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# The Pimp and the Happy Whore: ‘Doing Gender’ in Film Talk in a School Setting

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The present paper concerns the use of film for eliciting discussions of fundamental values in an upper secondary school setting. In this case, *Lilya 4-ever*, a feature film about sex trafficking, is used. The present paper contributes some empirical knowledge about how young people are ‘doing gender’ in a natural setting – an educational context – that celebrates equality values. The examples from a group discussion between pupils reveal a balance between performing the school task, discussing the questions on the sheet the teacher provided, and working on their private identities, which here includes social interplay that among teenagers could involve rejecting an academic identity. The analysis concern how pupils use discourses drawn from a film in that balancing act. The paper explores how discourses on sex are used to gain power in conversation, to challenge male sexuality and to reject victimization.

*Key words:* discursive psychology, film reception, gender, pupil resistance

## Introduction

The present paper examines a group discussion in an upper secondary school class. The discussion concerns a feature film on sex trafficking, *Lilya 4-ever* (Moodysson & Jönsson, 2002).<sup>[1]</sup> The activity was part of a governmental initiative in Sweden to encourage certain attitudes and values of equality in young people; stressed in particular was the standpoint that it is not acceptable to purchase access to another person’s body (Statsrådsberedningen, 2003). The then Deputy Prime Minister, Margareta Winberg, argued that it will be impossible to achieve gender equality as long as men buy, sell and take advantage of women and children through prostitution.

The curricula for upper secondary school in Sweden states that the schools should foster values such as equality between women and men (Skolverket, 2006a, p. 3). One way of achieving this is declared in the curricula: “The school in its teaching of Swedish should aim to ensure that pupils: [...] through different texts and media become familiar with fundamental democratic, humanistic and ethical values, and also develop an awareness of destructive forces to be confronted” (Skolverket, 2000, para. 6–16). This curricular aim explains the rationale for working with equality using a film.

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However, didactic efforts to influence people's ethical values in a certain way can result in acts of resistance. For example, school students commonly display resistance to any academic identity and tasks. Benwell and Stokoe (2005) analysed resistance in interaction in university tutorials; thus, resistance is not only found in compulsory school forms, as might be expected. Benwell and Stokoe (2002, 2005; Stokoe, 2000) have pointed out the lack of studies on how this phenomenon "is actually enacted discursively within a school setting and [...] what it 'looks like' empirically" (2005, p. 125). Thus, Benwell and Stokoe promote a conversational analytic methodology focused on naturally occurring data, rather than "participants' accounts of their [in this case] tutorial experience" (2005, p. 126). While their own research concerns university students, the present paper involves upper secondary school students and how they balance their academic identity and social identity in a classroom setting. Upper secondary school in Sweden is in theory voluntary – as is the university education that Benwell and Stokoe studied. However, the degree of voluntariness can be disputed, as in practice, almost 98% of the pupils leaving compulsory school progress to upper secondary education (Skolverket, 2006b, p. 55).

The present paper analyses how a classroom discussion aimed at instilling gender equity is resisted by the pupils, and how the pupils nevertheless use the very same educational context to do gender and reshape gendered subject positions. ('Subject position' refers to different subjectivities produced in discourses, for further reading see, e.g. Henriques (1984) and Davies and Harré (1990)).

### **Discursive Reception Research**

Theoretically, the present paper is based in discursive psychology, which deals with text and talks in interaction from a social constructionist perspective (Edwards & Potter, 1992). Discursive psychology stresses the interpretative resources that people use to construct their talk, and aims at showing how speakers draw on different discursive devices in their discussions. Applied on reception, discursive approaches offer possibilities to analyse the social interaction in the co-construction of the reading of a book, or talk on a film (cf. Eriksson Barajas & Aronsson, 2009). Discursive psychology provides a useful way of learning more about young people's responses to fiction, expressed in talk in interaction, and how they are jointly construed in the educational setting. Nevertheless, the trickiest part of reception and reader response is the relationship to the text, whether it is a book or, as in the present case, a film. To include the discursive interaction with the film the pupils were supposed to discuss, it is necessary to add another theoretical framework.

