The Intersectional Stigmatization of the Piranha in Prostitution
A case study of young women in prostitution in central Lima

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Abstract

This study is constructed upon narratives of fourteen young women, who have been working in prostitution since they were street children in central Lima, and acknowledges their stigmatization in the Peruvian society, and how they challenge their socially constructed position. By combining narrative method with an intersectional analysis I have, through a multi-layered loupe, interpreted the young women’s interpretation of themselves and their social world. I will bring forward how these young women view their subordinate and stigmatized position through their narratives surrounding their bodies as shameful, culpable, sexual and fixed. This stigmatization is intersectional as it surrounds all parts of their lives and situatedness within the Peruvian society. This situatedness is complex, involving hierarchical structures that have been present in Peru since colonization and imperialism (cf. Wade 2009). In addition, I will bring forward how the young women engage in strategies to challenge this stigmatization by applying measures to increase their respectability (cf. Skeggs).

Keywords: Intersectionality, narrative, prostitution, stigmatization, street children, Peru, power structures, patriarchy, respectability, marianismo, shame
1 Introduction

Lima spreads out like an endless ocean over the desert hills on the coast of Peru. Rich beautiful enclosed neighbourhoods with houses taken from the best of dreams, to homemade sheds with dusty roads, share this piece of land. Piranhas can be found in almost all parts of the city. However, you will not find them in the water. Piranha is a stigmatizing nickname for street children given by the Peruvian society; they are considered little thieves (Lieten & Strehl 2014: 36). Within their stigmatization, they are situated in a complex and fluid intersection of class, age, gender, race and sexuality based on patriarchal heteronormative hierarchies connected to the Catholic faith (cf. Alcalde 2010: 48). While street children are visible in almost all parts on the desert hills of Lima, their stigmatization, marginalization and situatedness is not as transparent: holding the bottom of a hierarchical iceberg in forms of structural violence (cf. ibid). Diving further down in the ice-cold water surrounding the hierarchies, we may find the street children in prostitution. Regularly the problem of prostitution is captured on the mainstream media showing stigmatization of girls of the night. At the same time, their own stories are seldom told.

Research regarding prostitution and street youths from an intersectional perspective is very limited worldwide, and especially in a Peruvian context. The current lack of feminist research regarding the slum of Lima and prostitution leaves a giant black hole of invisibility over what it means to work and live in this region (Nencel 2001: 71; 83). While research has touched upon women in prostitution (Nencel 2001), street children (Lieten & Strehl 2014), adolescent sexuality (Yon 1998; etc.) and gender based discrimination from an intersectional perspective (Boesten 2012; Alcalde 2010) there is a gap of specific research regarding street children in prostitution and women who have been working in prostitution since they were street children in central Lima.

The purpose of this study is to explore how fourteen young women, who have been working in prostitution since they were street children, reflect over their stigmatized position and what strategies they have to challenge normative structures connected to their situatedness. Their narratives give light to the complexity of lived experiences characterized by dynamic intersections of class, race, gender, age, and sexuality, highly affected by power structures. The multi-layered loupe of the theory intersectionality will help me to analyse how these
intersections intra-act and are intertwined, making it possible to dig down to the core of inequality (cf. Lykke 2010: 51). I have done this by systematically interpreting the young women’s interpretations of themselves and their social world, by using a narrative method. Normativities and categorizations surrounding their everyday lives have thus been exposed vicariously through their memories and lived experiences (cf. ibid 74). Consequently, I place my focus on the voices of the young women participating in this study, as I strive to answer the research question:

How do women who have worked in prostitution since they were street children conceptualize their bodies in their personal narrative, and what strategies do they have to challenge their marginalized and stigmatized position in central Lima?

1.1 Disposition of study

In the first part of this thesis I will present the state of the field, a short summary of gender relations in Peru, followed by methodological considerations and my theoretical framework. This first part will serve as analytical tools for presenting, discussing and analysing my material in chapter five and six. In chapter five, I will analyse how the young women conceptualize their bodies and discuss intersectional implications of this stigmatization. In chapter six, I will demonstrate how the young women challenge their bodies as stigmatized by taking measures to increase their social status. Lastly, I will make an overall conclusion of my study and make some suggestions for future research.
2 State of field & cultural-historical context

Street children in prostitution in Lima have not been under the academic loupe, which has contributed to a lack of literature regarding the subject. In addition, both research regarding Peruvian street children and prostitution is limited, placing my study in the gap between G.K. Lieten and Talianay Strehl’s study “Child street life: an inside view of hazards and expectations of street children in Peru” (2014) and the study “Ethnography and prostitution in Peru” (2001) by Lorraine Nencel. While Lieten and Strehl shortly mention street children in prostitution their study focuses on street children in Peru. Nencel, on the other hand, focuses her study on prostitution of adult women. From an international perspective, most research regarding street children in prostitution focuses on sex tourism, or is situated in significantly different socio-economic locations. These studies have not been helpful in the understanding of the narratives of the participants of my study due to the varied situatedness of street children in Peru. I will end this state of the field chapter by presenting a very brief summary of gender relations in Peru. This chapter will be used as a background to shed light on the complexity under which the young women of this study live.

