<sup>14</sup> and Fetlife<sup>15</sup> myself, without editorial permission. I was very lucky that one woman replied on a personal message that I have send to her profile, she was the first and introduced me to my second respondent, who seemed to be an expert in dating with gigolo's. Because they both have booked the same gigolo in the past I plucked up all my courage and contacted this gigolo. This snowball sampling strategy, which is a form of convenience sample is not random and it therefore will be very unlikely that this study will be representative enough of the whole population (Bryman, 2004: 100-101). But with this explorative study I have no aim to generalise any claims about the population of Dutch female clientele of gigolo's.

By talking with a total of 5 gigolo's and with the help of my first female respondent I eventually was able to talk with a total of 10 women. Who all had booked a high-end gigolo or middle-range gigolo once or more often. About fifteen women responded to my call for respondents (Appendix 1), that I placed on different forums and where e-mailed by different gigolo's to their clientele. Five of them replied that they were very pleased that someone had the interests and/or courage to do research about the motivations and desires of women to book a gigolo but they did not want to cooperate in the study themselves because of private matters. For the ten respondents I was for most of them the first and probably the only one to hear their story as they do not want or dare to talk to others about their motivations to book a gigolo. I am for ever great full that these women had the courage to talk to me.

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<sup>14</sup> SheSpot is an internet forum for women where they can openly talk about their sexuality and sexual preferences.

<sup>15</sup> Fetlife is a BDSM internet forum that can be comparable with something like facebook. They have general topics where they can leave comments but they can also add friends to their own personal fetlife page.

### **3.4 Respondents**

The interviews were conducted in hotels, restaurants, café's and in their own houses throughout the Netherlands. Some interviews were even conducted by phone because my main concern was that these women would have the ability to speak openly about their encounter(s) with a gigolo and some of them did not want to see me in person, not that they were embarrassed by their appearances, not at all, but they felt they could speak out without any embarrassment about the subject. "Through the phone you can't see me blushing" was a sentence I heard regularly. The interviews were semi-structured, while making use of an interview guide (Appendix 2) the sequence of the questions changed according to the conversation (ibid.: 113). With this qualitative research method all the interviewees were given the possibility to speak in depth and open up about their experiences and to describe the context in which their choices and motivations to book a gigolo were made and to reflect on their encounters with gigolo(s). This methodology also gave me the opportunity to build some rapport with the interviewees and make them feel comfortable to talk to me during the interview. These interviews lasted from 1,5 to 2,5 hours. All these women were native Dutch and were highly educated, having a HBO or University degree and most of them were financially independent. And a third of these women are divorced or are currently divorcing. In table 1. there is a small description of these women giving a description of their age, marital status and the amount of bookings they have had with gigolo's. All the names of the women are fictitious.

Besides the interviews with the ten female clientele I have conducted five semi structured interviews making use of a smaller interview guide (Appendix 3) with middle range or high-end gigolo's. These gigolo's recently worked or still work for an agency or as an independent entrepreneur. The distinction between high-end, middle-range and amateur gigolo's is a selection that I have made myself, therefore there can be some overlap between these three distinctive fields, which will be further elaborated in the Chapter 4. These five interviews lasted from 1,5 to 3 hours. I was able to find these gigolo's through internet, some of them have their own website and some have a profile on the website from the agency that they work for. I found one of these gigolo's by watching a recent documentary<sup>16</sup> on Dutch

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<sup>16</sup> This documentary , titled: 'Ersin and the gigolo's' (in Dutch:*Ersin en de gigolo's*) was broadcasted on the Dutch television on the 10<sup>th</sup> of November 2013 but is still available online: <http://www.uitzendinggemist.nl/afleveringen/1378379>. In this documentary Ersin visits the agency Private Men during one of their gigolo training sessions and meets the owner of The Mens Company, who gives him a glimps of the world of a gigolo by actually becoming.

television that tried to entangle the world of Dutch gigolo's. Due to ethical considerations and the wish of the gigolo's to stay anonymous, their names in this thesis are fictitious as well, except for Danny. Danny is the same gigolo, described in the introduction of this thesis. Danny was one of the names that he was given during the Linda scoop. Because of this convenience sampling with the gigolo's I do not have the wish to generalize their descriptions, perceptions and conceptualisations within the field of middle-range and high-end gigolo's, nor do I have the wish or ability to compare their different strategies to get into contact with clients. Given the aim of this research, namely to get insights in the motivations and desires of Dutch female clientele of gigolo's, the descriptions of the gigolo's that are presented in this study function to support those of the female clients. To comply with the wishes of the gigolo's and the knowledge I gained about their work environments and the importance to stay anonymous because of their other occupations, I will not refer to the website of the gigolo's nor will I make references to which agency they might work for. What I will only describe in this extend is if they work for an agency or as an independent entrepreneur. Although they have their differences, they have some similarities which is presented in table 2.

Table 1.

Name	Age	Marital Status	Sexual Orientation*	Etnicity	E ducation	Consulted a gigolo	Type of gigolo
Amber	27	Single	Straight	Dutch	High	1	Middle-range
Louise	>40	Relationship	Straight	Dutch	High	>14**	Middle-range
Anita	>40	Divorced	Straight	Dutch	High	>1***	Middle-range
Eline	53	Divorced	Straight	Dutch	High	2	Middle-range
Carmen	>40	Divorced	Straight	Dutch	High	4	Middle-range
Victoria	58	Widow	Straight	Dutch	High		High-end & Middle-range
Marjolein	34	Maried	Straight	Dutch	High	4	Middle-range
Ilona	38	Relationship	Lesbian	Dutch	High	1	High-End
Jasmijn	>40	Relationship	Lesbian	Dutch	High	1	High-End
Marichel	27	Maried	Straight	Dutch	High	2	Middle-Range

\*I acknowledge that this 'orientation' is rather limited but it would make it more complicated when I would describe that some of these women are pan-sexual etc.

\*\*During this study Louise would have her 15<sup>th</sup> date with a gigolo

\*\*\*During this study Anita would have her 2<sup>nd</sup> date with a gigolo

Table 2.

Name	Age	Marital Status	Working Experience	Still working	High-End or Middle-Range
Danny	>40	Single	4 years	Yes	High-End*
Bruce	42	Single	2 years	Yes	Middle-Range
Richard	>40	Single	App. 7 years	Yes	Middle-Range
Ricardo	>50	In a relationship	2,5 years	No	Middle-Range
Yerry	42	Single	1 year	Yes	High-End

\*Although Danny is an independent entrepreneur and he therefore does not work for an agency his prices are considerably higher than those of middle-range gigolo's.

Given these methodological and ethical dilemmas it is clear that this was not an open field to study. These dilemmas even indicate the inability to speak about the phenomenon of gigolo's, like the inability of the owner of the agency to get me in to contact with his clientele or the need for those that I've interviewed to stay anonymous at all costs. But these dilemmas also highlight the importance of this study. As will be described in the next chapter, the context, this will be the first qualitative study in the field of gigoloism about the desires and demands of female clientele. In this next chapter I will describe this as a conceptual leap in the (inter)national studies on sex work while describing the research that has been done about male (heterosexual) sex workers, female sex tourism in the global economy of the informal and formal sex industry to subsequently take a step 'back' to the national research field in this given study which is influenced by (inter)national policies.

## **4 Context**

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In this chapter the neglected field of heterosexual male sex workers is described as a conceptual leap in both theoretical and political conceptualisations of sex work when although the body of literature has grown scholars still tend to focus primarily on female sex workers. Both the political and theoretical context of this research will be elaborated as an important

foundation of this research. By addressing both the lack of research and the insights of different research on the field of sex work, considering the demands of female clientele of sex workers and how they might defer from the demands of male clientele.

#### **4.1 A neglected field of research**

*Just a gigolo, everywhere I go*

*People know the part I'm playing*

*Paid for every dance, selling each romance*

*Every night some heart betraying*

'Just a gigolo' by Bing Crosby – 1931

Movies and songs like Bing Crosby's interpretation of the song 'just a gigolo'<sup>17</sup> already speak of gigoloism around the 1930's. But what part are they playing? And whom are they betraying? The first mention of gigoloism in American literature appeared in the magazine *Women's Home Companion* in 1922: In the first place gigolo is a slang. In the second place, it is a French slang. In the third place, the gig is pronounced *zhig* and the whole is not a respectable word. Finally the *Women's Home Companion* describe that it is a term of utter contempt. A gigolo, generally speaking, is a man who lives off women's money (Jackson and Connel, 1981: 130). In my search for definitions of the term 'gigolo' I found one in the online Cambridge dictionary<sup>18</sup>: '*a gigolo is a man who is paid by a woman to have sex with her or spend time with her*'. So this means that the service of a gigolo can involve sex but that it's also about spending time with a woman. As mentioned in the introduction agencies like 'Cowboys 4 Angels' in the United States do not like to refer to gigolo as a form of 'prostitution', although it did seem to involve sex. Agencies in the Netherlands did describe the possibilities of having sex with their gigolo's.

A whole body of literature has been written about female sex workers, fictional and scientific, from window prostitution to Chinese massage parlours. But heterosexual male sex workers, like gigolo's, did not have their fair share (yet). As Smith et al. acknowledge, only a few studies have discussed how (young) men become involved in prostitution and escorting yet it seems that increasing numbers of men may be choosing to enter the field as a way to

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<sup>17</sup> The song 'just a gigolo' was first performed by Bohemer Wiener Verslag in 1929 (Wikipedia.org)

<sup>18</sup> The online definition of gigolo was found on dictionary.cambridge.org

earn money either on incidental or regular basis (Smith et al. 2013: 1). Male sex work remains under-research, especially male heterosexual sex workers. In general male sex workers are difficult to conceptualize in current economic, social and gender theories of prostitution (Logan, 2010: 679). The academic studies that have been done on male sex workers, like for example an older study of Sari van der Poel (1992), a criminologist, does problematize the conceptualisation of male prostitution. Van der Poel describes broad and more narrow definitions of male prostitution. The definition that she seems to find the most accurate is derived from the work of Pieper (1979) with the only restriction that it must involve the sale of sexual service from which the male seller derives no pleasure: ‘the provision of sexual gratification to one participant of the interaction by a male, the prostitute, in exchange for money or other goods and services in the absent of personal attachment or interest in the intercourse itself’ (van der Poel, 1992: 260-261). Interestingly, this definition only describes male to male encounters, sex is referred to as ‘intercourse’ and the prostitute should not be interested in ‘intercourse’ itself. As broad as the definition seems to be we could doubt its accuracy in relation to gigolo’s.

Although the body of research has grown, scholars continue to concentrate primarily on street prostitutes and female prostitutes (Lee Gonyea et al, 2009: 322). How can we understand, conceptualise and define gigolo’s? Especially when it is such a neglected research field within academic writings on sexuality and sex work. And how might we understand a growing demand of gigolo’s for female clientele? Or a growing supply in this matter. This would literally shake up the existing definitions of (male) sex work like definition that van der Poel employs. The research that did not dived into the field of those that work for female clientele did note that future developments in this line would enhance and extend our understandings of sexuality and gender and could even highlight contradictions associated with these social concepts (Logan, 2010, Minichiello, 2013). I couldn’t agree more with Lee-Gonyea et al. describing that there seems to be a gap in the research about sex work that has been conducted on male prostitutes who provide services to female clients (Lee-Gonyea et al, 2009: 327). It seems that sex work has been largely considered through the lens of patriarchy as something exploitative and degrading to women. With the outcome that female sex workers have been presented in research as a passive supply population and male clients constitute the ‘demand’ for sexual services (Minichello et al., 2013: 264). We tend to put men in the position of the suppressor describing women and men as natural victims (van Wijk, 2006: 73). It seems to be worthwhile to explore this gender bias in relation to male sex

workers and their female clientele when little or no effort seems to be done to understand the involvement of women as customers.

Interestingly Matt Adams, an American social scientist, has explored the American male sex industry for 20 years, although agencies like 'Cowboys 4 Angels' did not exist when he published his book *'Hustlers, Escorts and Pornstars: the insider's guide to male prostitution in America'*, he claimed that the market of male heterosexual sex workers is small because of three clear reasons. First, women generally do not have problems finding sexual partners. Second, women tend to prefer having sex with someone that they know, and do not tend to like anonymous sex. And thirdly, women generally do not have as much income as men (Adams, 1999: 123). All of these reasons could be taken into question, and will be addressed in this thesis. But the gender bias, which is perfectly exemplified by Adam's reasoning is not surprising and might even be understandable. But it reflects a rather conceptual leap in the economy of sex. This can be seen in the strong tendency to invoke the concepts of supply and demand, with women assumed to provide the supply of sex and men the demand for it (Smith, 2011: 540). A gender bias like this neglects the differences between the different forms of sex work, different demand and desires and its global economy. From a professional perspective, male prostitution is a commercial service orientated business, with the economic and social characteristics typical of other small and medium sized business, as individual entrepreneurs, prostitutes must move with the times and adapt to the demands of the market (van der Poel, 1992: 272).