Starting from an interest in the way a reader of a text (be it a book or a film or another esthetical expression) uses the text to make meaning of his or her life, the work of Walkerdine was added to the discursive analysis. Both in *Schoolgirl Fictions* (1990) and in *Daddy's Girl* (1997), Walkerdine explores the importance of the text – in her case the popular text – "in the production of subjectivity" (1997, p. 122). In *Daddy's Girl* (1997, p. 119), Walkerdine analyses conversations between two young sisters who are playing while the film *Annie* is running on a video in the background. Although there is only one direct reference to the film, Walkerdine argues that the film impacts on the family practice and on

the participants' understanding of their situation. According to Walkerdine, watching the film permits the family members to "dream, understand and face conflicts over what is happening to them" (1997, p. 119). For example, the young girls start from a scene in the film with a drunken woman to make comments about their mother's drunkenness.

When examining my data corpus, the film itself is a major part of the discussion, although in some sequences *direct references* to *Lilya 4-ever* may be rare (as in the sequence below). It was noticeable that the recording equipment used to collect the data was part of the interaction. Speer and Hutchby have discussed how many researchers find it problematic, with regard to the authenticity of data collection, when participants orient towards the recording device (2003, p. 333). Conversely, they suggest that such instances should be analysed with respect to what work these interactions do in the situation. The present paper aims at adopting such a perspective on the interaction with the recording equipment.

Some pupils commented directly on the video camera and/or the microphone; on other occasions, pupils gave director's instructions such as 'cut', 'take two' and the like. As will be shown below, the participants interacted with the recording devices. At times, this interaction was used by the participants to signal that they were not being serious about what they said.

Walkerdine's analysis shows that the video of *Annie* provided the participants with "a way of dealing with extremely difficult aspects of their lives" (1997, p. 119). The present data deal with a film about a difficult issue: sex trafficking. In line with Walkerdine, the film is in the present study seen as a "relay point in producing ways of engaging with what is going on" (1997, p. 119). Therefore, a description of the film, along with my interpretation of the viewer position, is presented below, and extracts from the film are inserted in one section of the analysis. However, neither the description, nor the extracts are part of the data analysed in the study.

In the analysis below, I will examine what the participants "are *doing* when they orient to being recorded" (Speer & Hutchby, 2003, p. 317) and when they orient towards a discourse on sex.

### **Sexuality, Gender and Schooling**

One element in doing gender and reshape gendered subject positions in the studied group, is sexualized teasing between the pupils. Even talking about sex trafficking and prostitution and using words such as 'pimp' in the classroom trigger laughter and embarrassed smiles among the pupils. Because the pupils chose to talk about prostitution and sex in general, it is interesting to look at other studies on young people's discourse on sex. How is sex talked about in school? And how do young people use 'dirty words'? The following brief review of previous research on discourse on sex in school is aimed at helping sketch out this area. The framing consists of two parts: studies on sex education and studies on recess talk in school.

Fine (1988) has analysed different discourses of female sexuality in public schools in the US. She also conducted a year-long ethnographic study in a comprehensive public school in New York City. Based on this research, she

points out the missing discourse of desire that restricts what can and cannot be said concerning female sexuality.

In her ethnographic study of Further Education in Britain, Skeggs describes how constructions of sexuality in the classroom functioned as a “means of control” over young female students (Skeggs, 1991, p. 133). Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork from two secondary schools in the UK, Kehily (2002) examines sexuality, gender and schooling. One of Kehily’s findings is that young women are more inclined than young men are to use popular culture as a resource in expressing thoughts on sexuality (2002, p. 73). Kehily further proposes that features in popular culture give pupils a possibility to talk about issues that might not be included in British sex education, for example “sexual abuse; pleasure and danger in sexual relations; constancy and betrayal; homosexuality.” (2002, pp. 73–74). The discussions about the film *Lilya 4-ever* (Moodysson & Jönsson, 2002) are examples of this: The theme sex trafficking leads to talk about prostitution, a phenomenon that might be or become a reality for young people either as a seller or as a buyer.

Based on her ethnographic fieldwork in a Swedish upper secondary school, Ambjörnsson (2004) examines how feminine gender positions are created within the frames of a hetero-normative order. One chapter discusses ‘the worst word’: ‘hora’ (Eng. = ‘whore’) (Ambjörnsson, 2004, pp. 184–216) and how it is used. Among young people in Sweden, whore is normally used by young men and women to insult young women. This use of dirty talk, of sexualized insults – gendered insults, as they attack young women’s sexual agency – in school has been on the political agenda for some time. However, Ambjörnsson also captures examples of young female friends calling each other whore; she argues that the word whore has lost its original meaning because it has been over-used. Ambjörnsson traces a class divide in the use of the word; whore is more frequent among students with a working-class background.