2.1 State of the field: Street children

The topic of street children is currently understood as a phenomenon that is in need of a holistic, analytical approach. At the same time, research regarding street children is often placed within two oppositions: viewing the street child as a homogenous victim and viewing them as having agency and resilience. Lieten and Strehl make a strong argument against the “fashionable ‘agency’ approach” in which the street child, according to them, “is iconized as a social agent, with a free will and with autonomous choices of survival” (2014: v). While scholars, such as Cathrine Panter-Brick, argue that taking the “victim” approach limits the acknowledgment of the resourcefulness and initiatives street children take to cope with their harsh surroundings (2002). I will take a similar position as Panter-Brick, arguing that while the women in this study have had limited possibilities and choices of survival, their initiatives and strategies highlights their agency and resilience.

Most of the parents of the young women in this study are still living. For them living on the streets has been a strategic choice to leave abusive home conditions. While their situation is
highly connected to poverty and social exclusion (cf. Green 1998: 59), they have rather ran away from then ran towards something (Karabanow 2003: 369-370). In other words, becoming a street-child is often indicative of conscious choices (happening gradually) influenced by push and pull factors (Green 1998: 58-67). In Lima, there is an estimated 700-1000 street children (Strehl 2010). They are stigmatized in the Peruvian society with nicknames such as: pirañas (piranha), ratones (rats), terokalero and fumones (smokers of drugs). They are treated like delinquents; making them turn their heads towards criminality and stealing (Lieten & Strehl 2014: 36). Street children are marginalised and excluded from the society. There is an image of them as “bad children” with poor health and psychological problems (Lieten & Strehl 2014: 36; 37). Being a street-girl you are not only marginalized as a piranha, but also are more vulnerable to sexual exploitation. They often seek protection amongst the street boys or adults who in many cases demand sexual favours in exchange (Lieten & Strehl 2014: 29). As a piranha they are already viewed as norm-breaking, drug-addicted thieves. The step to working in prostitution is not far away, in fact, it is just around the corner.

2.2 State of the field: Prostitution in Peru

The on-going debates surrounding how to define prostitution can be dated back several decades and is still highly polarized (Rivers-Moore 2010: 716). This debate may be shown by researchers either trying to highlight the “sex worker” as an empowered service worker or striving to present their marginalized stories (Frederick 2014: 491). In addition, research regarding working in prostitution often focuses on “the contradictory space between legality and illegality, value and shame” (Rivers-Moore 2010: 717). I have adopted the definition “working in prostitution” to highlight that the young women in this study are not by definition sex workers or prostitutes, but rather just working in prostitution for the time being.

Prostitution by women from the lower class in Peru looks different than tourist prostitution in countries like Costa Rica (River-Moore 2010), Mexico (Kelly 2008) and the Caribbean (Kempadoo 2004, Padilla 2007) as the clients of the street children in prostitution and the women of this study are mostly Peruvian men from the lower and middle class.

Nencel explains, in her historiography of prostitution in Lima, that ethnic differences and hierarchical ranking of different types of prostitution in Lima seem to be similar today as it has been described historically (2001: 20-21). The Peruvian culture has a tendency to value
Western and whiter complexions and to reject indigenous appearances (Portocarrero 2007: 223). This type of ethical preferences and hierarchal race structures affect the prostitution industry. Young, “beautiful” women of higher class and whiter complexion, often claiming French inheritance as a symbol of class, have a higher social status. These women generally work in higher class brothels or nightclubs, in contrast to working in the street as the young women of this study do (cf. Nencel 2001: 20-21). As a consequence, street children in prostitution have a very low status due to their racial, ethnic and class background.

Nencel further argued that the male sexuality in Peru has resembled the same necessity as food, sleep and drink (Nencel 2001: 15 on Muñiz 1887: 458; 460). This has made prostitution a “necessary evil” to satiate men’s unsaturated sexual hunger. Therefore, the problem with prostitution has not been viewed in connection to the male sexuality but rather how to keep venereal diseases away from men and out of sight of “decent” people (Nencel 2001: 15). Today, prostitution is present in almost all parts of Lima’s desert hills. While prostitution by adult women is decriminalized, the minors are considered clandestine prostitutes doing an illegal activity. The historical statements have frequently used dualities to describe prostitution placing them in the negative opposite to honour and respectability (Nencel 2001: 27-31). Within the historical debate on prostitution in Peru the position of the women in prostitution have been used as a tool for further stigmatization by referring to them as disgraceful, lacking dignity, and immoral. Nencel argues that the women have been seen by the Peruvian society as in need of rehabilitation or re-education, while their profession has been seen as a necessity for the stimulation of Peruvian male sexuality (Nencel 2001: 27-31).

2.3 Gender relations in Peru – A brief summary

In this section I will provide a brief summary of the complex, fluid and varying social gender roles in Peru. The complexity of gender relations is highly multifaceted, especially with the diverse, multiracial, multiethnic circumstances surrounding Peru. Therefore, this section should be understood as a small peek into the gender structures affecting the young women of this study.

Gender relations are highly influenced by the interplay of categorizations, such as ethnicity, race and class, influencing individual’s gender identities and norms. Gender relations in Peru have been influenced by the colonial past, as traces of its impact can still be shown in contemporary social and legal gender structures (Alcalde 2010: 133-152; Wilson 1994: 22-
Heteronormative, patriarchal gender structures were introduced by the colonizing Spaniards, constructed out of Christian norms and placing women as inferior to men (Boesten 2012: 356-370). These structures are argued to be the foundation of the extreme gender stereotypes of machismo and marianismo that are still affecting gender identities in contemporary Peru (Alcalde 2010: 140-146). Without getting into detail about the different definitions of these stereotypes, marianismo is thought of as the counterpart to machismo. Machismo gives the role of the strong, dominant, superior and highly sexual being to men while women are given the role of the self-sacrificing, vulnerable, emotional and inferior mother (Beattie 2002: 304-307; DeBoer & Tse 2010: 68).