It is too bad that Matt Adams does not speak Dutch because in 1989, Marielle Osté a Dutch journalist, wrote the first and only qualitative study about Dutch gigolo's and telling a story about male gigolo's and their search for female clientele. It describes, through the stories of these gigolo's the neglected field of paying for sex by women. It discusses, male 'prostitution', although as she describes, they did not like to be called 'prostitutes'. Although she spoke to some female clientele these were mostly quick general conversations, she was not able to make a representative picture out of their stories. The single female client that is described in her study functioned mainly as an illustration for the gigolo's she spoke with (Osté, 1989: 107). Interestingly this is the only qualitative story that has ever been done on gigolos. Marielle Oste, looked for respondents, male and female's through contact advertisements in daily newspapers and they could contact her by phone.

A lot has changed since 1989 with the influence of internet on the commercialised sex industry. Those that advertise their sexual services through internet might generate a whole new marketplace. In their study 'Boys online/boys offline: sexual services by boys and men

(MSM) in the Hague', the social scientists Paul van Gelder and Leon van Lier (2009) did a study on the representation of sex advertisements of male sex workers who seek for paying sex contacts on the internet. In this study they counted the number of male Dutch male sex workers who placed advertisements in the area of the Hague. Interestingly from the 312 male sex workers, 208 of them advertised themselves for male clientele but 1/3 of them, 104 male sex workers were seeking female clientele in the area of the Hague (van Gelder and van Lier, 2009: 45). Gelder and van Lier describe that there is an increase in the amount of male gigolo's that advertise for female clientele, but that this is not only visible in the Hague but that there seems to be a rather national trend that women in the Netherlands seek romantic and erotic contacts through the internet in return for money and that there also seems to be an international trend (ibid.:46) whereby more and more women seek romantic and erotic encounters through travelling to the Caribbean and (West) Africa in the form of 'sex tourism'. Before I will elaborate on this type of female clientele I consider briefly the features, the desires and demands, of male clientele in heterosexual sex work encounters in the following paragraph. Given that I will only be able to describe differences or similarities between the female and male demand for sex work when I highlight some of the most important studies that have been done questioning 'why' male clientele seek female sex workers.

#### ***4.2 The conceptualisations of male clientele***

The conceptualisations of clientele are of outmost importance given the prostitution-as-violence-against-women paradigm within current international policy reports. From a theoretical point of view, the client is central to the study of prostitution. Without the client there is no sex trade. Politically, the client is central because prostitution is held out to be the quintessential instance of the male sexualisation, commodification and exploitation of women. (Cauduro, 2008:19) In the introduction the current international policy debates and restrictions were briefly described wherein prostitution seem to be equated with human trafficking claiming that prostitution is both a cause and consequence of gender inequality whilst promoting the Swedish model. In this model clients are being criminalized and are 'sentenced' with a 'treatment' by taking part in an education program at a Johns school (the US) or receiving therapeutically treatment in a KAST group (Sweden). Although these programmes are not a part of the Dutch policy (yet) I do want to highlight this because the EU draft rapport is a rapport for all members of the European Union and therefore can have



severe implications on the way clientele are being conceptualised in the Netherlands, in the nearby future.

Teela Sanders argues that these strategies are ineffective because they do not examine the diversity; the sexual behaviour, sexual desires and the sexual and emotional needs of the clients. Policy strategies therefore ignore ‘the root cause of why men visit a sex worker’ (Sanders, 2008a: 156). When referring to male clients, the motivations for buying sex seem to differ widely and it’s not ‘just sex’ what they’re after. In a study by Monto<sup>19</sup>, one of the largest studies on the motivations of male clients to buy sex, 43% of the men reported that they sought ‘a different kind of sex than my regular partner’ provides; 47% said that they were ‘excited by the idea of approaching a prostitute’; 30% said they did not want the responsibilities of a conventional relationship’ and even 33% admitted that they ‘did not had the time for a conventional relationship’ (Monto, 2000: 78-79).

In an overview of several studies on the motivations of male clients Weitzer (2009) summarizes six different desires of male clientele: (a) they desire sex with a person with a certain image (e.g. sexy, raunchy etc.) or physical appearance (e.g. physique, race, transgender), (b) they are unsatisfied with the sexual dimension of their relationship with their current partner, if they have a partner, (c) they have difficulty finding a partner for a conventional relationship, (d) they find this transgressive conduct risky thrilling, or sporting, (e) they wish to avoid the long –term obligations or emotional attachment involved in a conventional relationship, (f) they seek a limited, quasi romantic emotional connection in addition to or instead of sex. (Weitzer. 2009: 224). These desires are not limited to a simple objectification of the female body in line with the argument of the EU<sup>20</sup> that ‘girls bodies are for sale to satisfy male demand for sex’.

Teela Sanders (2008a) describes that many customers place a premium on reciprocity; they value giving a sex worker pleasure, such as massaging or performing oral sex or manual stimulation. And that there are clients who seek pure emotional intimacy and companionship with a meaningful and personal connection. These notions challenge the assumptions about the sex industry that are reproduced by recent policy (re)forms and normative assumptions about masculinity and sexuality. Then what about the female clients? Female clients will have

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<sup>19</sup> This study was conducted handing out questionnaires at a John school in the North of America to 700 men. Within this questionnaire they were able to tip the boxes of several motivations for ‘buying sex’ (Monto, 2000)

<sup>20</sup> The Eu draft Rapport by Mary Honeyball describes that: ‘*The exploitation in the sex industry and prostitution is perpetuating gendered stereotypes such as the idea that women’s and girls bodies are for sale to satisfy male demand for sex*’ (European Parliament, 2013: 10).

important theoretical implications concerning the sex market and the dichotomy between male and female sexuality. Although as described there has not been one single research on female demand in a national commercial sex industry in the first world, there have been done several international studies concerned with 'female sex tourism' in third world countries. This type of tourism will be elaborated in the next paragraph as a new interpretation of sex work and a deconstruction of femininity and masculinity.

### ***4.3 Female Sex Tourism***

Within the last decades increasing recognition has been given to the reality that there is a sex tourism market for female tourist (Albuquerque, 1998; Herold et al, 2001; Kempadoo, 2001; Opperman, 1999; Pruitt and LaFont, 1993; Taylor, 2006). Specifically, researchers have focused on the relationships between North American/European female tourists who go to underdeveloped countries in the southern hemisphere for a holiday and have sexual relations with local males. Studies of relationships between female tourists and local males have been conducted in Jamaica, Barbados, Ecuador, Gambia and Greece (Herold et al., 2001: 979).

Typically the men and women do not compare this trade with sex workers and refer to these men as a beach boy, beach bum, sanky panky, or gigolo (Kempadoo, 2001: 49) Or in the case of Barbados: rent a dread (Albuquerque, 1998). Interestingly none of the female respondents Jacqueline Sanchez Taylor (2006) interviewed in her research about sex tourism used the term prostitution to describe their encounters nor did they considered their sexual behaviour as a form of sexual exploitation even when they acknowledged that it was 'all about the money'. Many female sex tourist criticized male sex tourist for 'taking advantage' of the poor local women, yet did not see their sexual encounters as also taking advantage of global economic structures that empowered them to enter into very particular kinds of sexual relationships with local men (Taylor, 2006: 50).

In the light of this thesis, this form of sex work whereby women seek and demand sexual encounters and men supply these encounters needs to be addressed as it is one of the only areas wherein women are considered as 'clients' whilst it deconstruct simplifications about sex work whereby clients are seen as perpetrators and sex workers as victims. Although it is not my aim to compare these different trades – gigolo's and sex tourism – they are related and might be fuelled by the same global economic factors. As women increase their economic and social standing around the world, one might expect more and more female sex

tourist and consequently, more male sex providers serving female tourists (Opperman, 1999: 259). This economic independence might not only lead to an increase in the international sex industry for women but also in the national, Dutch, sex industry.

In his study on female sex tourism in Barbados, Albuquerque (1998) describes that since the early 1970's, Barbados has become a popular destination for female tourists (Albuquerque, 1998: 50). These studies indicate that the sex tourism experience provided a stage for First World gendered performances – for European and North American men to re-enact traditional masculinity and to reassure themselves of their dominance over women, for European and North American women to experiment with and expand their gender identities (Kempadoo, K., 2001: 51). In their studies about romance tourism in Jamaica Pruitt and LaFont conclude that being dissatisfied with the confines of cultural norms and expectations people are willing and even eager, to experiment with and rewrite gender scripts (1993: 436).

Radical feminist theory (f.e. Dworkin, 1974) suggests that sexuality is a key site of male power. Radical feminists describe that during the 'sex act' women submit to men, and men affirm their masculinity and patriarchal power by penetrating the female body. This model of gender power as domination constructs relations between men and women as obscures the significance of class, race and age for individual's social power and life chances. This model also conceals the fact that women too can feel empowered by certain aspects of heterosexuality and are sexual agents (Kempadoo, 2001: 46). This male domination versus female subordination does not give any room to the broad scope of heterosexual sexual exchanges nor does it give any agency to women when given the trade of sex tourism, the supply and demand side of sex are reversed. As commentators like Augustin describe, with this language of victimization it seems that the power relations within sexual economic exchanges are identical to rape and leads to the construction of the sex workers client as an active abuser and therefore necessarily a man (2007: 8, 128).

The different studies that have been done in the Caribbean and Africa seemed mainly interested in the expansion of this type of sex trade and how this trade can be formulated given the growing demand of female clients. Pruitt and Lafont make a clear distinction between love tourism and sex tourism, for them it seems obvious that most of the women do not look for sexual encounters but for love. Although they state that these relations reproduce gender and power relations they acknowledge that it might be understood, given the trade, as a transformation of gender scripts (1993: 423). Herold et al. note that the tourist involvement with local men vary even more and that there is also a focus on companionship and neither love nor sex may enter the picture. They suggest the possibility of a new concept, namely

companionship tourism (2001: 994-995). Whether it is sex tourism, love tourism or companionship tourism these researchers seem more interested in questioning the 'what' instead of questioning the 'why' to stress out underlying factors and the desires of women to travel in search for sex, love and companionship. However, no systematic study has been done among this group to determine their own-self perceptions and definitions of these relationships (Kempadoo, K, 2001: 49).

Must be said that the research that has been done on female sex tourism underlines the importance in contributing to a substantive basis for the re-examination of theories of prostitution and sex work and to feminist theorizing that pays attention to contradictory and multiple gendered positions and locations within contemporary globalized relations when binary views of gender roles are abandoned. The aim of this thesis is to describe the self-perceptions of the relationships between female clientele and male heterosexual gigolo's within the field of gigoloism in the Netherlands. Given that this is a neglected field of research though acknowledging that the female demand for male supply is not a new phenomenon as exemplified by the descriptions of female sex tourism. The following paragraph will elaborate the context of this new field of research in the Netherlands.

#### ***4.4 A (new) research field in the Netherlands***

In her qualitative study on gigolo's, Marielle Osté asked the gigolo's how they were able to find their clientele. Some of them placed advertisements in daily newspapers and met potential clients in hotel lounges. A lot has changed since the introduction of internet. Gigolo's in 2014 are working their ways through different types of online media, as a member of an online club, with a profile on the website of an agency, with a personal website or with small online advertisements on sex-websites. They are even present on different kinds of social media like internet (sex)forums, Facebook and Twitter. As described in the former paragraph, van Gelder and van Lier (2009) described that there seems to be a national growth in the amount of heterosexual male sex workers who seek clientele through the internet. The biggest player in this field is the Dutch escort agency that was already introduced in the introduction, 'The Men's Company' (TMC) was founded in 2009, TMC seemed to be the only high-end gigolo agency in the Netherlands. But since 2013 it seems that TMC has a competitor, namely 'Private Men'. But because they seem to profile themselves not as 'gigolo's' but as 'gentlemen's' for companionship and hospitality for women, and they do

not primarily describe the companionship that they offer as sex related. I am not sure whether Private Men could be seen as a competitor of TMC.

The gigolo's of Private Men are club members of Private Men and they all work independently, they either seek for their own clients by handing out business cards or you can contact them personally by phone or e-mail. Who also work independently are the middle-range gigolo's, as described in the methodology I made a clear classification myself between high-end, middle-range and amateur gigolo's depending on their price ranges. Middle-range gigolo's host their own websites, although you can contact these gigolo's personally by e-mail, the most striking difference between their websites and those of an agency like TMC is that you don't see any pictures of the gigolo's on their websites. Although this is also because of privacy concerns for the gigolo's themselves. Another difference is the range in price. When you would book a 'high-end escort' at a high-end agency you will have to pay around 450 euro for two hours and you have to pay for every additional hour. An independent gigolo, which I would like to refer to as 'middle-range' you would have to pay about 150-200 euro's for 3-4 hours. Besides these hourly cost you would have to pay for their expenses like for example travel costs and the costs of booking a hotel room. At the bottom of the market of gigolo's you will have the 'amateurs' or 'wannabe gigolo's'. You can easily find someone who calls himself a gigolo on websites with sex advertisements, Twitter or even Facebook. The costs of an amateur gigolo ranges from 40 to 60 euro and sometimes amateurs trade sex for luxury goods.