In her study of how sexual harassment constitutes a way of doing hegemonic masculinities, Robinson (2005) quotes Bordo, who claims that “heterosexual men do not generally feel ‘anxiety’ about sexualized and sexualizing gestures from women, unless they are experienced as specifically undermining their masculinity” (Bordo, 1997, p. 54).

A Swedish study of verbal abuse in school examines how use of dirty language both “constructs gender and produces power relations” (Eliasson, Isaksson, & Laflamme, 2007, p. 589). Eliasson et al. (2007, p. 591) argue that being able to sustain verbal abuse without taking offence and to return it is a main characteristic among high school boys in the construction of a ‘cool’ masculinity. Eliasson et al.’s conclusion corresponds to that of, for example, Labov (1972).

As will be shown below, laughing and returning a possibly insulting comment are features of displaying distance towards the academic task the teacher gave the pupils (cf. Benwell & Stokoe, 2005, p. 124); the pupils strive at acting ‘cool’, resisting an academic identity. In the present case, that academic-resisting identity is expressed in gendered terms. Nevertheless, the present paper, in contrast to Eliasson et al.’s study, does not concern insults, but jokes that involve dirty words.

### **Aim of the Study**

With the present paper I hope to contribute empirical knowledge about how young people are 'doing gender' (West & Zimmerman, 1987) in a natural setting, starting from an educational context that stresses equality values.<sup>[2]</sup>

More specifically, the aim of the present paper is to analyse two ways in which the studied pupils are 'doing gender' in a film discussion that is part of a school assignment; a) the way the pupils are using discourses on sex drawn from a film; b) the pupils' balancing act between academic and social identities, which might occur simultaneously as well.

### **Data Collection and Participants**

The present data are part of a larger dataset on film as an educational tool.<sup>[3]</sup> The data analysed in the present paper were collected in a town with about 30,000 inhabitants in the southern central Sweden. The upper secondary school studied has about 300 pupils and is situated in the city centre.<sup>[4]</sup> The pupils studied here were in their first year of the Information Technology Programme (i.e., 15- to 16-year-olds).

First the pupils listened to a lecture about sex trafficking given by a representative from ECPAT Sweden (the acronym stands for End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes)<sup>[5]</sup>, and directly after the lecture they saw *Lilya 4-ever* at a city cinema. Afterwards, the pupils ate lunch and gathered in their classrooms for discussion in the afternoon. Because the pupils were minors, they were required to have permission from their parents to participate in the study, and to give their own informed consent. The pupils were informed that they could interrupt their participation in the study at any time. Nine pupils did not wish to be part of the study and therefore discussed the film in a separate classroom. The teacher divided the remaining pupils into three discussion groups. After the group discussions, the pupils shared what they had discussed with the whole class. The data in the present paper come from one of the group discussions. The group consisted of four male pupils (Lukas, Dan, Sven and Björn) and one female pupil (Sara). (There were only two girls in the class.) However, it is the film talk practices in which these persons participated that constitute the primary analytic units of the present study.

### **Analytic Procedure**

The present data are *naturalistic* in the sense that the pupils would have seen the film, listened to the lecture and discussed the issue of sex trafficking based on the question sheet prepared by the teachers even if the researcher had not been involved. Nevertheless, the discussions are – as will be examined further below – influenced by the fact that they are being recorded.

The focus here is on conversations or talk-in-interaction in an educational setting, that is, discursive data. Within the theoretical framework of discursive psychology, film talk (like all other conversations) is seen as a type of social action (cf. Potter, 1996, 2004).

The video recordings of discussions of *Lilya 4-ever* cover five classrooms in two towns and amount to over 10 hours. At an initial stage, the entire body of

data was roughly transcribed *in extenso*, as recommended by Potter and Wetherell (1995). In the data corpus, the group discussion studied in the present paper stood out as an unusual example; the ‘typical’ discussion after seeing *Lilya 4-ever* was more obviously task-oriented (see Sparrman, 2006). These sequences were transcribed in greater detail, and the transcriptions cover overlaps, emphasis, loudness, pauses, and prolongation of sounds and latching.<sup>[6]</sup>

### **Description of the Film *Lilya 4-Ever***

The film *Lilya 4-ever* was inspired by a true story about a Lithuanian girl who was left by her mum and committed suicide after being locked in and repeatedly sold as a prostitute in Sweden. The film plot evolves around the 16-year-old girl Lilya who lives in a poor and run-down suburb somewhere in the former Soviet Union. Lilya’s mum leaves for the US with her new husband. The 14-year-old boy Volodja is Lilya’s only friend. Hope for a better future is raised when Lilya falls in love with Andrei, who promises her a well-paid job in Sweden. However, it turns out that Andrei has lured her: Lilya is kept under slave-like conditions by a brutal pimp. One day she runs away and commits suicide.