The female gendered stereotype within Marianismo idealises women on the foundation of the Virgin Mary, the self-sacrificing virgin mother of Jesus. Within this role, motherhood is idealized while female sexuality is connected with shame; resulting in a Madonna/whore dichotomy very present in the narratives of the young women of this study. Women should preserve their virginity until marriage, provide pleasure for their husbands and give birth to children. At the same time as society holds Latinas as the personification of sexuality and sensuality, they are also taught to feel ashamed of their bodies and to fear their sexual desires (Arrizón 2009: 194). While machismo/marianismo and the Madonna/whore dichotomy reduce the complexity of the situation in which the women are subordinated in the society, women from Latin America have a tendency to place themselves within these images (Wade 2009: 229). Consequently, it has affected the hegemonic masculinity that paints a picture where the man is supposed to be the dominant, supporting and highly sexual macho and the woman is at risk to follow into the role of the “other woman” if she does not comply to the feminine normative structures (cf. Alcalde 2010: 68).

In addition to the patriarchal heteronormative structures, race and ethnicity has affected the contemporary gender structures and norms. As a consequence, Peru has a history of discriminating and oppressing women based on their geopolitical locatedness, aspiring on racist and sexist social structures (Alcalde 2010: 7). The racial hierarchy constructed by the Spanish colonizers favoured white or mestizo and discriminated indigenous and the black slave population. As a consequence of the racial and gender hierarchies, indigenous and Afro-Peruvian women were considered to have the lowest social status in Peru (Boesten 2012: 356-370). Boesten argues that these racial hierarchical structures were strengthened by internal conflicts between 1980-2000. Due to the inferior position of indigenous and Afro-Peruvian women they were constantly harassed and raped. In addition, Boesten argues that these
women were seen as having “rape-ability”, justifying the sexual violence (Boesten 2012: 356-370). While the hierarchical structures has changed form today, ethnic racism is still very present in Peru (Boesten 2006: 356-370; Alcalde 2010: 18-19).

While ethnic racism always is present, Latin American societies are today not as socially divided by race but rather by class. This is due to the multiculturalism of Peru and the rest of Latin America. At the same time, most people with whiter complexions are of the higher class in Peru, the middle and lower classes has a mixture of race and ethnic background (cf. Wade 2009: 157). The subcultural group of people living on the streets are viewed as part of the society but classed as inferior due to their inherited ethnic background and social position (cf. Wade 2009: 200). Time has changed the colonial structures, but has left a trace of breadcrumbs of racist and sexist structures to follow.

In this section, I have provided a short background to previous research and historical situatedness surrounding the women of this study. They are situated in deeply socialised dynamics and shaped by the historical and social meanings of what an outsider is in the Peruvian society (cf. Wade 2009: 242-243). As street children, they are stigmatized as the offspring of poor women who are seen as ignorant, dirty and promiscuous; resulting in many children with different fathers. In other words, they have been seen as children of unnatural mothers who have let their children work and sleep on the streets (Barrig 1982: 15). This image is circulated to themselves that represents the same patterns in their own roles as mothers. This situatedness is a construction of historical and social relations affecting the situation surrounding the position from where the young women in this study speak. It is influenced by the colonial heritage, racial preferences, normative structures, the dualistic view of the woman, male sexuality and the stigmatization of street children as delinquents and offspring of unnatural mothers.
3 Methodology: Feminist Ethnography

Making research in a different socio-political location than one’s own is always difficult as it brings a myriad of ethical dilemmas and considerations. In this chapter I will reflect on methodological considerations concerning this thesis. I will firstly describe my position in relation to the research and field study. This will be followed by the methodological aspects of entering and leaving the field study. I will end this section by discussing the method of analysis.

3.1 Colonialism, white preference & I

“Emotions are the very ‘flesh’ of time” (Ahmed 2004: 202), and time is alive in my flesh. If colonialism was a stone thrown in a calm lake, I am one of the ripples displaying the effect of the harsh impact. It is exposed in my blue eyes, white skin, and light brown hair. It is shown in my Swedish education, privileges, and middle class lifestyle. My flesh, my situatedness, tells a violent history of colonialism, slavery, racism and death. Even if colonialism happened “long ago” it has affected the injustice in contemporary, international politics and the power structures that affected everyone I met during my field study in central Lima 2011 (cf. Ahmed 2004: 118; 202). History has shaped my personal appearance in relation to and with the young women I met in this study. It was very visible in the emotions of rage that Ramon, my guide on the street of Lima, showed when a middle-aged man asked if I was for sale one late afternoon when we visited the workplace of street children in prostitution known by the name of Avenida Iquitos. He pushed the man on his chest, offended on my behalf that the man could ask such a stupid question - for I was different. I was white or as the street children said: I was a Barbie. Through my situatedness, I represented colonial structures: the racial and gendered hierarchy placing me in the “desirable” body (cf. Portocarrero 2007: 223). My position in the eyes of the participants is important to reflect upon in this ethnographic study as we enter their social world (cf. Aull Davis 2008: 89-90). Meanwhile, this position brings me shame, anger, discomfort, and pain.