What these three types of gigolo have in common is that they work part-time, especially the high-end and middle-range gigolo's are prevailing high educated men who either have their own company or have a well paid or steady job. Working part-time results in approximately two to three dates a week. All these men are not financially depending on the earnings of being a gigolo.

In the following chapters, the analysis of this study, this context will be addressed in full length through the eyes of the clientele. Because it is an explorative study the first chapter, '*female demand*', will describe the sexual encounters with a gigolo but will also gently describe differences and similarities between male and female demands and desires of consulting a sex worker. The second chapter, '*male supply*', will unravel the discrepancies between the personal perceptions and societal perceptions of gigolo's and the mechanisms that they employ to 'naturalize' their act according to both the embodiment and the subjectification of the stigma that is attached to sex work. As well as the (re)conceptualisations of gigolo's by both gigolo's themselves and their clientele and the

meanings they attach to their 'professionalism, welcome contribution to the current political and theoretical conceptualisations of sex work (i.e. prostitution).

### *Context Summary*

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Since the 1920's the concept gigoloism is described in American literature, movies and songs. Besides a small study in 1989 by Marielle Osté no scientific research has been done on gigoloism in the field of sex work, with the outcome that female sex workers have been (re)presented in both academic research and political reports as a passive supply population wherein male clients constitute the 'demand' for sexual services. This representation conflicts a rather conceptual leap in the global economy of sex neglecting different forms of sex work, different demands and desires. Given the political prostitution-as-violence-against-women paradigm clients of sex workers should be given a central position in the study of sex work. In different studies it is highlighted that it is not 'just sex' that male clients are after when their desires defer from having sex with a person with a certain image and the desire to have an emotional romantic connection. Even more they seem to value a certain reciprocity in their encounters. These desires are important information when conceptualising sex work both theoretically and politically when agency would be given to both sex worker and client to be able to deconstruct a male domination versus female domination in current debates. This deconstruction is needed to acknowledge that women can feel empowered by certain aspects of heterosexuality and can be considered as sexual agents (Kempadoo, 2001: 46).

Although not all scientists (and female sex tourist themselves) refer to female sex tourism as sex work and a part of a global sex work economy, it does abandon binary views of heterosexual gender roles. Female sex tourism in the Caribbean and West Africa are an international trend. The national trend, Dutch gigolo's can be divided into three different kinds, high-end gigolos, middle-range gigolo's and amateur-gigolo's.

## ***Analysis Female Demand***

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### ***5. Consulting a gigolo***

This chapter will start with a description of the clientele from high-end agencies and middle range gigolos to eventually describe in depth the motivations, desires and demands of these women to book a gigolo. As described in the methodology it was questioned if I would be able to find these women, let stand that they were willing to talk to me. They told me, because of discretion, these women would never share their 'secrets' with me and on top of that these women were so very different that they would never have something in common that I could write about. I always questioned these statements. But 'discretion' seemed to be a great good, not only in consulting these women but also as a motivation for them to consult a gigolo.

#### ***5.1. Discretion, safety and anonymity***

Just like male clients, female clients differ tremendously, not only in age but also in their marital status. One of the Gigolo's I spoke with, Richard has made an overview of these differences of his last 135 clientele. 24% of his clientele was single, 36% of them was married and booked him without the acceptance or know a bouts from their partner, 4% was married and booked him with the acceptance of their partner, 12% was (recently) divorced, 5% was widow and 19% was a couple. I had the opportunity to speak to a total of 10 women, these women might even resemble the clientele descriptions of Richard. Amber was single, Louise has been in a lovely relationship of over 20 years and her partner doesn't know about her booking a gigolo every once in a while. Anita is recently divorced. The same counts for Eline and Carmen. Victoria is a widow. Marjolein has an open relationship with her husband. Ilona and Jasmijn are a lesbian couple who booked a gigolo as a couple and the same counts for Marichel and Richard a heterosexual couple.

For most of the women I was the only one they could share their story with about their struggles, their motivations and wishes to book a gigolo. For them it was an opportunity to openly talk about something that they couldn't talk about with friends, relatives and for some their (ex)partner. They were surprised that a younger woman was interested in their stories. They knew they weren't the only one, but apart from some online reviews that they wrote themselves about their experience(s) with a gigolo and forums that some of them attend they

never spoke about their experiences in public. At the beginning of our conversation or afterwards in an e-mail almost all the women told me how thankful they were to have had the opportunity to share their story.

*“The reason why I wanted to talk to you, to tell you my story is because I think it is an important one to share. There is a whole world out there that nobody knows about. I feel almost obligated to talk to you. In a good way though to raise awareness and acceptance.*

(Victoria)

*“I miss to just talk about it with a woman every now and then”.*

(Marjolein)

*“I wanted to talk to you because I truly think that it would be so much better if women could share their experiences and that there would be more information about this phenomena. Otherwise it would stay such a limbo subject. I have the intention to make this (booking a gigolo) open for discussion”.*

(Louise)

Victoria did tell it to one friend and Anita shared it with her three closest friends. Anita, who is recently divorced was even stimulated by one of her friends to book a gigolo. In a long and troublesome marriage she didn't had sex for approximately ten years. Her closest friends almost pushed her to truly choose for herself when the divorce was finally over. But she was afraid, where would she start? While googling she was texting one of her friends an image from a website of a gigolo. *“Shall I do this?”*, her friend replied with that it was probably the best idea she had in years. Anita was insecure during and after her marriage because she blocked her feelings, but she didn't know where to start exactly or how to overcome feelings of insecurity:

*“If I would have dated first I would have been really insecure. What do I have to do? What do I need to do? I don't even know what is expected from me when I would be dating. But then I thought, a gigolo. A gigolo can share his experiences with me about what is happening nowadays between the sheets”.*



As confident as this revelation of Anita might sound like, it took a lot of courage to send the gigolo an e-mail. All of the women who had e-mail contact had to conquer some fears before sending an e-mail and make it to an actual appointment with a gigolo. All of them used internet to look for a gigolo at forehand which resulted in some difficulties. Marjolein didn't even know what it was called in the first place. *"It took me forever to type the word gigolo in the browser. I just didn't think about it. Sex with men... or sex this and that or sex-contact or sex-date, everything crossed my mind, except 'gigolo'. I even typed male whore, but that get's you to... well you know!"* The 'you know' where Marjolein is talking about is the google search all of the interviewed women had some troubles with.

There is a clear distinction between what they call 'wannabe gigolo's and the other middle-range and high-end gigolo's. *"When you start googling you first find all those sleazy creapy men, you know!"* As Eline describes the 'wannabe gigolo's, or 'amateur gigolo's' as *"men who make a picture of their naked body while showing off the size of their penis!"*

Victoria, Ilona and Jasmijn booked a high-end escort for just a single time, just for 'the experience' as will be described later on in this chapter. But the rest of these women didn't want a high-end gigolo. *"For about 250 euro you would have a quickie or something, hell no. I don't want to look at the clock and know it's ticking!"* as Louise describes her discomfort with an agency. But for a lot of women it wasn't only the money but also their smooth model-like looks that they didn't find appealing at all. Except for Ilona and Jasmijn, they all went for the middle range gigolo. After having one 'date' with a high end escort Victoria consulted a middle range gigolo. A middle range costs about a third of the price of a high-end escort agency and time isn't an issue because all the bookings are for 3 to 4 hours. Interestingly is that these 'middle range gigolos' do not have clear photographs on their websites. Where all of the women eventually fell for wasn't the body or the looks of the gigolo or the way he presented himself, it were the reviews of other women that triggered them.

Although they had some doubts, like Marjolein describes when we talked about her three options a 'wannabe-gigolo' on a sex-job<sup>21</sup> website, a high-end escort or a middle range escort:

*"It's not about appearance, it's about a certain contact, a click and what he actually can do, do you know what I mean? For me that's what counts. A lot of them have such a big mouth. If*

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<sup>21</sup> Sex-job websites, like <http://www.sexjobs.nl/> are gaining more popularity in the Netherlands. Websites where you can offer yourself or seek others for different sexual adventures for cash or luxury goods like iPhones. Sexjobs.nl also has a topic list 'gigolos' where more than 50 'gigolo's' present themselves. The website is always up to date, meaning that if you want sex today you will be able to find it.

*somebody is already sending me pictures of their penis, well, then I'm already done with that. That is so corny! And when they have their own website, off course everybody can make a website, so I'm a bit suspicious, but at least it looks more sincere".*

After finding the right (middle range) gigolo, contact with the gigolo started with e-mail contact. They all send on average four e-mail messages before an actual arrangement was made. Only Ilona and Jasmijn had contact by phone at fore hand with the owner of the gigolo agency.

All of the women preferred, at least for their first appointments, to go to a hotel. A hotel contributes to their need of discretion, safety and anonymity.

*"You just don't want any fuzz! [...] We would never invite somebody to our own house, never, just in a hotel somewhere or maybe at their place, but we considered that as an option but it still felt rather unsafe. But you can't find those type of arrangements on the internet, not on dating websites at least and we didn't want anybody we would know because that can wreck your friendship! Or for the fear that there are other emotions involved"*

(Ilona)

Discretion, safety and anonymity seem to be three important values for these women to book a gigolo, as Ilona described. The importance of 'not having sex' with somebody you will know or simply pick up in a bar will be described in the next paragraph.

## **5.2 Business like transactions**

I asked the women what the difference might be between having sex with someone they met in a bar or on a 'dating' website, someone they know or a gigolo. When considering the assumptions that were made by Matt Adams who claimed that women generally do not have problems finding sexual partners and women tend to prefer having sex with someone that they know, and therefore do not tend to like anonymous sex. Considering that it almost can't be anymore anonymous when they haven't met the gigolo at forehand. Although these women differ in age, marital status and even sexual orientation, they all explained to me, like this statement of Amber, that *"if you pay for something you know what you will get"*. But until the actual appointment with the gigolo all of them still wouldn't know how he really looked like,

the ‘what’ is most definitely not about his looks. The ‘what’ has to do with (1) experience in sex and (2) a business like transaction. As Amber describes: *“The odds are much higher if you hire a professional that he actually knows what he is doing and in case you pick someone from a bar you just don’t know”*. Louise describes that: *“yes women can have sex everywhere, they can be taken on every corner of a street but that doesn’t mean that they are being beloved<sup>22</sup>, that is such a difference”*.

The experience in sex is not a plus but seems to be a requirement what makes the gigolo ‘a professional’, in the words of these women. This professionalism is what counts for Eline: *“In the domain of sex he knows his trade, he is very professional”*

All the women describe a certain ‘business like transaction’ as a condition and feature of a gigolo. Eline saw her female friends struggling extra marital affairs:

*“That could cause so much trouble. You know, there comes a time that you can’t turn around anymore, that you can’t hide it for others. They will call you eventually on those inconvenient times. Booking a gigolo is safe, a gigolo doesn’t want a thing from me”*.

A notion like this didn’t only count for the women like Eline who had problems with her relationships or those that are actually in a divorce or are recently divorced. The same notion seem to count for Louise, as well:

*“Do you know what most people do? They will have sex with someone they know. I think you should always keep these two spheres apart because eventually you will want to do other stuff with each other, outside the bedrooms. Then emotions will play their part and then all the limitations are gone. With a gigolo you don’t have that problem! It’s the ultimate ‘solution’. This will not touch my private life [...] This is a business transaction I do not need to say to the gigolo that ‘now isn’t a good time’ I just don’t talk to him anymore, over, out, were done”*.

This ‘transaction’ was also important for the lesbian couple Jasmijn and Ilona, although Jasmijn seems to like to refer to a gigolo as a ‘good’, both of them see the value of the transaction when they state:

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<sup>22</sup> ‘beloved’, translated by the author from the Dutch word: *beminnen*. There seems to be no accurate English translation.

*“to sum it up we were looking for somebody who we could have sex with just for one time, who is hygienic, has a good penis size, well he didn’t had that but the actual intention was that we looked for a man that we could pay money to never see him again, that is just part of the deal. He doesn’t have our cell phone number, renting a gigolo was the right thing to do for us”.*

The gigolo’s all describe this as one of the key features of their profession as Bruce indicates by his clear statement:

*“Women don’t want any problems afterwards, because they will know they have a chance of getting into trouble meeting someone in a bar, sometimes they can’t get rid of the guy and he’ll keep coming. And when it was just with the intention of one single night and he keeps coming back, then you are fucked. If you pay for the service, consulting me for instance, you won’t have those problems!”*

The term ‘service’ is also described by some, like Anita when she was thinking about what she actually ‘bought’: *“It is just a service you pay for that will help you, you would also go to a coach when you want to be better at something, right?”* Marjolein who had some more experience than the other women with having sex with other men than her husband, clearly prefers gigolo’s:

*“You know I questioned myself recently why I still like to meet him, I have seen him recently in March this year, but why do I pay him when there are so many men out there? I think it all has to with him being so discreet. And you know he would never bother you afterwards. I once had a stalker, so I think that’s it. It’s so much safer”.*

The importance of these business like transactions as a somewhat demarcated terrain where they pay for a service and when their needs are met both parties go their own way is part of what Elisabeth Bernstein would describe as ‘bounded authenticity’ (Bernstein, 2001: 403). What makes it ‘bounded’ is the importance of the transaction, without the transaction it is not considered as a service.