### **The Viewer Position in the Film**

In a film, any plot can be communicated in a number of versions. My interpretation of the position that the viewer is invited to by the director, will be presented below. Obviously, such a viewer position constitutes a highly subjective account, and other viewers, for example the pupils, might make different interpretations. Nevertheless, I found it necessary to include my own reading of the film here, in an attempt to make the description more vivid to readers who have not seen the movie.

The initial scene is very strong: A young girl runs the streets of a concrete city landscape, she hides from the police and finally jumps from a bridge, to the very loud soundtrack of ‘Mein Herz Brennt’ by Rammstein (a German heavy metal band). Then the narrative goes back in time, depicting Lilya as a teenager crying like a little girl while she pursues her mother, who is leaving in a car. From the moment that Lilya’s mother leaves, the events develop in a downward spiral.

By putting the camera in Lilya’s perspective in crucial scenes where clients have sex with her, the director puts the viewer in Lilya’s position – you see a long series of punters grunting, rocking back and forth towards you in full screen. The film does not expose the young girl who plays Lilya. She is never shown completely naked or in sexual poses. Nonetheless, you get the message: Lilya is being exploited and abused just as are other girls and women around the world. Taking her position, you cling to the ‘caring’ procurer Andrei as the only hope; you feel Lilya’s hopelessness and her despair, seeing no real way of escaping the situation.

### **Sexualized Subject Position to Gain Power**

It was found that the pupils in the present example used a discourse on sex as a resource in their balancing work between an academic and a social identity. This is particularly interesting because the school task also invoked a discourse on

sex; nonetheless, the pupils reshaped the discourse to suit the situation they were in. In Example 1 below, Sara's use of sexualized subject positions as a means to gain power in the educational context will be examined.

Skeggs claims that the students in her study refused to be defined as "victims of male power" (1991, p. 136). In the following example, we will see an incident in which a young woman uses the whore position as a means of gaining social power in the classroom.

**Example 1.**<sup>[7]</sup> DVD KA1C start 0.38.53.

5 Lukas: We haven't said so much- only been laughing **and-**  
 6 ((voice as if crying, hides his face in his hand))  
 7 **No, it's not possible** ((turns towards the window))  
 8 → Sara: ((touching Lukas' arm with her hand)) but you're my  
 9 pimp so-  
 10 Lukas: ((laughs)) Schhhh (.) (think) of the microphone  
 11 ((points towards the microphone))  
 12 Sara: Yeah that's right ((turns towards the microphone as  
 13 She speaks))  
 14 Lukas: ((giggling)) Sara you can't reveal such a thing here-  
 15 → (.) **gonna beat you up later** (.) **damned whore**

Before the example above, Björn turned the discussion towards the task and was encouraged to do so by Lukas and Sara. Lukas first continues in a task-oriented way by evaluating the work the group has done so far: not so much 'only been laughing' (line 5); actually himself describing what the group members have been doing so far as task resisting. Then Lukas starts to use a way of speaking that differs from his previous manner; he speaks in a more theatrical way.

Moreover, hedged between two theatrical utterances, Lukas hides his face with his hands as if he is crying and trying to conceal it. In sum, he goes into a parodying mode, exaggerating the seriousness of the subject by claiming that it is too difficult to talk about at all. By touching Lukas' arm, Sara displays that she might orient towards Lukas acting like someone who is crying. Initially, Sara's touching Lukas' arm might be seen as a form of comfort.

Sara takes the initiative from Lukas (lines 8-9) in several ways: 1) by touching his arm, 2) by using a 'dirty word', pimp, in the classroom in front of the microphone, and 3) indirectly positioning herself as a whore, something that the highly didactic lecture and film has taught them is bad.

Lukas regains his power in the discussion by invoking threats of violence (line 14) that are part both of discourses of masculinity and of discourses of prostitution displayed in the film *Lilya 4-ever*. This turn is the only time at which Lukas goes into the role of the pimp.