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1 This field study was done before I started to study Intersectionality and Change as a freelance study outside of any university.
My role as the foreigner, a *gringa*, is not only problematic in relation to colonialism. I bear cultural and conceptual limitations due to my origin from a different ethnocentric and partial knowledge. As a tool to reduce the ethical dilemmas of doing research outside of my own situatedness and within such a situated inequality between me and the participants, I have tried to use the tools rooting/shifting, suggested by Nira Yuval-Davis. By “rooting” in my own situatedness, locatedness and subjectivity I later tried to use “shifting” by committing myself to the situated knowledge of the participants while conducting the interviews and during the analysis of this study. While the complexity of lived experience and feelings of the participants cannot be represented by a researcher (as they only can represent themselves) rooting and shifting may create solidarity across or our different locatedness (cf. Lykke 2010: 85, Yuval-Davis 1997: 130 Stoetzler & Yuval-Davis 2002: 328). With this in mind, I do not claim to speak for the former street children, the contemporary street children or women in prostitution in Peru. In addition, the participants of this study should not be understood as a homogenous group as it re-inscribes their subordinate position in the society (Mohanty 2003, Kapoor 2004: 630). The women in this study should be seen as individuals who are sharing their thoughts and life experiences. Their voices are not united nor their experiences.

With this thesis I attempt to act as a catalyst to make their voices heard. Speaking on behalf of the ‘subaltern’ might just end in representational objectification that is the problem with literature on these issues in the first place (Spivak 1988). At the same time, I wonder: Do I have the right to speak about or on behalf of anyone? Was it right for me to be there in the first place? In the same vein, was it my right not to be there? What gives me the right to look away or ignore? It was the injustice of heteronormative patriarchal structures that moved me to make these interviews. I entered a field that was unknown to me, but that from a distance seemed to be the peak of injustice. It brought me a small interstice of the situation these girls are enduring, as well as a firestorm of feelings. Most of all, it brought me anger towards the situation that young women have to endure due to an unequal global society that has created this position for them. Within this complexity, I say as Peter Wade states regarding his location as a white, male, middle-class academic making research on race and sex in Latin America: “But better some attempt at this, I believe, than none at all” (2009: 205).
3.2 Enter & leaving the field

Being raised in Sweden, I am used to behold colonial buildings with a certain admiration. Their beautiful structures and details tell historical tales of different times. However, the saying, “It’s the inside that counts”, is very much applicable when it comes to the houses in central Lima. When downtown Lima was added to the UNESCO’s World Heritage List in 1991, the colonial buildings got a “face-lift”; making it a tourist area (Alcalde 2004: 45). While the outside attracts the tourist’s eyes, the inside embraces entire floors separated with plywood boards leaving just an eight-square meter space for a bed, TV and a drawer. Ramon lived in one of these houses in the neighbourhood Rímac, just two hundred meters from Plaza Mayor and the Cathedral of Lima: the Mecca of colonial houses in Peru. I met Ramon when I was working as a volunteer at a home with street youth suffering from tuberculosis. During my three-month field study, Ramon was my guide on the streets of central Lima. Having lived on the streets for twenty years (since he was eight years old) he is a famous face among the street people in Lima, especially the girls standing in the street Avenida Iquitos. Located in central Lima, Avenida Iquitos is the place where street children in prostitution may be noticed. Ramon, being used to street life, spent most of his evenings selling candy and talking to the girls in between their clients.

In contrast to the liveliness of Avenida Iquitos, I conducted the interviews either in the young women’s temporary rooms, in Ramon’s room or in a location on Avenida Grau where some of the women worked. These are home-spaces for the fourteen participating in this study, but not necessarily a safe space. The selection of participants highly relied on Ramon, who introduced the participants to me and knew the requirements for the participants: they have all worked in prostitution since they were street children. He had not approached the participants beforehand, but rather he and I, together, went to their homes during the day to see if they were willing to participate. Before I started the interviews I told them a little about me: my name, where I came from and why I wanted to talk to them. They were informed that the material from their interviews would be part of a study where I would keep their identities confidential according to research confidentiality. In addition, I told them that they could end the participation of the study or not answer questions that made them feel uncomfortable. The one hour (approximate) interviews were semi-structured, which provided the opportunity to shed light onto previously unknown factors related to the participant’s own experiences (Kvale, 1997: 117-118). An important aspect of qualitative interviews is the ability to provide
the respondents’ own personal reflections and view the respondent as a subject with experiences and a life story (Madison 2005: 25).

Bringing the interviews to another step of complexity in regards to ethical dilemmas, the majority of the young women wanted twenty soles for participating in the interviews. They argued that they lost income due to the hour they spent with me. Did I do the same thing as their clients? Did I buy them and use them, collecting stories as some sort of trophy hunter? Or did I make it possible for them to take one less client that day? At the same time as all of these questions ran through my mind it might have given them the possibility to place some conditions and agency over the setting of the interview, making sure that they would get something out of our meeting. While it highlighted the power structures between us, the asymmetries of wealth and power were inevitable because this field study was conducted in a socio-political location that differs radically from mine. This socio-political position of mine affected the way the young women answered the questions, even if I would not have paid them. Taking into account the participants expectations and other possible forms of reciprocation (cf. Hammett & Sporton 2012: 501), I paid most of them twenty soles. It might not have solved any problems, not putting my conscience at ease, but it makes visible the very complex and power-ridden situation that we were under.