Bernstein describes that the male sex clients want an emotional connection, but they do not want any obligations. They don’t believe they can have no-strings–attached–sex, which is why they pay. They’d rather pay than get it for free (ibid.: 403-404). This seems to

resemble the above descriptions of the women and gigolo's that I have interviewed. What makes the bounded sexual encounter 'authentic' is the authenticity of a 'real' sexual experiences. This experience is rephrased by Bernstein as the 'Girlfriend Experience' (GFE). For Bernstein it seems that the GFE is one of the most sought after feature in the prostitution and are typically described in advertisements about escorts in print media and online advertisements. A GFE is a type of session that might be proceed much more like a non-paid encounter between two 'lovers'. This may include a lengthy period of foreplay in which the customer and the escort touch, rub, fondle, massage and perhaps even kiss passionately. A GFE session might also include activities where the customer works as hard to stimulate the escort as she works to stimulate him. And finally a GFE session usually has a period of cuddling and closeness at the end of the session, rather than each partner jumping up and hurrying out as soon as the customer finished (Bernstein, 2007: 127). Interestingly, Danny refers to himself as a perfect BFE, 'boyfriend experience' wherein this given authenticity and boundedness is described:

*“A lot of the women I have met do not want the fuzz [...]other men would stalk them afterwards with messages or through social media. But to be honest they just want sincere sex, and that's it, they ultimately pay you to shut the door, to leave! So this is the same as what they say about female sex workers which they phrase as a true GFE“*

In this extend Danny considers himself to be a true BFE. The authenticity on the other hand will be elaborated in the upcoming paragraphs whereby I would like to state that the possibility of reciprocity to make it an 'authentic' sexual encounter will not be valued in the same extend as in the description of Bernstein.

### ***5.3 A practical problem needs a practical solution***

All of the interviewed women had their own demands and desires, booking a gigolo seemed to be for all of them a 'solution' for a given 'problem'. In the former paragraph I described their practical descriptions of why they wanted a gigolo instead of somebody they know or just recently met in a bar. In this paragraph I will describe each of their demands and desires in the light of the 'business like transaction' and the sexual experience ór sexual professionalism of the gigolo. What becomes clear is that the 'experience' is three folded, (1)

the gigolo has experience, (2) booking a gigolo is an experience in itself and (3) by booking a gigolo you can gain experience.

*“The biggest snare of a woman is that she has to pay for sex. What I think is that you should see it in it’s context, like I do. Because not every men can give you a great massage and can solve all your back problems, can they? No you go to a professional masseur, and that you pay for that, well that’s normal. And I understand that there is a big difference between having a massage or being beloved, I get that. But still this is also a professional that you pay for his knowledge and that you pay for the experience” .*

(Louise)

The experience that Louise is referring to is the experience of the gigolo. Louise is in a relationship for over 20 years with a man who is ‘older’. During our conversation she told me he was definitely the love of her live, she couldn’t bear speaking negative about him, the only thing that she missed was his sex drive. Her sex drive was simply more present. And it’s not that they didn’t want to work it out together, not at all, they went from therapist to therapist. But that wasn’t what Louise really needed and she saw her partner getting miserable for not giving her what she needed. *“I began to get sexually frustrated and very impressible for other men. I’m still very attractive so I get a lot of attention from men, that’s what makes it even harder [...] I felt like a ticking bomb! So that’s why I made the conscious choice for a gigolo.”* She is very happy with this ‘solution’ as it works out for her and her partner, although he doesn’t know about the monthly gigolo services.

For Anita, the professional experience of a gigolo was one of her main reasons consulting one, but through his experience she wanted to gain experience. As described she has been in a long marriage for several years and during the last ten of them, she did not had any sex with her partner. Before her partner she had one single experience. She wanted to enjoy life again, go out, have fun and date but she didn’t know how and would feel insecure if she would enter the dating field without some knowledge. For Anita a gigolo was the one who *“really helped me to overcome some of my fears that I felt during that time about sexuality and my body. He really helped me to overcome that all, that was so important”*. She felt that she missed a certain expertise before she could date others. *“For me it was a service to gain expertise, if I have a problem with my work, I’ll hire a coach, If I have a problem with my sex life, well lack of experience, then I rent a gigolo!”* During our conversation she shared some new dating experiences with me and I asked her if she would have taken these steps if she

didn't 'rent' a gigolo, she explained me that *"Well, eventually. But it would have took a long time. My friends told me for a very long time that I should get a life of my own. Even my ex-husband was asking me why I haven't start dating."*

During her marriage Carmen couldn't relax during physical contact. During a session with a relationship therapist to work on their marriage her (ex)husband called her a 'frigid ice queen' (in Dutch: *'frigide ijskonijn'*). Although these were rather harsh words, she could relate to his feelings, but because of a severe health problem and a burn-out afterwards she just couldn't get physical. *"I thought I have two options I can either start an extra marital relationship, to see if I can relax with somebody else, what I don't want because that would definitely feel as cheating as well and I don't want to bother anyone with my life situation. And then I thought about the article that I once read about a gigolo, that was the other option to try to save my marriage"*. Eventually her marriage broke down before she met the gigolo for the first time. But her main goal stayed the same *"Was I blocking something that was due to my (ex) partner or was there just something I could let go off why I could not relax?"* She told me she now gained the experience that sex is not only physical but that it's mental as well *"If you can't let go, you will never experience an orgasm"*. Practically, she experienced several sexual acts that she had never done with her partner. *"It is no nice and relaxing and he really helped me to cross some bridges which I didn't had the courage to cross in twelve years."*

Eline her (ex)husband didn't touched her for nearly five years. To experience intimacy with an experienced professional seemed to be the right thing to do for her to get rid of some of her insecurities. *"He is really open and sets you at ease in an instance. It felt so good. He took all my insecurities away. I felt so save and it was such a long time ago that somebody saw me naked [...] I didn't feel like a natural woman anymore. I used to call myself Cinderella. I could cook and clean, I was only there to keep up appearances"*. Like Anita she is taking some next steps in the world of dating. *"Little by little I am starting to flirt with people, I am not there yet that I can actually allow men in my life, it will take some time but I'll see what the future brings"*.

Victoria is a widow for four years now and has been with her husband for nearly 36 years. With her gigolo she is now able to share the intimacy that she was missing when they meet every three months. Before her encounters with this middle-range gigolo she booked a high-end gigolo but he didn't had the experience she hoped for, which she most definitely found with her middle range gigolo, which she refers to 'as my lover' or 'my entrepreneur' (in Dutch: *mijn ZZP-er*) . *"Besides the sex he shared with me some of his knowledge and I see*

*now that besides my age there is still a lot to explore [...] I thought my age would matter but it doesn't, maybe that was my own narrow judgement". Her gigolo even suggested some websites, like secondlove<sup>23</sup>. Because she described that she wasn't into a relationship yet, but sex every three months wasn't enough. It wasn't only the (sexual) experience of the gigolo that she was after but also to gain experience that improved her confidence about her own sexuality in this given stage in her life and her overall wellbeing: "Every year for Christmas I give three people a small gesture when they positively influenced my wellbeing in that year. Last year I gave my gigolo a bottle of wine as well".*

To be more in peace with her physical appearance and her female body Amber booked a gigolo for a more explorative sexual journey. *"I knew this was going to be good, that was my main idea. If you look at the reviews on his website you see that there are a lot of women who have certain wishes. I liked to see it as a night out. One that I didn't need to think"* The 'I don't-need-to-think' part refers to the sexual reciprocity that is non-existent during a 'date' with a gigolo. *"It's all about receiving as a woman, without giving"*, as Amber further elaborates. What she learned from the experience was that *"It broadened my horizon, I felt much more free and aware that it was okay to enjoy all parts of it [...] looking back I'm very happy that I've done this. I most definitely do not regret this!"*. She explained to me, without going into minor details that the experience of the gigolo gave her some skills<sup>24</sup>, some experience that she could share with others, *"Now I knew that certain techniques worked for me, I was able to share this with others. I even shared it with a partner whom I dated after the gigolo experience. He just loved it."*

For Amber the whole experience was definitely three folded, an experience in itself with an experienced professional to gain experience. *"I do acknowledge that a lot of women don't tell men what they really like, but there are a lot of men who just don't have the experience and they can't communicate, that's completely different with a gigolo"*.

The experience in itself was definitely one of the main features of booking a gigolo for Ilona and Jasmijn. Ilona explained to me that the main reason that she wanted to book a gigolo was *"I really wanted it because I never had sex with a man, I'm lesbian but I always had this interest in having sex with a man, but definitely not in a heterosexual relationship"*.

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<sup>23</sup> Second Love is a dating site for people who are in a relationship, they advertise with the statement that: 'flirting isn't only for singles', but on their dating sate you will not only find people who are in a committed relationship but singles as well <http://www.secondlove.nl/>

<sup>24</sup> One of these skills that Amber did refer to was 'squirting'. Squirting or 'female ejaculation' is the ejaculation of a clear water like liquid that squirts out of the urethra of women when their G spot is stimulated.



Her partner, who did have sex with men wished to give her this experience. Because she was 'in-experienced' she didn't know what to expect. After their date with a gigolo she knew what to expect and what not and they had sex with another men. Although with a slightly different background then, for instance Amber, having sex with a gigolo was a first step for Ilona before she could take any future steps:

*"I couldn't have done this without the experience I had with a gigolo being safe and discrete. But I still didn't get it, why women have sex with men, it was fun, but it wasn't that spectacular. But the experience was definitely good for its purpose (having sex with a man) [...] If we would have sex first, with for instance somebody we would have known that would have made it a lot more complicated".*

For the heterosexual couple Marichel and Richard the experience in itself was their main motivation. Marichel got the first booking with a gigolo for her 25<sup>th</sup> birthday. They, Marichel and her partner Richard, talked about booking a gigolo before because Marichel didn't had that much experience with other men. They have a very strong committed relationship for over 8 years with a, as they described, 'healthy and normal sex life'. In the last two years they have had two bookings with the same gigolo, 'just for fun'. And with both of these bookings Richard came along, it therefore wasn't only about the possibility to have sex with another men with no strings attached but also the ability to have a threesome. But as Richard explained to me that he only liked to watch. *"As a man you somehow feel the pressure to perform. But that really doesn't matter, I enjoy every single part of this experience when she is receiving so much pleasure"* Marichel explained to me that *"It's an easy service, with no strings attached, this is the cherry on our pie because we have a very good sex life as it is, it's just for fun every now and then [...] We go on a small weekend breaks, and well we just book a less luxurious room but a gigolo instead. We told him the last time, the next time we'll plan something we will book a suite again".*

Marjolein who is in a strong committed open marriage didn't need more experience, as she had different relationships next to her marriage, but they all lacked some kind of experience in and respect for the female body. *"They just don't acknowledge it's value you know. Single men whom I slept with they were just like, when I'm done, it's done"*. Marjolein couldn't get enough sexual gratification from those men when they completely lacked some kind of experience in the way they treated the female body. In a way this is comparable with the lack of communicative skills of men where Amber is referring to and the importance of receiving as a woman *"It's not about his needs it is about mine!"*

In the next paragraph the importance of reciprocity and its nonexistence during a sexual encounter with a gigolo is further elaborated when I describe why they appreciate their sexual encounters with a gigolo what makes a BFE slightly different than a GFE.

#### **5.4 heterosexual reciprocity**

Months, weeks, hours and minutes before the date the women all had some nerves, and they even had their doubts at the beginning of the date, feelings that they tried to block. The description of Carmen about those doubts is similar to that of the other women: *“Do I really want this? I can still back out! Well I had these kind of thoughts, but yeah on the same time he had the ability to set me at ease in an instance”*.

Most of the women told me about the importance of making some small talk with the gigolo at forehand, drink coffee or set them at ease and they really appreciate this order. After the small talk they got a massage to set the mood followed by a more erotic massage before they could begin having sex. Anita described that she needed this sequence because:

*“You just lay down and he will give you such a great massage and that gives such an inner peace. And then you get those feelings you know. I didn’t know I was able to get them and then, oh I’m such a thinker I really needed to let that (thinking) go because otherwise nothing was going to happen. But those feelings were so sublime I couldn’t even think anymore”*.

It should be clear by now that the sexual act in itself seem to be of far less value for the respondents. As described in the former paragraphs these women all had their personal wishes and their personal gain. But what seemed important is that these wishes stay personal and that the gigolo has the ability and will to make sure that they felt comfortable and remain comfortable in the 3 to 4 hours that he was there, because it was not about his personal gain, the wishes of these women were his command. Amber explained to me that *“you pay him for several hours and in those hours he will do as you please. And if you want to be cuddled for three hours, no problem. I can’t imagine that you would only want this, but still if you want a massage of three hours no gigolo would say no to that. And I think that is one of the main differences between a female escort and a male escort. Because would a man just want to cuddle? I don’t think so”*.