In the data analysed by Eliasson et al. (2007, p. 594), threats of violence were only rarely directed at the girls. Violence towards prostitutes, however, is part of the stereotype. Hence, by accepting the ascribed role as Sara's pimp, Lukas manages to perform threats that otherwise would be impossible in the classroom. The prostitute discourse that Sara introduces becomes a powerful resource by which Lukas can perform actions that would be quite illegitimate in an educational setting under normal conditions.

In the data that Sparrman examines, none of the pupils in the discussions identified with the male characters from the film (2006, p. 173). She interprets

the interaction as showing the impossibility of “any of the participants to even try to take the position of or be positioned as the abusing men”.

In the present data, Lukas not only goes into the role of a male character who plays a significant role in the film, he also accepts playing a truly nasty male role, the abusing pimp, who in the film keeps Lilya locked in an apartment and takes her to men who exploit her.

### Challenging Male Sexuality

In the next example, which occurs later in the discussion, after discussing old men as clients of prostitutes, the following takes place:

#### Example 2.

55 Björn: They can't get it up  
 56 ((laughter))  
 57 Sven: (what about the young guys) what do you do with them?  
 58 ((looks at Sara))  
 59 Boy?: ((laughingly)) (heh heh) Viagra (heh heh)  
 60 → Sara: ((looks at Sven)) Ehr (<I dunno>) I thought that was  
 61 Him ((points at Lukas))  
 62 → Lukas: Me? (.) ehr her (.) (yes now-) which question are we  
 63 On?  
 64 Björn: I don't know (.) which-  
 65 Sara: There are the lilies (.) there ((shows on the  
 66 question sheet))  
 67 Lukas: Okay (I'll handle this)

‘They’ in line 55 refers to old men over 70 years (see Example 3 below).

Sara again uses an sexual reference to gain power over Lukas and the group (line 60), accusing Lukas of being a homosexual prostitute and challenging the group by going the furthest in talking dirty in the classroom.

On a speculative note, one can interpret Sara’s use of overly sexual references as a way of covering up a flirt by overdoing it. Could Sara be implying that she has ‘inside’ information on Lukas’ sexual preference, covering up their heterosexual relationship by supposedly ‘outing’ Lukas as homosexual? Along similar lines, is Lukas’ response to the male prostitute accusation an overly embarrassed performance, that is, is it work intended to cover up an embarrassment?

Drew (1987, p. 222) has analysed a continuum of responses to teases, where for example one response is to recognize the tease by laughing and then respond seriously to it, that is a po-faced response. One could say that Lukas does quite the opposite above; initially, he displays an exaggerated po-face, then continues as if the tease had not occurred, in line with another of Drew’s examples (1987, p. 229).

When Sara teases Lukas about being a homosexual prostitute, it can be seen as a way of undermining his sexuality; according to Bordo (1997), see above, this could explain the anxiety Lucas displays.

While Eliasson et al. (2007, p. 598) found it rare for girls to initiate verbal abuse against boys, the example above shows how Sara sets off an insulting sexualized joke directed at Lukas. The rareness of girls initiating verbal abuse against boys might explain Sara’s way of grounding for her insult saying ‘I dunno’. Drawing on Potter (2004), this can be seen as a stake inoculation to head

off critique of Sara being inappropriately rude. Lukas' response to the insult displays that he is disturbed by it.

### Rejecting Victimization

Among working-class girls, Ambjörnsson (2004) sees examples of young girls playing with the whore position, which she interprets as a way of rebelling against the victim position. This way of rebelling against a victim position by reclaiming the demeaning label corresponds to Example 3, analysed below.

The film presents the viewer with two young female characters: Natasha and Lilya. They both embrace several subject positions: in Natasha one can read the friend, the happy whore, the disappointed whore, the betraying friend,<sup>[8]</sup> whereas Lilya represents the abandoned child, the bullied pupil, the young woman forced into prostitution, the trusting and naïve girl in love, the foreign victim of sex trafficking, the person who commits suicide.

How such subject positions are taken up by the young pupils discussing the film will be discussed below.