My field work resulted in interviews with fourteen women that have worked in prostitution since they were street children, who are between the ages of 18 and 31 (Selena, 18 years old; Araceli; Carmen and Paula, 19 years old; Lucia and Carina, 21 years old; Maricielo, 22 years old; Magali, 25 years old; Maria, 26 years old; Judith; Nicole and Annie, 28 years old; Gisela and Miriam, 31 years old). They have all been misidentified, along with my guide Ramon, to keep their identities confidential according to research confidentiality. The interviews were recorded, resulting in 137 pages of transcribed material. The transcription was done both by myself and Peruvian friends who could help me understand slangs and specific language that the participants used. These friends had no connections to the participants, which secured their confidentiality. I thought that slangs, hums and pauses were an important aspect in the interviews, as this partly showed the participants feelings. Therefore, I decided to keep this in the transcription (cf. Kvale 1997: 155-158). In addition, I took notes directly after the interviews, which I sometimes recorded and other times wrote down. Within these field notes, I expressed my feelings and my perception of the interviews and the feelings that the participants had expressed. In addition, I wrote down the surroundings of the interviews, and occurrences that happened before and after the interviews. Only I have had access to the
3.3 Method of analysis

I have been inspired by qualitative content analysis when analysing the material. This involves an interpretation of the participant’s narratives by placing it into new narratives using a hermeneutic circle (Krippendorff 2004: 17). I firstly divided the material into themes, which has been the point of departure for this thesis. The hermeneutic circle, on the other hand, has its starting point in my situated knowledge (cf. Haraway 1988). I interpret research as a “crystal that reflects externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colors, patterns, and arrays, casting off in different directions. What we see depends upon our angle of repose” (Richardson 2000: 934). The place from which I speak determines which angle I view the crystal and the outcome of this thesis. I follow the post-structuralism doctrine: I believe that language can produce social reality and meaning, and that language constructs the individual’s subjectivity in ways that are historically and locally specific (cf. Richardson 2000: 928-929). In addition to my own situatedness, the hermeneutic circle involves the theoretical framework, closely explained in the next chapter.
4 Methodological & Theoretical framework

This theoretical framework should be understood as both a method of analysing and theory. I have built this thesis around a theoretical framework orbiting power, intersectionality, normativity, sexuality and respectability. I will firstly discuss identity and narrative, which is a keystone of the narrative method. I will follow by discussing the concept “doing intersectionality” and what this implies in this study. In the end of this chapter, I will bring forward theories regarding normativity, respectability and sexuality. Together, this large theoretical framework is needed for the complexity of the material that will be presented in the next two chapters.

4.1 Identity & narrative

I understand identities as multi-causal, multi-directional encounters, events or accidents. Identity is never stable but rather “unstable assemblages that cannot be seamlessly disaggregated into identity formations” (Puar 2012). In this sense, it is impossible to find a fixed identity formation. What we may find is traces of belonging expressed in their narratives. I follow the theory that identities can be traced in “specific forms of narratives regarding the self and its boundaries” as Nira Yuval-Davis argues (2012: 272). She suggests that the content of narratives and what is left out tells a story of its own about how the individual perceives their belonging in their society (Yuval-Davis 2010: 267). The narrative method expresses how the participants position themselves in relation to their encounters, events and accidents, likewise within social categories, such as gender, class, culture and ethnicity (cf. Puar 2012; Anthias 2002: 498). The core of the narrative method is its interpretive nature: to systematically interpret other people's interpretations of themselves and their social world. This makes the method suitable for the study of identity and subjectivity as this approach puts human action and imagination in focus. Subjective narrative gives the researcher an understanding of how the narrator at a specific time and space perceive their reality and herself within it (Anthias 2002: 501). This may make theories of belonging and the place from which we speak visible.

I view the young women in this study as not only carriers of knowledge but as knowledge creators. They create explanatory models based on their own experiences and have the
interpretation right on their own lives. Storytelling is an important aspect of our meaning-making, as it helps us organise our experiences from a cultural mode of reasoning (Berger 1997). Culture is visible in the narrative as it has been part of the construction of the self. I play a big role in their stories, as they constructed their stories in relation to me as a researcher. They took into account what they thought I wanted to hear and stories they had constructed themselves out of a cultural perspective of being in prostitute and living on the streets. In addition, their stories were based on their theories of belonging in relation to other aspects in their lives that holds higher cultural values, such as motherhood. Through narrative research we may analyse intersecting oppressions and analyse how normative structures may uphold subordinations. In this way, we are highlighting the multidimensional nature of oppression (Peterson 2006: 721).

The importance of the collection of life stories is highly connected to the poststructuralist perspective of social meaning being constructed through discourse: meaning being relational. From this perspective, our hermeneutic filters, situated knowledge and imagination is based on the language, deconstruction and speech act, which is created in relation to other people and the interaction we have with them (cf. Lykke 2010: 89-91). From this way of viewing our social understanding, it is interesting to investigate the symbolic interactionism: how common social categories are constructed in everyday life. Our understandings of gender, sexuality, age, ethnicity, etc. is a process in which rights and wrongs are created and become naturalized (ibid). Consequently, inequalities are created within social groups where certain socially constructed characteristics, like using sex as a way to make an income, are considered lower ranked within constructed social hierarchies. It is within the subject position of the participating women where I will be able to find how they “create meaning out of the categorizations and normativities that frame their everyday lives” (Lykke 2010: 74). Their situation is, in other words, socially constructed.