Carmen acknowledges these abilities of a gigolo: *“a few days before we meet he sends me an e-mail to ask if I would have any specific wishes or needs, I mostly replied that we’ll just see what will happen according to my mood. Because I know he can feel when I can relax or not and knows what I want or need according to that”*. Although Louise doesn’t need any small talk, because: *“I am here to have sex”* she does acknowledge the expertise a gigolo has to accommodate to a woman and her body *“I didn’t feel the need of sitting down and drinking coffee with him, absolutely not, I don’t want to talk, I want to feel, he understands that”*. Louise explains that the personal attention that he gives is very important:

*“A lot of women are withdrawn during sex. They are too occupied with thinking ‘what does he want from me?’, ‘does he like me?’ or ‘am I doing what I’m supposed to do?’ It is so good to do it with someone when all of these issues are non-existent. . It doesn’t matter what he thinks, he is there for you! He is simply offering his services to make your fantasies come true”*.

Amber, like Louise is describing, saw this as a big plus but she had her doubts *“I wasn’t thinking about how I might look like or if I was doing any good but I was wondering if I was supposed to do something in return. But yeah it was the whole point not to give. He did not had an orgasm, but still as a woman I have this feeling that, yes it would have been nice for him if he had one. But I knew when I was thinking those thoughts that I should let go of them, because and I don’t mean this rude, but I’m the one who pays!”*. Eventually Amber gave him some oral pleasure but *“only because I wanted to, it was not about his pleasure!”*. Also Eline had some problems with the absence of reciprocity, *“I felt so passive! But he told me to let that part go and just enjoy it. But he is right, in fact he is there to service you”*.

For the gigolo’s I spoke with it seemed that they want to share their sexual experiences, not only by doing it (sexual intercourse), but also by taking away certain, what Danny would call *‘human insecurities’*:

*“Not only as a woman, but every human has it’s insecurities, especially when it concerns sex and physical appearance. Are my breasts big enough or what about the shape of my ass or are my labia too long? Everybody is so vulnerable when they are naked. With my experiences I have the ability to sooth every women and convince them and take away their insecurities.”*

When they were being asked what it takes to be a gigolo and what ‘makes’ a gigolo a gigolo, all the men answered that besides being properly dressed, having a good hygiene and the knowledge of certain etiquette it takes some certain capacities to be a gigolo. Whether or not these capacities can be learned or not is debatable, for most of the men I talked with these competences are gained by experiences in their personal and professional lives. Therefore ‘gigoloism’, the suffix of ‘gigolo’ that I have mentioned in the preface, seems to be quite accurate as a description of their professionalism, indicating an activity and a characteristic quality. The gigolo’s describe that they have the ability to give a woman their full attention within the given time that they are paid. Ricardo describes that women “*are not used to this, although men take on the lead most of the time they always think they have to do something in return. They don’t have to. [...] it is about them and their pleasure, and not about mine*”. And Richard describes that: “*It’s the game, women enjoy it that they only have to receive that they don’t have to think. They can all just let it go and enjoy!*”.

I asked the gigolo’s if they ever ejaculated during a paid sexual encounter. Some of them replied that it could happen on occasion but most of them replied with a simple ‘no’ referring to their earlier statements about a non-existence of heterosexual reciprocity, meaning that if it was a woman’s desire they could receive. As Danny described: “*I once met a woman who wanted oral sex, just because her husband didn’t let her. And she wanted to swallow all of it just to be able to taste it for once in her life, and that was it! That was everything she wanted*”.

The inexistence of a heterosexual reciprocity is at odds with the description of the sexual reciprocity that Bernstein (2001) refers to as a feature of a GFE and its bounded authenticity. I would like to refer to this inexistence of heterosexual reciprocity during an encounter with a gigolo as ‘bounded reciprocity’. As Braun et al. (2003) describe in their manifestation of heterosexual reciprocity, is that reciprocity in itself – which they analytically reduced to the ability to give and receive orgasms – offers women an entitlement to pleasure-as-orgasms within sex (Braun et al. 2003: 254-255).

A discourse of reciprocity could challenge aspects of traditional male-focused constructions of hetero sex, but discourse on reciprocity, given the statement of Amber for example, also comes along with certain obligations and responsibilities as a woman, which seems to make them uncomfortable and off track on their own pleasures. During the sexual encounter with a gigolo they do not want to give, they don’t want the obligation to give, they want to receive. Therefore I consider the heterosexual reciprocity ‘bounded’ when they will only give pleasure when it’s perceived as their pleasure.

This bounded reciprocity is not, as will be discussed in the following paragraph something for ‘all’ women because to be able to bound this you will have to be able to separate love from sex first.

### **5.5 Love versus Sex**

*“I wish every woman could experience this. I thought I’d know my body by know. I am the type that masturbates a lot!”*, Louise explains to me when we were discussing her personal gain and experiences, *“You don’t have to tell me nothing about my body, I have a drawer stuffed with toys, so I consider myself an expert, but now I know I’m even learning new things. About my own body!”* Louise wasn’t the only one who could recommend this to other women, all of the women told me that more women should experience this. *“This experience was satisfying for me, I realise that now and I wish more women could enjoy this. Off course there will be a lot who wouldn’t dare to book one, that’s such a waste”*.

Though the women can recommend a gigolo to other women, like Louise and Carmen, half of the women that I spoke with are a bit withhold to say ‘all women’ due to the experience of the gigolo and the presumed moral standards of other women. Because of the sexual experience of the gigolo, Marjolein describes that it wouldn’t be a good idea to book a gigolo when you’re still a virgin *“When she hasn’t lost her virginity I wouldn’t like start with a gigolo. Let them first know the bad sex, because when you book a good gigolo, that would be your point of reference. But if you’re not, book a gigolo!”*.

These moral standards stand in the way of what they all describe as the ability to make a clear separation between love and sex. It weren’t just Louise and Marjolein who made this clear distinction because they are both in a relationship, all women told me the importance of this distinction. Marjolein, being in an open relationship has a lot of difficulties with these ‘moral standards’, because her personal perceptions do not match with the more general societal perceptions from her surroundings:

*“A lot of women tell me that they can’t have sex with somebody else, they can’t have sex without any love or passion. They can only have sex with somebody they love. Well I think, you have ‘sex’ and ‘sex’. I have sex with my husband and with the gigolo it’s sort of a rush, it’s a kick there’s no need for love in that game”*.

For Ilona and Jasmijn this distinction was already made clear during their contact with the owner of the gigolo agency, they didn't want oral sex for instance or any cuddling what so ever, *"it might sound a bit corny"*, Jasmijn explained, *"but we just wanted a living penis"*. The other sexual acts were just for themselves, this was pure (penetrative) sex. Amber described that she thought it would be very important to make a clear distinction between love and sex at forehand:

*"You should really know yourself. Because you have to acknowledge that somebody will give me his undivided attention for 4 hours. And I was allowed to enjoy that, but after those four hours it's over [...] you have to ask yourself if you're able to make clear cut division between love and sex"*.

Carmen describes that you have to be very conscious and aware of the feelings that you will have during the sexual encounter with a gigolo:

*"especially know I realise that he is fulfilling a need and at the same time I feel really safe, that is a soil for all kinds of feelings and you have to be very conscious of those feelings, and it's still the prevailing moral standard for women that you can't disconnect those feelings from love. At least that is what I can conclude from my surroundings and my background"*

The women describe a certain physical need that they desire, the physical and sexual authenticity that they seek provoke certain feelings that they are aware of, which have as they describe nothing to do with love. And it is exactly their ability to make a clear distinction between sex and love that might enable the bounded authenticity and bounded reciprocity during the time that they spend with a gigolo .

While talking with the women if they 'could' recommend a gigolo to other woman, it was more a 'would' because most of them do not have the opportunity to share their stories with other women. Although they would like to they can't. This discrepancy between their own choices to book a gigolo, the 'personal perceptions' and the way they have been raised and what they presume to be the moral standards, the 'societal perceptions' are further described in the next chapter. These discrepancy leads to certain contradictions about what they personally describe as natural feelings and what they mention society prescribes as natural.

### ***Summary Female Demand***

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This first chapter of the analysis of this thesis addresses the first three explorative sub questions that were addressed in the methodology to make an inductive analysis: 1. What are the demands and (sexual) desires of the female clientele?, 2. What are the do's and don'ts of their demands and desires? and 3. What are their perceptions of the fulfilment of their desires?

I would like to recall Matt Adams, the American social scientist who described that the market of male heterosexual sex workers is small because of three clear reasons. First, women generally do not have problems finding sexual partners. Second women tend to prefer having sex with someone that they know, and do not tend to like anonymous sex. And thirdly, women generally do not have as much income as men (Adams, 1999: 123). As for the third reason, all of these women are financially independent and can at least afford to see a middle-range gigolo on regular basis. For the first and second reasons the female clients that I have interviewed state quite the opposite although some of them described that they get attention from men, they seek anonymous sex which they perceive to be more discrete and safe than if they would have sex with someone they now or met in a bar because of all the problems that they might face afterwards. From a gigolo they could demand discretion, safety and anonymity.

Although the women differ in age, marital status and even sexual orientation, they all explained to me, like a statement of Amber that : *“if you pay for something you, know what you will get”*. The ‘what’ has to do with (1) the experience and (2) a business like transaction. This business like transaction is a condition to book a gigolo it makes it clear for the women that it is a service that they pay for. This relates to the ‘bounded authenticity’ a concept coined by Elisabeth Bernstein, who described that the male clients she interviewed want an emotional connection but they don't want any obligations (Bernstein, 2001: 403-404). The authenticity denotes the sexual ‘realness’ of the intimacy during the sexual encounters. Bernstein describes that this is typical for a Girlfriend Experience (GFE), but a ‘real’ GFE covers a heterosexual reciprocity, but a Boyfriend Experience (BFE) that even one of the gigolo's interviewed is referring to may not have a heterosexual reciprocity, it's all about the ability for women to receive, they will only give sexual pleasure when it is their desire. Therefore the sexual encounters are not only about ‘bounded authenticity’ but also about ‘bounded reciprocity’.

Booking a professional gigolo was for all the women I interviewed a ‘solution’ for a given ‘problem’. Besides the wish to have sex with (another) man for the first time which was the case for the two couples that I have interviewed, all of the other, single, married, committed or recently divorced women it was their lack of intimacy that was the core motivation to book a gigolo. They all wanted to be ‘beloved’, although this is not an accurate translation of the Dutch word ‘*beminnen*’ because they didn’t seek love, it was their ability to separate love from sex to bound the authenticity of the sexual experience in the first place. It is therefore limited to state that the women want to be ‘beloved’ as they perceived their sexual experience with a gigolo as three different types of experiences: 1. The gigolo has experience, referring to the professionalism of the gigolo to fulfil their desire. 2. Booking a gigolo is an experience in itself, when the booking was in the first place ‘just for fun’. 3. By booking a gigolo they gained experience. This last ‘experience’ is of great importance to understand the impact that booking a gigolo had on the lives of the majority of the women that I spoke with. The experience that they gained enabled the women to take further steps in their lives and for some - especially for those that do not have a partner or when their partner could not fulfil their sexual desires - the sexual encounter with the gigolo improved their wellbeing.

## **Analysis Male Supply**

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### ***6. Personal and Societal Perceptions***

In this chapter I will describe the ways in which the women personally perceive their sexual encounters with a gigolo as ‘natural’ although stating that during their encounter with a gigolo they all had conflicting feelings knowing that ‘society’ or even their closest friends and relatives would perceive it as an ‘unnatural act’. This unnaturalness for women is further analysed as their perception of an existing sexual double standard and the given stigma of paying for sex and their unchaste behaviour. Both the gigolo’s and their clientele use different information management strategies to cope with these stigmata.

#### ***6.1. A natural woman in an unnatural act***

As described in chapter five it has been a long while for some of the women to be intimate with a man. An intimacy that they longed for, whether they were in or out a relationship.