#### Example 3.

23 Lukas: "think about and try to find out exactly what tempts  
 24 The girls"  
 25 Björn: That's not possible, we cant find that out if we don't  
 26 have such a girl who can answer the=  
 27 Sven: =here  
 28 Sven: Yeah (x) exactly  
 29 Lukas: But Sara!  
 30 Sara: (but) I  
 31 Björn: Yes that's right  
 32 Sven: ((looks at Sara with open mouth)) ↑okay ((smiles))  
 33 Lukas: Sara  
 34 Sven: **The question is like this- then we ask you what forc-**  
 35 **what what demands are there that tempt you?**<sup>[9]</sup>  
 36 Björn: Yes, exactly  
 37 → Sara: Well I don't have that much money so I don't have that  
 38 much of a choice then I'm like a little bit  
 39 ((laughingly)) overly horny ((turns towards the  
 40 microphone))  
 41 ((laughing, Lukas and Sven lean from the table, Björn  
 42 leans from the table, Dan shakes his head, then they  
 43 All lean towards the table))  
 44 → Lukas: So its like- so you are the happy whore like here (.)  
 45 or?  
 46 Sara: ((turns towards the microphone)) °Yes°  
 47 Lukas: Okay  
 48 Björn: That's like the question- (.) that's like the  
 49 Question- if you- if you whore because you think its  
 50 pleasurable or ((all laugh))  
 51 Sara: Or turn on on old men but I do that  
 52 Lukas: Yes you do that but [what about your pal Lilya?  
 53 Sara: [has to be 70 and then over

Björn's objection in lines 25–26 is in a way simultaneously task-refusing and task-oriented, refusing in that he claims that the task is impossible to fulfil, and orienting in that a real-life source would solve that problem. It is interesting to see that the pupils follow gender regulations; hence, being female, Sara is the only one in the group who could possibly impersonate a girl tempted into prostitution.

Other studies suggest that men are less used to and prone to identifying with a female fictive character than vice versa. Howard and Allen (1989, p. 296) claim that, because more stories are told by a male narrator than by a female, boys are not trained in gender-transgressive identification while reading. In a study of children and feminist stories, Davies' (1989, p. 230) found that most children identified with a same-sex character; as did the children in Rydin's (1996, pp. 174–175) study of readings of a fairy tale on TV. Indeed, in a study of booktalk in school, teachers even encouraged pupils to identify with same-sex characters (Eriksson Barajas, 2008).

In a way, the sequence from Björn's statement (line 25), that the group quite literally has to have a girl with experience of being a prostitute in order to answer the study questions, to Sara's claim (line 53) is actually highly task-oriented.

In a certain respect, the pupils in the present study use role-play to 'experience' prostitution in a safe way. Actually, the syllabus for the subject Swedish states that it "aims at providing pupils with opportunities to share in and develop their views on cultural heritage, and to experience and discuss texts that both inspire and challenge views" (Skolverket, 2000 para. 3), although it probably was not supposed to be taken as literally as this.

The pupils' role-playing goes one step further than writing a fictional letter to a fictional agony aunt, as the pupils in Kehily's study (2002) did. Also, the 'role-play' is a pupil initiative – it is even part of a task-resisting activity – in contrast to Kehily's example, which was introduced by the teacher.

### Talk about Prostitution

As a background to how prostitution is talked about in the pupils' discussion of the film, it is essential to present in which ways prostitution is presented in *Lilya 4-ever*. The two extracts from the film below were chosen since the pupils indirectly referred to them in their discussion. My brief interpretation of how the prostitution is presented in the two clips below is added. In the film, it is Lilya's friend Natasha who introduces Lilya to prostitution. Natasha presents it as not being a big deal:

#### Film Clip 1. DVD *Lilya 4-ever*. Scene 7: 'Natasha explains'. Time: 23:43

Natasha:	It just takes a few minutes
Lilya:	Okay if they're young guys, but if they're disgusting old men...
Natasha:	On the other hand it's much quicker. One, two and it's over! Then you get the money And can buy a dress or something.
Lilya:	No, never. It's horrible!

Natasha's use of words such as 'just' and 'few' works to play down the act of having sex for money. Lilya hypothetically accepts the idea of sleeping with young men, but not with 'disgusting old men'. Natasha continues to play down the activity by turning Lilya's objection into an advantage; Natasha claims that older men are quicker, which compensates for the fact that they are disgusting. Then Natasha focuses on the money and what you can do with that: buy things.

The above conversation takes place on the girls' way to a discothèque. In the discussion, Natasha displays quite a pragmatic view on prostitution.

However, at the discothèque, Natasha leaves for a while with an adult man and returns with some bills. Lilya is curious and asks Natasha about the activity:

**Film Clip 2.** DVD *Lilya 4-ever*. Scene 7. 25:35

Natasha:	Ha ha
Lilya:	How was it?
Natasha:	Okay.
Lilya:	I'm freezing! Tell me how it was.
Natasha:	Forget it. Let's go home, it's so cold.