4.2 Doing intersectionality

Power is always present within social divisions and in the creation of belonging. I understand power as a spider web, connecting each and everything in a fluid symphony. Michel Foucault argued that power must be analysed as something that is constantly in motion, circulating, in relation to our surroundings. Therefore, individuals are always exercising and undergoing power (Foucault 1990: 94-96). Power is thus something that we are performing and receiving
in relation to everything in our surroundings. In this powerful world, the locatedness of one’s body implies carrying different values, cultural baggage and is situated in different and unequal locations (Skeggs 2004). In other words, power can be traced to the productive relations surrounding bodies and the social divisions of their belonging; working as a process of normalization that defines and categorizes individuals (cf. Foucault 1988: 118). These categorizations, or social divisions, are intertwined in a common and entangled process of construction and transformation (Lykke 2010: 51), where power always is present.

When using the term intersectionality I refer to the intra-connectedness of social constructed divisions and the power that is exercised and undergone in connection to these divisions. I will use it as an analytical tool and theoretical framework for this thesis, which is an entrance point to understanding normativities and power differentials (cf. Lykke 2010: 51). The intersectional perspective analyses the fluidity of power that circulates within social divisions, making it possible to analyse identity from different kinds of subordinations through a multi-layered lens (Lykke 2010: 75). Using this approach, the social divisions that the young women of this study belong to are not just attributes and entities of their subjecthood, but considered “events, actions, and encounters, between bodies” (Puar 2012). In other words, intersectionality, the intra-connectedness between social divisions, is something that is being performed in the society, built on socially constructed norms. We are performing gender, sexuality, normativity, justice, and so on, through the power we are exercising and undergoing.

4.3 Normativity, respectability & sexuality

The young women of this study are constantly in a limbo of normativity, respectability and sexuality. This limbo is constructed of power relations and, as Foucault argues, “Where there is power, there is resistance” (Foucault 1990: 95). Beverley Skeggs describes that working class women rarely feel comfortable with their positions and characteristics. They handle this through processes of identification, misidentification, simulating and dissimulating. She suggests that women are well aware of their class position, but they do not always resist or adapt to it. Meanwhile, the body becomes a carrier of class, making the young women in this study strive to display their respectability by surrender oneself to norms that make up ‘the proper woman’ (cf. Skeggs 1997: 150). In other words, they are currently located in a
complex and fluid social location where they constantly strive for respectability by following the norms surrounding normativity and sexuality.

The young women are aware of their location, their social position and how the society attempts to represent them. This characterizes their responses through a dialogic form of recognition: they acknowledge other people's statements. Recognition is never without judgments and the young women in this study are always aware of how real and imaginary others judge them (cf. Skeggs 1997: 13). When failing to fulfil normative ideals in relation to their community they conceptualize shame. This does not only involve the physical body, but also the inner self of the young women in prostitution: they become both the subject and object of the feeling of shame (cf. Ahmed 2004: 104-108). This affects the way they try to present themselves within their society.

Respectability is created in relation to cultural and religious norms of the woman and the mother. Yuval-Davis argues that culture is a part of the socialisation process closely connected to the experience of the subject. Culture and religion cannot be separated as their relationship is tied together and they have historically been embedded in power relations. These power relations have constructed religious and cultural imaginations, hierarchies of desirability, hierarchies of power, constructions of inclusion and exclusion and general structures of power and class within the society where gender and sexuality have been central (Yuval-Davis, 1997: 43). Being socially constructed, sexuality is politically placed in a power structure rewarding some while punishing others (Rubin 1993: 151). Similarly, the hypothetically “destructive female sexuality” is balanced between the idealised stereotype of the mother and the stereotype of the whore (McNay 1992: 77). Therefore, cultural-religious codes and regulations are developed to describe “the proper woman”; keeping women in an inferior power position (Yuval-Davis 1997: 47).

To increase respectability, the young women of this study felt the need to follow the codes and regulations, or appear as if they were. Femininity may work as capital in increasing respectability. Through femininity and sexuality women are placed in social categories (Skeggs 1997: 157). Their behaviour as a woman is central, as such, they should follow the norms of heterosexual marriage, education and employment. Through respectable femininity women may raise their social status, which may be done by the use of glamour: awareness of the outer appearance. How to dress is comprised of a femininity, sexuality and class factors that may decrease or increase shame and respectability (ibid). By following the cultural-religious regulations of the proper woman, both by behaviour and appearance, they may
represent the collective boundaries, which bears the collectives’ honour (Yuval-Davis, 1997: 45-46). These regulations and codes work as common standards of behaviour and culture, creating otherness and outsiders. As a consequence, being respectable is something these women strive for.

Sexuality is a complex system of inclusion and exclusion in the Peruvian society. Gayle Rubin argues that only a very small part of the spectrum of sexuality is normative and socially accepted. While the limits of sexuality have been stretched in recent years and become to a larger extent socially acceptable, the normativity of sexuality still has power over the everyday thoughts that the young women express in their stories and narratives (1993: 152). Sexual intercourse outside of marriage is regarded as a sin. In addition, sex (i.e. non-procreational, promiscuous, homosexual, cross generational and casual) that is for money and outside the home is considered deviant of the charmed circle of normative sexual behaviour (Rubin 1993: 151). One consequence of the charmed circle separating good sex from bad sex is the marginalisation and stigmatization of groups that are included like street children in prostitution.