Besides Jasmijn and Ilona, all the women spoke about the naturalness of their feelings, this 'naturalness' has two sides, the first one is that the sex with the gigolo went really smooth and easy, like Anita describes when she is saying: “*It was all so natural. I could totally let go of the sexual limits I had on a very natural manner*”. The other side of this 'naturalness' lays in the fact that they felt like a natural woman again, for some of them, it was a pretty long time ago that they could feel this sexual again and to embrace their sexuality and their female body, which relates to their feelings of finally feeling like a natural woman again, like Eline explains:

*“The fact that you feel so good, you feel like a woman and it has been a long time that I have felt that way. To feel like a woman. I thought I could just go to the Hema and buy myself a pair of grandma panties. I didn't buy myself anymore nice lingerie because who was there to see it and appreciate it?”*

In an e-mail message that she send me a few days after our conversation she told me:

*“The experience with him contributed to the bear fact that I feel much more liberated in my own body. Being rejected for several years I lost the sense of this I could not feel like a woman anymore”.*

For Louise there is no doubt that “*every woman wants to feel desired and that man gives you the feeling that you have a fantastic body*” Although they feel like a natural woman (again), they did feel a lot of pressure on their shoulders what others might think about what they were doing, The naturalness of the act becomes unnatural in the eyes of others:

*“At the beginning I couldn't stop thinking about what I was doing. What was happening here? And also: I am paying somebody to do this with me! I could feel the judgements of others”.*

(Amber)

*“I'm so afraid for the reactions of others. That's not what I need. I know this is what is good for me, this is my choice, this is my sex life and that's private and I'm going to keep it that way”*

(Carmen)

All the women had a certain feeling like they were not supposed to have sex with another men and/or to pay another men to have sex with like Carmen and Ambers descriptions. Eline felt like she was lowering her standards:

*“I thought: ‘to what am I reducing myself’. But on the other hand I thought: ‘what will become of me when I do not take this step?’ Maybe I won’t have sex for forty years when I would stay with my husband! All those thoughts crossed my mind you know and then I thought: ‘I am just going to take it in my own hands!’ [...] It was about time I stood up for myself!”*

(Eline)

Later in the conversation I asked Eline about what exactly it was that she was reducing herself to, she stated that *“It felt so wrong to pay for sex! I’m not an ugly woman, I’m in really good shape for my age. So that’s not it, I can meet men. It’s about the fact that you pay for sex!”*

The personal feelings of the women contradict the feelings they think society would have if they will know of their sexual encounters with a gigolo. The women internalized the consequences if they would openly tell about their experiences. Although their sexual encounters with a gigolo are not evidently visible for the outside world, the fact that they have to ‘hide’ it because they know that it is not perceived as a norm makes them aware of the social stigma they are dealing with (Goffmann, 1963: 57). In their contacts with others, like friends or family, what Goffman refers to as the ‘process of socialization’, they become aware of the consequences if they would tell others about their encounters. In this way they accept the stigma (ibid.: 36).

When I asked the women about what might happen and why they are so doubting to ever tell somebody outside a certain comfort zone – because some of them did tell it to one or some of their closest friends, or me - they all refer to ‘the taboo’. I see the mentioning of the word ‘taboo’ as the internalization of a stigma.

*“It seems more practical to not talk about it. It is taboo. That’s exactly why I do not speak about it. It’s not done! And if I would talk about it you’ll see that people would laugh about it, because they assume that women that book a gigolo are desperate or something like that. It’s just not done! You must be very ugly or desperate as a woman when you would do such a thing!”*

(Carmen)

*“You know very well yourself that a lot of people think very negative about paying for sex. I could not tell this to my children for example, it’s just not done! What will happen to my career? My life? I’m not willing to take any chances”.* (Anita)

The women preferred to book a gigolo because of its ‘business like transaction’ and it’s ‘bounded authenticity’ but it is exactly this transaction which they assume not be tolerated by others, paying for sex is *“still pretty strange for others, I think, especially when a woman pays for sex. That’s still the case I’m sure”*. Although Amber feels that this still could be the cease, she hopes that this will eventually change while incorporating her own feelings about the service she is paying for:

*“A change is important because I think this has to do with the current thoughts about sex and I still see it as a service. That may sound stupid but that’s what it is. So personally I do not have any moral concerns with it (a gigolo)”*

The women acknowledged that they weren’t contributing to any change if all the women kept quiet about their positive experiences with a gigolo. Anita even called it “a vicious circle” because *“It would still remain hidden if nobody would open up”*.

In the next paragraph the standards of the norm where these women think they deviate from are being described that makes it even harder to open up.

## **6.2 Unchaste female behaviour**

As described in the theory section of this thesis some scientist described that a sexual double standard is non-existent and fiction though these studies were mainly quantitative this study shows that context is very important leading to, what is described in the former paragraphs, certain discrepancies between their personal and the societal perceptions. Whether it is fact or fiction, it is a fact that the societal perceptions that these women express have an influence on their behaviour, their thoughts and their acceptance of certain norms and scripts as described in the former paragraph. In this paragraph these norms and scripts are described in light of a sexual double standard. In the theory of this thesis I rephrased the sexual double standard (SDS) as: ‘men are evaluated more positively or less negatively than women when deviating from the sexual norm’. I rephrased the concept when implementing a social theory on stigma,

when stigma means deviating from the norm. To recall, the social stigma theory of the sexual double standard involves the notion that having multiple sex partners (i.e. deviate from the norm) could spoil a woman's reputation. Eline had some troubles with the thought of paying for sex from her societal perceptions, she thinks: *“women should be more open about paying for sex. If men are allowed to this, why can't we? What's wrong with that?”* She continues that it might be due because *“society still believes that men have more sexual needs than women. That's not true! And that's not fair! I have needs as well! Why should we set those needs a side?”*

Interestingly the heterosexual women that I have interviewed employ a social stigma theory on the sexual double standard when they describe that paying to have sex with a gigolo is not something that they are supposed to do as a 'chaste' woman according to society, as it would spoil their reputation. At the same time they deconstruct the sexual double standard with a rather new biological imperative by embracing their female sexuality, to 'feel like a natural woman' as described in the former paragraph. They perceive this 'naturalness' as a biological given that they need sex 'as well' and the ability for women to receive sex instead of giving sex. In this extend they contradict heterosexual assumptions about sexuality wherein women are described as passive and men as active in seeking sexual encounters by embracing their female sexual needs and their sexual activity. Although they are aware that their 'naturalness' is perceived as 'unnatural' when it is (still) not perceived as a norm to be a sexually active woman making a conscious decision to pay for a sexual encounter, but that these sexual activities were seen as 'unchaste'.

Being 'unchaste' in the description of Gail Pheterson or having illicit sex is not something that is accepted. Although Marjolein would definitely be considered unchaste in the description of Ghail pheterson, it was her husband who told her how she would be called if she would openly talk to others about her sex life:

*“Do you know what my husband said? If a man has sex with many women he is called a stud, because then you are considered tough! But if you are a woman who has sex with different guys you are a whore, a slut!”*

The unchaste behaviour of women is also something that was not accepted when the women were growing up. All the heterosexual women told me that they have been raised in small(er) communities in which they were taught to be good and decent girls. The following description of Louise resembles all of their descriptions:

*“I was taught to save myself from any undescency, you know? You don’t want to be called a slut! You would be very carefull to start something with a boy!”*

All the women explicitly spoke of the word ‘slut’ when they were talking about what society might think of them having sex with a man they don’t know, don’t love but pay in return. Besides Marjolein nobody talked about the word whore in this manner, they did when they talked about the gigolo’s, but that will be discussed in the next paragraph. The ‘whore stigma’ has much more to do with gender codes and female decency than it has to do with the actual commerce of sexuality. For Pheterson, when a woman is acting unchaste she can be subjected to the term ‘whore’ and therefore it’s stigma, what Pheterson defined as: ‘a mark of shame or disease on an unchaste female slave or criminal’ (1996: 37).

Although the women described feelings of embarrassment or shame about their ‘unchaste’ behaviour according to societies norm, they prefer to use the term slut. Must be said that time could have had an influence on these concepts as well. The use of the term slut (Dutch: slet) has increased this year due to the media attention of the publication of the book and documentary “Slutphobia” in 2013 (in Dutch: Sletvrees) by Sunny Bergman, a political and philosophical scientist who makes documentaries. Slutphobia<sup>25</sup> means: the fear of women to be seen as a slut, in particular a behavioural fear, whereby they can’t openly expose sexual behaviour’ (translated by the author). (In Dutch: *angst van vrouwen om voor slet te worden aangezien, m.n. zulke gedragsbepalende angst, waardoor zij zich niet openlijk overgeven aan seksueel verkeer*) (woordvanhetjaar.nl). But the conceptualisation of this term doesn’t quite capture the dynamics of its influence. The women describe that if they would not hide their behaviour they would be called a slut, and they question if a man would be called something similar or that he is, like Marjolein’s husband is describing, called ‘a stud’.

Louise is a member of different forums and writes online about her sexual fantasies and desires. She told me during our conversation that people who read her sexual fantasies could not believe that it was written by a woman. In an e-mail she wrote me in detail some of their comments:

*“This is written by a man.”*

*“What an exaggerated phantasy story.”*

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<sup>25</sup> The word slutphobia has been awarded with the 3<sup>rd</sup> price of ‘Word of the Year 2013’ in The Netherlands (woordvanhetjaar.nl)

*“A woman would never enjoy something like that.”*

*“I don’t believe this!”*

Those comments really got to her as she wrote in the same e-mail:

*“am I really not normal? Well I don’t think what I write down is abnormal. But what I do know is that it is still not accepted for a woman to have sexual lust. They broke my heart because I wrote it from my own experiences and my own feelings and thoughts, of course it was true!”*

It’s interesting to see in the comments that somebody described that ‘a woman would never enjoy something like that’, as if Louise isn’t allowed to enjoy it. As she describes herself it is still not accepted for a woman to be sexually active and to have certain sexual desires. The heterosexual women question what it would be like for a man. Carmen, has a neighbour, who is single and according to Carmen he implies double standards:

*“Still if I was a man I’m not sure, because of my occupation if I’d say it out loud. But still you have much more freedom as a man. My neighbour told me, and he is around 45 that his last conquest was thirty, the way he said that was just disgusting! [...] More so because he thinks it is absolutely okay for a man to pick someone up from a bar, but he thinks it is absolutely ridiculous for a woman to do such a thing, or even go to a swingers club. That’s what I call double standards!”*

Carmen told me she would never speak to her neighbour about her experiences with a gigolo because the double standard that he is applying led her to think that these experiences would be seen as unchaste, in behaviour, speech and appearance. Although the women, as described in the former paragraphs felt very natural when they had sex with a gigolo. And finally felt like a natural woman again, the societal perceptions restraint them to talk about it with friends, family and others because they knew they weren’t allowed to experience these feelings as ‘natural’. If we translate this to the different information management strategies Goffman (1963) introduced that those that have a stigma or are stigmatized would employ to act normal the strategies that these women are employing are ‘covering’ and ‘compartmentalization’ or a mixture of both.

Those that did tell it to some of their friends, like Victoria and Anita for instance, use the strategy of ‘compartmentalization’ (Goffman, 1963: 98) wherein they divide their own

world into separated social worlds; a small and intimate one wherein they are able to reveal their stigma, and a larger group, the group from which they not only derive their stigma from but also conceal their stigma for. Those that were not able to share their story with nobody else then me, like Carmen and Eline for instance are employing the strategy of ‘covering’ (ibid.:101) by deliberately concealing signs that are commonly considered as stigma symbols. This is already noticeable in the fact that they meet their gigolo’s in a hotel. Nobody is allowed to see it, let stand to know about it or hear about it.

In the next paragraph this strategy of ‘covering’ is further elaborated when discussing the embodiment of the ‘whore stigma’ when the women describe how they refer to their gigolo, to themselves or to others and try think of other names besides ‘gigolo’ that would really capture their descriptions, experiences, needs and outcomes.

### ***6.3 It’s not the concept, it’s the content***

In order to fully understand the meaning and the outcomes of their experiences with a gigolo I asked all the women what they thought of the term ‘gigolo’. Some of them admit that they saw this question coming but others didn’t because they never thought about it, mainly because they seemed to already rephrased the term by themselves.