Natasha's first response to Lilya's question is minimal 'Okay'. And when Lilya continues to ask Natasha ends the subject explicitly: 'Forget it'. The fact that Natasha does not want to talk about what happened – after having described it as something trivial – signals that her experience maybe was not so trifling.

In the film, Natasha is not portrayed as a victim. Initially, she is depicted as a young woman making an active choice to have sex for money. Not because she does not have money, but because she wants money to buy *extra* things, like 'a dress or something'. Then, after having sold her body, the character Natasha becomes more complex, or to use a literary term, round (Forster, 1927/1993), in the sense that she is depicted as a three-dimensional figure, characterized by several qualities that may be incompatible: she got the money she wanted, but her unwillingness to talk about the activity signals that prostitution might be more complicated than she first expressed.

In the film, Lilya does not enter into prostitution until she needs money to pay for necessities, such as food.

In pupils' discussion (see Example 3 above), Sara impersonates the victimized whore in the first part of lines 37–38, 'I don't have that much money so I don't have that much of a choice' (thus, corresponding to Lilya, and partly Natasha, in the film). This part of Sara's answer is very task oriented, and coincides with the feminist equality discourse that the government wishes to promote by showing the film in the upper secondary schools; the reason for women to go into prostitution could only be lack of resources. Then Sara positions her persona into that of an 'overly horny' woman. In combination with the preceding turn, both Sara's use of a 'dirty word' (horny) and her drawing on a sexist discourse – where women become prostitutes to have a lot of sex – can be seen as protests to being perceived as too task oriented. The sexist discourse contradicts the pedagogically imposed equality discourse. The statement about being 'overly horny' is picked up from existing male discourse about rape, and Sara's use of it also works in her way – such that the discourse itself refuses to see the woman prostitute as a victim. By hedging the quite delicate statement (herself impersonating a happy whore who is 'overly horny') between a laughter and a glance at the microphone (Speer & Hutchby, 2003), Sara shows that she is not being serious. She also uses the microphone – by talking into it – to orient towards playing a role, as opposed to giving her own private answer to Lukas question of whether she is a 'happy whore' (line 44). Sara is very clear in showing that she is playing a role. Nevertheless, Sara is as lucid in her way of not going into the role to the point that it becomes realistic. I'd like to argue that Sara *plays* at 'doing acting'.

As in Walkerdine's (1997) data, referred to above, one could say that in the present data, both the film and the research situation become resources in the participants' meaning making regarding the situation they are in.

In line with Fine's (1988) findings, see above, Sara's statement about being 'overly horny' in a school context must be presented as a joke.

One possible interpretation of the sequence above is that Sara is addressed as herself, but that she saves herself from talking about herself by playing scenes inspired by the movie. However, there are several features that speak against such an interpretation. First, there is Björn's negation and emphasis of 'such a girl' in line 26; obviously, he knows that Sara is there, so just any girl cannot fulfil his request for a specified 'such a girl'. Second, Sven speaks in a different way than on other occasions in lines 34–35; his manner of speaking and the wording he uses orient towards a journalist discourse, thus, Sven is playing the role of an interviewer, which safely leaves the floor open for Sara to answer in the role of a whore. Thus, I argue that Sara is not saving herself from talking about herself. Instead, she is saving herself from being associated with the female victim in the film.

'Overly horny' also cues the boys to 'happy whore' (line 44) and pleasure (line 50); it gives the boys licence to say such things.

Östergren claims that there are two extremes in the way prostitutes are portrayed: the 'happy whore' and the victimized woman (2006, p. 167). She argues that the image of the victimized woman is the strongest one in the debate on prostitution.

The stereotype of the happy whore, on the other hand, is a common justification for buyers of sexual services and a frequent way of making prostitution a non-problem.

Sara continues to refuse to be a victim (line 51) by stating that she – in the role of a whore – turns on to old men. In this ironic statement, Sara aligns more with Natasha – who in the film sees the advantages of selling herself to old men, as they are faster – than with Lilya, who expresses her disgust at having sex with older men. Lukas' question in line 52 also orients towards Sara impersonating a pal, possibly Natasha, to Lilya rather than Lilya herself. Thus, remaining in the film discourse and using the subject positions provided there, Sara shows a way of rejecting victimization. Sparman argues that the girls in her data identify with Lilya, so their only option to protest against a victim position is to "express disgust" (2006, p. 173).