The sexual activity should first and foremost be done to procreate, as a result the image of the child is always present. I understand the concept of ‘child’ to be situated within a middle class, Western framework. The child represents the production of a desirable social order that is highly connected to a political discourse (Edelman 2004: 7; 11). In other words, there is a distinction between the theoretical child and the stories of the child that is present in the narratives of this study. Their childhoods do not follow the illusion of middle class modernity and are not considered the “futurism’s unquestioned good” (Edelman 2004: 7). Children are considered to be “bearers of the collective” (Yuval-Davis 1997: 26). At the same time, there are boundaries of inclusion and exclusion for this belonging. Placed within a historical framework (see chapter 2) street children has been stigmatized as unwanted within the Peruvian society. This unwantedness is both reflected upon them, as not following the norms connected to middle class childhood, and their children by the reflection of their mothers.

In the next chapter I will continue the discussion surrounding motherhood when I present and discuss how the young women of this study conceptualized their bodies in relation to the normative ideals they acknowledged about the Peruvian society. This will be followed by a chapter on how they resist these stigmatizing power structures.
5 The stigmatized body

The narratives of the young women in this study demonstrate how they are living within a toolbox of stigmatization instruments used to place them as the outsiders in the Peruvian society. I will focus this chapter on the way they conceptualized their bodies in different settings. The image of the body can expose elements of social difference related to sex, gender, class, race, age and so on (Yuval-Davis 2012: 274), due to the productive power surrounding and comprising bodies. The young women’s narratives draw an image of their bodies as shameful, fixed, culpable and sexual in relation to normative structures surrounding the ideal role of women in the Peruvian society. I will discuss how the stigmatization of their bodies intersects with all social categories they belong to, contributing to their marginalized and stigmatized position.

5.1 The shameful body

Feeling shame is highly connected to failure to live up to normative ideals in the eyes of others. On a macro level, it is also the feeling many of the young women expressed in relation to their community. In this way, shame conceptualizes the power normative and social ideals affecting them, making them the personification of bad. Shame is conceptualized in relation to both objects as well as subjects: they become the other. This does not only involve the physical body, but also the inner self of the participants (cf. Ahmed 2004: 104-108). Shame was a central factor present in the young women’s narratives in this study. They viewed themselves as having the bodies of shameful mothers, wives, daughters; connecting the sexual intercourse with clients as making them into the object as well as the subject of shame.

*The shameful mother*

The narratives of the women display their bodies as shameful due to their contradictory social position as mothers in prostitution. Being a mother is an idealized role of womanhood as the guardian of the culture and norms of society (Yuval-Davis 1997: 45). The stereotype of the ideal mother is highly dependent on the stereotype of the whore; making these two visions collide (McNay 1992: 77). This image has been visible from an historical perspective in Peru where women in poverty have been seen as unnatural mothers (Barrig 1982: 15), that has been surrounding the young women during their entire lives. Most of them got their first child
when they were between fifteen and eighteen years old. Being a mother in prostitution collides with this normative role as they are projecting one of the most disgraceful positions for their children: their children become “hijo de puta” (son/daughter of a whore). This collision is often used as a stigmatizing tool to shame them as mothers in prostitution.

Selena highlighted her contradictory position as a mother in prostitution in a story about an encounter she had with a friend and her husband the other day. Her friend had found out her occupation and asked her how she could do such a thing. “Are you crazy? I don’t do anything,” she has replied offended at his accusation. Her friend replied: “Yeah, sure! You hang out with Wini [a friend] and you don’t do those things”. She replied: “You’re nuts! I don’t do anything; I pee on what you think or stop thinking about me.” Her husband and friend asked her once more how she could do such a thing, focusing on how she must think about her daughter. “Your daughter is going to grow up and people will say: ‘Oh! Your mom did this, and your mom did that’”. Selena tried to hide her shameful position as a woman in prostitution to not make it collide with her role as a mother. At the same time, she did not view herself as a good mother: alluding to her daily routine of sniffing the glue Terokal in front of her daughter while they were resting in the bed together. In the morning she felt ashamed of her last nights’ escapades: working in prostitution and sniffing Terokal. “I don’t know, maybe someday I’ll quit for my baby.” Selena conceptualized herself within a stigmatized role of a shameful mother.

Within Selena’s story, in addition to the other participants narratives, their roles as mothers are seen by themselves and their surroundings as contradictory to them being in prostitution. Motherhood is a woman’s political status, incorporating their social order and duty to spread cultural and religious values to their children (Yuval-Davis 1997: 39; 63). The children represent the ‘unquestioned good’ of the society (Edelman 2004: 7) but it is the mother duty to spread the expected values. Drug addiction and prostitution contradict their status as mothers, making them feel shame in relation to what is the normative ideal for their children. Therefore, the desire to quit prostitution and drug addiction for one’s child is present in all narratives from the young women who had children. In the imaginary eyes of the society they are failing in their role as mothers, resulting in a shameful position (cf. Ahmed 2004: 104).