As mentioned before Marjolein didn’t knew the term gigolo at forehand when she was actually looking for someone who could fulfil her needs:

*“It took me forever to type the word gigolo in the browser. I just didn’t think about it. Sex with men... or sex this and that or sex-contact or sex-date, everything crossed my mind, except ‘gigolo’. I even typed male whore, but that get’s you to... well you know!”*

When asking her what she thought about the term she thought it sounds *“it’s so mysterious, I like to see it as a prostitute or something like that before but then I actually slept with one and that couldn’t cover it. It was beyond my expectations at least”*. Although she first thought of prostitute, after having sex with one she described it was much more. The other women also do not place a ‘gigolo’ in the same category as ‘prostitutes’ or sex workers. Like Louise: *“I think it’s (the term gigolo) is such a nasty word. But I have more problems when people call it ‘sex worker’ for instance”*. I asked her why she would have a problem with that because especially in the Netherlands it is a legal occupation, so why not call it sex worker when she enjoys having sex with a man she pays. She explains: *“Because it is so*

*much more! It's not 'just sex' therefore it is not 'just a gigolo' it is so much more! It is not a man who simply puts his dick in your cunt and then, well you know what I mean. It is an art of making love that he needs to master!". Interestingly Louise makes the same explanation as Garren, the owner of the American 'Cowboys 4 Angels' when describing it as 'an art'. All of the women I spoke with thought that the word 'gigolo' was rather 'tacky' but it was simply a much better term than 'whore' or 'prostitute'.*

*"You know when a men pays for sex, he would go to a whore, and I think that is so awful contemptuous! But whatever term you give it, oh I even once read about the term sex worker. But whatever term, it just would not cover the content. And whatever we would call it, people know what's about, or at least they think they know, because do they really?"*

(Carmen)

*"The term (gigolo) does not honour the work of a gigolo because it comes along with so many judgements before people actually know it's content. That's such a shame! Because a lot of these gigolo's work professionally, and they deserve better. And we'd never put all those terms under the same umbrella".*

(Eline)

For all the women it seemed that the term does not quite match with it's content. Six of the heterosexual women already called their gigolo their '*minnaar*' (Dutch), interestingly I have some troubles myself translating this. Dictionaries tell me it is either 'lover' or 'sex partner'. But that doesn't quite capture it as well, because the women explained to me, that in order to fully enjoy a gigolo they made a clear distinction between love and sex, as described in the former chapter. And it's not just sex as the gigolo's also describe themselves:

*"Nowadays when you'd call it gigolo it seems as if it's only about some kind of sexual performance! It is about the women, not the sex! It's about giving them the attention they need. I talk, I listen, I cuddle. It's the whole package".*

(Bruce)

Due to the agency that Jerry works for he does not call himself a gigolo 'anymore' he did so when he worked as an individual entrepreneur but his agency refers to their 'gigolo's' as 'gents' or 'male companions' or they refer to themselves using the Dutch word



‘gezelschapsheren’ Because as he stated: “we want to go beyond the negative image of gigolo and represent ourselves as something different [...] although in the eyes of some or maybe all we can be considered male whores because we fuck for money”. The members of the agency that Jerry works for seem to rephrase their professionalism because of negative connotations not only on ‘sex work’ but also on gigolo’s because both concepts seem to indicate sex and they want to articulate that it does not necessarily have to do about sex when they rephrase it as companion, the second meaning of a gigolo, namely to spend time with a woman. But the use of this concept seems rather complex when he still indicates that he ‘fucks for money’.

If they needed to rephrase it the women didn’t seem to know how, because, like Amber states, “people have such prejudices about it’s content” she therefore during our conversation did not want to give ‘gigolo’ another name:

*“I can call it fuck buddy for all I care, whatever, but that’s not the point. I can rename it but the ideas stay the same. We do not need to change the name we have to change our thoughts about the content!”*

It seems that both the gigolo’s and the women use the information management strategy of ‘covering’ when rephrasing it as lover, sex partner or fuck buddy to go beyond the factor of paying for the expertise of the gigolo when they would phrase it as ‘prostitute’ or ‘whore’. When I asked the women what they would call it when they would have to rephrase it while incorporating this factor those that did still want to rephrase it, these were five out of the ten women, all called it ‘sexworker’, ‘escort’ or ‘high-end’ escort. In the same line as the male prostitutes that Koken et al. (2004) interviewed these women told me : “*escorting sounds better than prostitute*”. Only Amber spoke about “sex worker” as a preferred term, although she didn’t want to rephrase it in the first place.

*“Sex worker is such a gender neutral term! And therefore it doesn’t sound all that heavy, although referring to sex. But if I really need to change it, then I would change it in to sex worker. But still it wouldn’t do a thing for the stigma and all the prejudices we have about them”*

Interestingly gigolo Richard implemented the common prejudiced with the content that he thinks that needs to be addressed, describing his occupation as a ‘sexual therapist’:

*“You can go to all sorts of therapists, you even go to a sex therapist ( in Dutch: seksuoloog) for no matter what kind of problem you would have in the bedroom, but that is theory, that’s not practice. A sexologist is not allowed to touch you and that’s a good thing, he’d better not. But considering the impact of my job as a gigolo I consider myself a sexual therapist. Coming to think about it, they should refund it as medical costs. Do you know what intimacy problems can do to a woman, and what this will cost society? Medication, therapies and not forget the inability to work”.*

Richard’s argument does not seem that odd coming to think about the content of the professionalism of the gigolo’s and considering the stories of the female clientele that I was able to interview. This gives a new perspective on the conceptualisation of sex work as a form of therapy besides the theoretical frameworks of companionship, romance and sex.

### **Summary Male Supply**

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This second chapter of the analysis of this thesis addresses the last four sub questions that were addressed in the methodology that referred to the (methodological) concepts stigma, whore stigma and the sexual double standard in the theory: 4. Is their desire stigmatized?, 5. How do the societal perceptions of a sexual double standard influence the personal perceptions of their desires?, 6. How do the female clients conceptualize gigolo’s? and 7. How do the gigolo’s describe their occupation in relation to the desires of their female clientele?

What became evident is that all the women I spoke with described a certain naturalness of their encounters with a gigolo. This naturalness has two different levels, the first covers the actual ‘sex act’ during the encounter with a gigolo when they described it their explorative sexual journey went smooth in a very natural manner. The other level refers to the their descriptions of feeling (finally) like a natural woman. These personal perceptions contradict the societal perceptions of their surroundings when the naturalness of the act becomes unnatural in the eyes of others. Therefore they hide the fact that they book, have booked or sometimes book a gigolo. The fact that they have to hide their encounters knowing that it is not perceived as a norm makes them aware of the stigma that they are dealing with (Goffman, 1963: 57).

Telling somebody that they haven't told it yet would not be an option as the taboo - the internalization of the stigma - that they state lays on not only their 'unchaste' behaviour to be sexually active but to pay for sex. It's exactly their presupposition of the sexual encounter with a gigolo to have a 'bounded authenticity' that will, in the eyes of the interviewees, not be tolerated by others. Interestingly the heterosexual women that I have interviewed employ a social stigma theory on the sexual double standard when they describe that paying for sex would spoil their reputation as a mother or an employee . At the same time they deconstruct the sexual double standard with a rather new biological imperative by embracing their female sexuality, to 'feel like a natural woman', perceiving this naturalness as a biological given that they need sex 'as well' and the ability for women to receive sex instead of giving sex, the 'bounded reciprocity' as described in the former chapter. The information management strategies that the women employed in their surroundings were a mixture of covering and compartmentalization when they concealed the embodiment as well as the subjectification of the whore stigma.

Both the gigolo's and the women seem to rephrase the term gigolo when they refer to 'their gigolo' as a *minnaar* which does not denote any financial transaction for sex as is the case with sex work. Or *gezelschapsheer* in the case of gigolo Jerry. But it's not the concept that the female clientele and the gigolo's have problems with it is its content. Because of the different experiences that they gained a gigolo is not 'just a gigolo' and it's not 'just sex' that they gain from their sexual encounter.

## **Conclusion**

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After 1989 when Marielle Osté published her book on Dutch gigolo's no research has been done on gigolism in the field of sex work. With the outcome that female sex workers still prevail in both academic research and prostitution politics as a passive supply population wherein male clients constitute the active demand for sexual services. This representation leads to a conceptual leap in the global economy of sex neglecting different forms of sex work, different demands and desires. Given the political prostitution-as-violence-against-women paradigm clients of sex workers should be given a central position in the study of sex work. If we tend to criminalize clients as the European Union promotes we neglect the agency and further stigmatize both parties without incorporating interpretative insights on the motivations and desires of clients and sex workers and the meanings they give to the market.

In this explorative and qualitative study on the female clientele of gigolo's the demands and (sexual) desires of the female clientele are given a central position by answering the main research question of this thesis: *What are the demands and (sexual) desires of Dutch female clientele of gigolo's and how do the perceptions of these demands and (sexual) desires reflect the sexual double standard?* As promised in the introduction an answer to this question would describe the dynamics of paid sex transactions, producing a more nuanced, multidimensional and comprehensive understanding of sex work. Although the ten female clientele of gigolo's that were interviewed differ in age, marital status and even sexual orientation their stories had a lot in common. This starts with their need for discretion, safety and anonymity. This is something that they can demand from a gigolo and not from somebody they know or just met in a bar. They would rather pay because "*then you'll know what you get*". First, this 'what' has to do with the pre-condition of a business like transaction. Secondly, the 'what' has to do with 'experience'.

In comparison with male clientele of sex workers they seek an authentic sexual encounter with a certain realness, but this sexual encounter has to be bounded in the fact that it is a financial transaction for a service that is rendered. This is what Elisabeth Bernstein (2001) refers to as a 'bounded authenticity'. Interestingly, the descriptions of male clientele in its first respect do not seem to differ that much from female clientele given that they more than half of my respondents wish to avoid long-term obligations or no emotional attachment involved in a conventional relation, or even are unsatisfied with the sexual dimension of their relationship with their current partner. In a study by Weitzer 30% of the male clientele emphasized these two desires (Weitzer, 2009: 224 ) But by no means I would like to claim with this thesis that women (can) do it too, because I was interested what they are doing, why and what they are gaining.

The bounded authenticity coined by Bernstein is a feature of what is commonly known in the sex industry as a girlfriend experience (GFE) wherein the sexual encounter is seen authentic when a certain heterosexual reciprocity is aspired and both the female sex worker and the male client gives and receives. This heterosexual reciprocity is not desired during a sexual encounter with a gigolo. Heterosexual reciprocity seems to denote a certain gender equality during the sex act that already goes beyond assumptions of radical feminist suggesting that sexuality is a key site of male power. When men affirm their masculinity and patriarchal power by penetrating the female body. As described these notions do not give any agency to the feelings and desires of women and that they can feel empowered by certain heterosexual acts, like penetration. But although heterosexual reciprocity is assumed to

generate equality acknowledging the importance of a female orgasm it also comes along with obligations and responsibilities. And it are the obligations that makes them insecure and absolute not something they want when they are paying. Both the gigolo's and the female clientele I have interviewed describe the importance of what I call a 'bounded reciprocity', wherein it is only okay for a woman to give if she desires to do so.

All the women wanted to be beloved, although this is not an accurate English translation for the Dutch word '*beminnen*' because they didn't seek love, it was their ability to separate love from sex to bound the authenticity of the sexual experience in the first place. It is therefore too limited to state that the women want to be 'beloved' as they perceived their sexual experience with a gigolo as three different types of experiences: 1. The gigolo has experience, 2. Booking a gigolo is an experience and 3. By booking a gigolo they gained experience. This last experience is of great importance to understand the impact that boogieing a gigolo had on the lives of the majority of the women that I spoke with. The experience that they gained enabled the women to take further steps in their lives and for some – especially for those that do not have a partner or when their partner could not fulfil their sexual desires – the sexual encounter with a gigolo improved their wellbeing. This addresses the empowerment of embracing their female sexuality. But although it empowers them and they would like to recommend other women to book a gigolo telling somebody that they haven't told it yet would not be an option as the taboo – the internalization of the stigma – is not accepted by others. Their unchaste behaviour - the subjectification of the whore stigma – will not be accepted by their surroundings, booking a gigolo is not something they were supposed to as a woman. Therefore they hide the fact that they book, have booked or regularly book a gigolo.

Using information management strategies like covering and compartmentalization, only revealing their stigma to a small group and withholding it to a larger group, the group from which they not only derive their stigma from but also conceal their stigma for. The fact that they have to hide their encounters knowing that it is not perceived as a norm makes them aware of the stigma they are dealing with (Goffman, 1963: 57). But at the same time they deconstruct this social stigma perspective on the sexual double standard with a rather new biological imperative by embracing their female sexuality when they state they (finally) 'feel like a natural woman'. They perceive this naturalness as a biological given that they need sex 'as well' and the ability for women to receive sex instead of giving sex.

As described in the introduction of this thesis, Garren, the owner of the American gigolo agency 'Cowboys 4 Angels' described that it is not sex what his agency is selling,

when considering the Dutch gigolo's in this thesis, it is not 'just sex' what they are selling. Given the different levels of the experiences that these women gained and their sexual empowerment it is not that odd that one of the gigolo's refers to himself as a sexual therapist. As stated by the gigolo's and the women it is not the concept that needs to change, it is the versatility of its content that needs to be addressed, because it is not 'just a gigolo'. I hope this thesis can contribute to its versatility.

## **Discussion**

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This explorative study gathered insights in a field of sex work that has not been addressed in scientific research before. But this study can't be generalized on the whole population of Dutch female clients of Dutch gigolo's. Just like the broad scope of sex workers, the clientele of gigolo's are not a homogeneous group. But the stories of the female clientele in this thesis do acknowledge the diversity of the demands and desires in the sex industry, stating that it is not 'just sex' that they're after. Interestingly as described there are some similarities with male clientele in the emotional involvement and sexual authenticity that they long for. But differences as well.