To sum up, one could say that in lines 37–39 Sara moves from playing a politically correct discourse to the opposite. But both themes can be found in the film.

### Conclusions

According to poststructuralist feminism, the social order of humans is marked by a separation between men and women (see for example Davies, 2003, p. xi). Furthermore, being male is associated with having power over women (Davies, 2003, pp. 73, 92). According to a stereotyped image of prostitution, the separation between men and women, and women's subordination under men are fundamental features. Therefore, the pupils, in the film discussion presented above, need to 'do gender' – that is, handle being gendered beings – in a

conversation around a film in which gender positions are drawn to extremes. Since the girl, Sara, is alone in a male group where she positions herself and is positioned by the group participants as being connected to the female protagonists, the example gives insight in how young people are 'doing gender' in relation to a film dealing with gender stereotypes.

I would like to argue that the knowledge that can be drawn from this 'odd' example can be transferred to other situations; young people in a school setting who at first glance appear to be 'only fooling around' can actually, as in the present case, be completing the assigned task and even advancing the equality discourse beyond the level intended in the curricula.

A closer look at the examples shows that the pupils in the group are balancing between doing the school task, that is, discussing the questions on the sheet the teacher provided, and working on their private identities, that is the social interplay, which among teenagers involves rejecting the identity of a 'swotty' student. The specific focus of the present paper was on the gendered 'pair' of the pimp and the whore, which is at play in the pupils' balancing act. This pair is interesting because, in the present context, it is sustained and represented on both sides of the balancing act – in the young people's work on their assignment and in the social interplay between them: The task is to discuss a film in which a pimp and a whore are depicted, and the pair allows a set of roles to be played by a girl and a boy in the group. In this way, different ways of playing with power, via gendered subject positions, can be used. In the film – as in real life – the pimp has an enormous advantage over the whore, but in the example, the pupil Sara gains an advantage by first positioning Lukas as her pimp, and she keeps that advantage by continuing to go in and out of the 'role' of the whore. I'd like to suggest that Sara, in this way, gains space to talk, attention and admiration for being brave enough, in a school context and in front of the cameras, to use dirty words and act out a role that is considered bad according to school standards.

The pupils use the film and the research situation, including the video camera, to handle their work – social interplay. The pupils' discussion displays existing discourses on prostitution; it also demonstrates how pupils resist indoctrination from the government, or the adult world.

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### Notes

- [1] The film has an 18 certificate in UK, but in Sweden it is rated 15, which is the highest certificate there.
- [2] Whether the pupils' attitudes have changed in line with the educational goals for the film discussions, will not be considered in the present paper.
- [3] 'From Instruction to Reflection – teachers' and pupils' use of school film and school movie' (The Swedish Research Council, 2002-2727).
- [4] All names of participants and places have been left out or changed to ensure anonymity.
- [5] The age for consensual sex in Sweden is 15 years. However, you are not considered an adult until the age of 18 years. It is illegal to pay for any sexual service in Sweden.

- [6] Transcription symbols are mainly based on Gail Jefferson's system (see, e.g., (te Molder & Potter, 2005)): [ ]; Square brackets mark the start and end of overlapping speech; underlining, emphasis, with the extent of underlining within individual words locating the emphasis; CAPITALS, mark speech that is obviously louder than surrounding speech; °..°, quieter speech; (n), a pause, with n indicating the time in seconds; (.), micro pause; ((text)), transcriber's comments; :, prolongation of preceding vowel; > <, speeded-up talk; < >, slower talk; =, immediate "latching" of successive talk; -, utterance interrupted or ebbed away; (. . .), talk has been omitted from a data excerpt; (text), uncertain interpretation; (x) (xx), inaudible word or words; heh heh, laughter. Because the transcriptions are translated, laughter within speech is marked (laughingly) instead of for example: st(h)op i(h)t. I've added the following symbols: **bold**, pronunciation differs from surrounding speech, e.g. irony, theatrical; "text", signals reading aloud.
- [7] The examples are drawn from the same discussion; therefore the lines are numbered consecutively. However, because the examples are presented based on their content, the pieces are not always presented in order.
- [8] The day after Natasha has explained prostitution to Lilya, Natasha's father finds out about his daughter's prostitution. Natasha then blames Lilya and also spreads the word in school.
- [9] In Swedish, the word that Sven interrupts is 'krafter', and the word that he corrects it with is 'krav'; thus, the alliteration explains why he confuses them. A literal translation was chosen over an alliteration-based translation in this case.