Due to the length and aims of this study I was only able to compare heterosexual sex work and not able to compare heterosexual sex work with homosexual sex work, the sex workers and their clientele. To further unravel gendered assumptions, binaries, paradigms and scripts of sex(uality) and of sex work. Especially concerning the different power structures that are inevitable in sex, concerning not only it's reciprocity. During the sexual encounters with a gigolo the women seem to pull the strings in demanding the 'bounded reciprocity' which empowered them, unfortunately I was not able to discuss the perceptions of the gigolo's of the empowerment of their clientele. But power constructions should also be acknowledged considering the fact that they are financially independent. Although the gigolo's that I spoke with do not need the money they gain from these sexual encounters. In future research I suggest that this power structure needs to be addressed considering the economic factors of women. But power is not only about money. When referring to the female sex tourism as an important contribution to the broad scope of sex work, power also has to do with racial and ethnical factors which have not been addressed in this thesis because it was not of interest in this study nor an interest of the women I spoke with. It might have

been of interest for the clientele of Bruce, given that he is a tall Surinamese men with a darker skin tone but unfortunately I was not able to talk to one of his clientele.

Therefore I would like to suggest that future research could emphasize the different power structures in relation to heterosexual reciprocity, economic factors and race and ethnicity. But what I would like to emphasize for any future research on sex work is the implementation of the voices of sex workers' clients, clients are a key source of information to understand the broad scope of sex work especially concerning the prostitution-as-violence-against-women paradigm. The insights of clients could deconstruct simplifications about sex work. Because evidence and not morality should guide theory and politics about sex work.

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## **Policy Reports**

European Network Male Prostitution (2003), Final Report; ENMP: Amsterdam

European Parliament (2013) Draft Report: on sexual exploitation and prostitution and its impact on gender equality; European Parliament: Brussels.

## **Media**

### **T.v. shows**

Gigolo season 1 – Behind the scenes

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zmNinpXHf1U>

Cowboys 4 Angels Male Escorts for Women featured on Dr Phil show.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a6FjK2LfTkk>

Ersin en de gigolo's

<http://www.uitzendinggemist.nl/afleveringen/1378379>

### **Websites**

Escort agency search tool

<http://escort-service.nl/index/nederland/noord-holland/women-of-the-world-escort>

Private Men

<http://www.private-men.net/>

The Men's Company Gigolo Services

<http://www.gigolo-services.com/over-gigolo-services.php>

Woord van het jaar

<http://woordvanhetjaar.vandale.nl/>

### **Online magazine and newspaper articles**

Beroep – Gigolo

[http://www.gigolo-services.com/beheer/up\\_files/lin69\\_124\\_129\\_het\\_artikel.pdf](http://www.gigolo-services.com/beheer/up_files/lin69_124_129_het_artikel.pdf)

Gigolo weet Linda lezeres niet te bevredigen

<http://www.ad.nl/ad/nl/1022/Celebs/article/detail/1914422/2010/11/19/Gigolo-weet-Linda-lezeres-niet-te-bevredigen.dhtml>

Linda gigolo kan er niks van

[http://www.telegraaf.nl/vrouw/actueel/20110157/\\_Linda-gigolo\\_kan\\_er\\_niks\\_van\\_.html](http://www.telegraaf.nl/vrouw/actueel/20110157/_Linda-gigolo_kan_er_niks_van_.html)

Just a gigolo

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Just\\_a\\_Gigolo\\_\(song\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Just_a_Gigolo_(song))

560 NGO's and 94 researchers demand members of European parliament to reject Ms Honeyball report.

<http://www.sexworkeurope.org/news/general-news/560-ngos-and-94-researchers-demand-members-european-parliament-reject-ms-honeyball>

## **Appendix 1 – Call for Respondents (in Dutch)**

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### **Gigolo's: onbemind, onbevangen, verlangen**

*Just a gigolo, everywhere I go  
People know the part I'm playing  
Paid for every dance, selling each romance  
Every night some heart betraying.*

**Bing Crosby – 1931**

Theater, film en zelfs liedjes zoals 'just a gigolo' van Bill Crosby spreken al over 'gigolo's' in de jaren dertig. Maar wat zegt zo'n liedje eigenlijk? Wat is 'the part they are playing'? En hebben we het echt over 'betraying'? Bijna 80 jaar later, in 2007 is het **Heleen van Royen**<sup>26</sup> die een zoektocht start naar mannelijk schoon, en betoogt in telegraaf: "Ik heb een misstand ontdekt, het is als vrouw helemaal niet zo gemakkelijk om te betalen voor seks". Ondanks haar platte beschrijvingen en het beperkte onderzoek dat zij heeft gedaan komt ze tot de conclusie dat menig gigolo's hun vak niet verstaan, zet Heleen gigolo's wel op de kaart.

Slechts 3 jaar later is het **Linda de Mol**<sup>27</sup> die het debat weer aanwakkert door 25 nieuwe abonnees een date met een gigolo cadeau te doen. Ze was naar eigen zeggen benieuwd of hier een markt voor zou zijn in Nederland, liet menig beschuldiging van 'souteneur' achter zich want het was een dienst van professionals wat ze aanbood!

Sindsdien zijn in menig Glossy's **interviews en columns** te lezen van bekende en onbekende gigolo's. Helaas blijft dit vaak bij een bepaald beeld over gigolo's. Maar klopt dit beeld? En belangrijker: is dit beeld wel volledig? En waar blijft de vrouwelijke stem in dit verhaal? Daar lijkt geen journalist of (sociaal) wetenschapper zich over te buigen. Het zou zo'n kleine (commerciële) markt zijn dat ze zich blijven concentreren op vrouwelijke 'sekswerkers'. Nou zal de markt van gigolo's ongetwijfeld veel kleiner zijn dan van hun vrouwelijke 'collega's', maar wat voor gevolgen heeft dit voor onze huidige denkbeelden? Heeft Heleen van Royen gelijk met het misstand dat zij heeft ontdekt? Waarom lezen en weten we zo weinig over de ervaringen van vrouwen die wel eens of wel eens vaker een gigolo hebben geboekt? Is dit een taboe? Wat gebeurt er met onze denkbeelden over de vrouwelijke seksualiteit wanneer vrouwen 'vragen' en mannen 'het aanbod' zijn?

Voor mijn **Ma scriptie sociologie –gender en seksualiteit** onderzoek ik wat vrouwen vinden van de huidige denkbeelden over gigolo's en wat hun persoonlijke ervaringen zijn, hun motivaties, wensen en verlangens. Ik doe dit doormiddel van (korte) interviews met vrouwen die wel eens óf vaker een gigolo geboekt hebben en hun verhaal met mij willen delen. Deze interviews zijn volledig anoniem om discretie van de vrouwen te verzekeren. Mocht u uw verhaal met mij willen delen kunt u contact met mij opnemen per mail ([merel.vanmansom@student.uva.nl](mailto:merel.vanmansom@student.uva.nl)) of telefoon (06-20527327).

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<sup>26</sup> [http://www.telegraaf.nl/prive/20582823/Heleen\\_van\\_Royen\\_betaalde\\_voor\\_seks\\_.html](http://www.telegraaf.nl/prive/20582823/Heleen_van_Royen_betaalde_voor_seks_.html)

<sup>27</sup> [http://www.telegraaf.nl/prive/20437944/Linda\\_de\\_Mol\\_is\\_geen\\_pooier\\_.html](http://www.telegraaf.nl/prive/20437944/Linda_de_Mol_is_geen_pooier_.html)

## **Appendix 2 – Interview Script Female Clientele (in Dutch)**

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### **Achtergrond informatie**

1. leeftijd
2. partner
3. kinderen
4. beroep

### **Interactie Gigolo – Cliënte**

5. Heb je één keer of meerdere malen een Gigolo ‘geboekt’?
6. Hoe was die ‘eerste keer’?
7. Zelf geboekt of iemand anders?
8. Meerdere malen? Was er verschil tussen deze ‘aanvragen’?
9. Staat er eventueel nog een ‘boeking’ gepland?
10. Steeds bij dezelfde agency?
11. Waar selecteer je nou een man op?
12. Korte of lange boekingen (uren/dagdelen)?
13. Wel eens moeten ‘bijboeken’?
14. Vaak is het boeken, zo heb ik mij laten vertellen.. een lang proces. Hoe bereid je je daar op voor? (peilen: ‘naar uit kijken’, ‘plek voor vrijhouden’, ‘speciaal’ ...)
15. Hoe gaat dat...hij staat voor je deur en ‘dan’...? (peilen: initiatief, verleiden, ‘opwarmen’)
16. Hoe voel je je tijdens zijn aanwezigheid? Zou je dat misschien willen omschrijven?
17. Hoe verloopt zo’n avond/boeking/afpraak? Zou je dat misschien willen omschrijven?

### **Wensen en Verlangens**

*Nou hadden we het net al even over het ‘proces’ naar de ‘ontmoeting’ toe. Hoe geef je nou aan wat jij echt wilt óf verlangt, ik bedoel...*

18. Wat zijn jouw wensen? (peil: gevoelens van schaamte of juiste zelfverzekerdheid).
19. Zijn dit ook de wensen die je hebt opgegeven bij het agency?
20. Komt de gigolo je in jouw wensen tegemoet? (peil: wanneer wel, wanneer niet)
21. Zijn dit wensen die je ook hebt bij een partner?  
(peil: wanneer wel, wanneer niet en waarom niet/afhankelijk van situatie: doorvragen)
22. Is dit wat jij van een gigolo wenst?  
(peil: evt. issues rondom geld/(beroeps)stigma én ‘beloftes’ van het bedrijf)

## **Wensen, Verlangens en Seksueel Dubbele Moraal (én belichaming stigma)**

*In mijn korte introductie beschreef ik al even dat ik het zo opmerkelijk vind dat hier zo weinig over wordt geschreven of bij het fenomeen wordt stilgestaan...*

23. Waarom denk je dat er meer geschreven is én gesproken wordt over vrouwelijke escorts voor mannen dan over gigolo's?  
(peil: vrouwelijkheid, mannelijkheid, seksualiteit, 'natuur of cultuur')
24. Zou je dat graag anders zien?
25. Waarom is dit belangrijk? Of waarom juist niet?
26. Weet je omgeving bijvoorbeeld dat je (wel eens) een gigolo (hebt) (ge)huurt?
27. Zouden vrouwen nou meer gebruik moeten maken van 'gigolo's'?  
(peil: gevoelens van schaamte óf juist zelfverzekerdheid, waarom wél of waarom juist niet).
28. **Wat vind jij van de uitspraak : 'vrouwen kunnen altijd seks krijgen, dus waarom zouden ze ervoor betalen?'** (peil: vrouwelijkheid, mannelijkheid, seksueel dubbele moraal)
29. **Wat vind jij van de uitspraak: 'het huren van een gigolo is de meest wenselijke manier om vreemd te gaan'.** (peil: vrouwelijkheid, mannelijkheid, seksueel dubbele moraal)

## **De grenzen aan verlangens en wensen**

*Je hebt mij net al veel verteld over het proces van het boeken van een gigolo en de daarbij behorende gevoelens, wensen en verlangens...*

30. Verlang je wel eens naar iets anders? (peilen: waarom wel en waarom niet)
31. Zijn er wel eens vragen/wensen die je niet durft te stellen?
32. Is het ooit wel eens voorgevallen dat jij iets hebt verzocht en dat dit niet mogelijk was?
33. Zitten er grenzen aan mogelijke wensen?

## **Gigoloïsm**

*Je hebt mij al eerder uitgelegd wat voor jou het verschil is tussen een vrouwelijke escort en een gigolo. Maar...*

34. Zou je mij misschien in een paar woorden kunnen uitleggen wat een gigolo is?
35. Is deze omschrijving tevens de omschrijving waar jij vindt dat je als cliënte voor betaald?
36. Zou er een ander woord zijn voor 'gigolo'?
37. Zouden we ooit deze term gebruiken?
38. Zou een gigolo deze term ook willen gebruiken?

## **Afronding**

## **Appendix 3 – Interview Script Male Gigolo's (in Dutch)**

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### **Achtergrond informatie**

1. leeftijd
2. partner
3. kinderen
4. beroep

### **Beroep**

5. Hoe lang werk je al als gigolo?
6. Heb je nog andere (betaalde) werkzaamheden?
7. Parttime of Fulltime?
8. Werk je per uur? (kost dat)
9. Kan je er van rond komen?
10. Waarom ben je gigolo geworden?
11. Werk je zelfstandig of via een agency?
12. Heb je een training gevolgd?
13. Hoe ziet nou een dag er uit als gigolo?
14. Spreek je bij hun thuis af of in een hotel?
15. Neem je wat mee?
16. Hoe bereid je je voor?

### **Clientele**

17. Hoe leggen clienten contact met jou? (telefoon, website)
18. Heb je veel clientele? (hoeveel)
19. Is het verschillende clientele? (hoe)
20. Heeft deze clientele verschillende wensen?
21. Wat zijn die wensen?
22. Hebben deze vrouwen iets gemeen?
23. Heb je wel eens nee moet zeggen tegen wensen?
24. Welke wens is je het meest bijgebleven?

### **Gigolo**

Nu hadden we het net even over het beroep gigolo, maar... Weten je vrienden dat je gigolo bent (waarom wel/waarom niet)

25. Weet je familie het?
26. Wat vind jij zelf eigenlijk van de term gigolo?
27. Als jij in een paar zinnen zou mogen omschrijven wat een gigolo is, hoe zou je dat doen?

### **Afronding**