The shameful wife
The young women conceptualize their bodies as shameful due to their social position as wives and partners. The rhetoric of community, family and relationships between women and men are linked to national ideologies; constructing normative structures on how a proper woman
should behave (Calhoun 1997: 93). The young women often find comfort in being in a relationship, in other words, following heteronormative structures. Within these structures in Peru, the man should care, nurture and protect his family while they, as women, should be caretakers of their husbands and children (DeBoer & Tse 2010: 68). Furthermore, women are expected to be submissive, obedient, and self-sacrificing in relation to the men in their families (Yanaylle 1996). This often leads to abuse within relationships and only contributes to shame when she is not able to live up to the ideal of the wife or partner.

Nicole expressed shame within her relationship with her husband. She was the sole provider for the family. The shame she felt was both connected to her role as a partner and in her role as the woman in prostitution. When she was alone, friends of her partner would say: “Well, let’s go to a telo’ (hotel)” making Nicole stay silent in shame. She also often stayed silent when her partner asked for money to avoid getting abused. “You work for that reason!” her partner would say, taking her savings to buy drugs. Supporting her partner made Nicole feel shameful because people would point at him and say “mantenido” which means a man who is economically supported by a woman. But her partner did not care. She took care of him, but did not tell him that she was working in prostitution. He thought that she sold candies, but she stood on Avenida Iquitos every night. One of the first questions I asked Nicole was if she could describe herself for me. “As a person?” she asked. I nodded smiling at her. “I feel... how can I explain... bad,” she said and started to cry. She placed her hand over her face and cried for several minutes. Her body made violent twitches as she sobbed in her hands. “I feel used, abused. I feel inferior, like he doesn’t love me. The way he is with me. And I do this for my kids, because I don’t want him to leave. I don’t want to feel alone” she cried once more and looked sadly at me. “I want to have company, more than anything. That’s why I do all this.” Nicole expressed shame of her position, as a woman in prostitution and by being the provider of the family. She felt as if her partner did not love her and she was afraid to be alone. The fear Nicole had of being alone is shaped by multiple histories that she had to live through in her life. Traces of the pain and fear she had gone through when being alone made her endure her husband’s abuse (cf. Ahmed 2004: 66).

In many ways, Nicole lived up to the image the society has constructed for her: being submissive, obedient, and self-sacrificing in relation to her husband (cf. Yanaylle 1996). At the same time, following these normative structures made her express feeling ashamed by the abuse from her partner (because she allowed the act to happen), as well as shame over her occupation. She conceptualized shame as not being able to fulfil the heteronormative ideals
and taking on the normative role that her husband was supposed to do: nurture and care for their family (cf. DeBoer & Tse 2010: 68). Many of the young women have similar stories to Nicole’s, placing them into non-normative and shameful positions in their roles as wives and partners.

**A disgrace & shame for their families**
The majority of the young women conceptualize that their social positions as women in prostitution is a disgrace and reflects shame onto their families. The fundamentalist, construction of social order urges the need to control women and the patriarchal family (Yuval-Davis 1997: 62). Women should, in this role, be guardians of the emotional well being of their families, highly connected to the religious role of the woman. The young women in this study step out of the normative role of daughters. Crossing the pre-determined limits of their roles as daughters and women therefore results in oppression (cf. Yuval-Davis 1997: 63).

Parents have yelled, beaten and neglected the young women due to their occupation, bringing shame to their families. They have heard that they are worthless and not part of the family anymore. Maria advised other girls not to enter the prostitution industry, but to rather “Do what your family says” because it “is ugly for a girl to be in the streets doing what I do.” She had been discriminated and neglected by her family after they found out of her occupation. The young women understand themselves as bringing shame to their families, making their families look bad in the eyes of others in the community. Annie described that the pre-determined normative limits of correct daughterly behaviour could be tainted even before starting working in prostitution. She was thirteen years old and had been out with her friends in a nightclub. Her parents were furious when she came home. Her mother told her: “If you steal an egg better that they cut a finger of you”- referring to her daughter’s lack of obedience and that needed to get punished. Her mother thought that if you went to a nightclub you were a whore. So, she told Annie: “You are a whore!” Annie felt very sad because she was not a whore; she was just a thirteen-year-old girl who wanted to have fun. Her mother burned Annie’s feet as a statement that Annie should not go to the nightclub again. That night Annie climbed out the window and took a bus from Tingo María, a city in the beautiful jungle, to Lima where she began living on the street and working in prostitution.

Being daughters in prostitution projects disgrace and shame over their families, as their families are seen to have failed to teach their daughters of existing cultural and religious values, which is their duty within the social order (cf. Yuval-Davis 1997: 116). Annie’s story
highlights how following the norms of a proper woman has not only been a part of the young women’s reality from the time they started in prostitution, but during their entire lives. The image of the “whore” represents the opposite of what is considered desirable and normative. Crossing the bridge over from being a sinful daughter to the role of the “whore” may be established before working in prostitution. Failing to follow these normative structures made these young women to be considered as outsiders, even from their own families. By not being able to fulfil the normative ideals of the good woman, the young women have been marginalized and oppressed by the society and by their families (cf. Yuval-Davis 1997: 63).

**The shameful woman in prostitution**

The young women expressed the feeling of embodied shame in relation to their occupation. Being in prostitution situates the women in the role of the non-normative woman: the real conceptualization of the shameful whore (River-Moore 2010: 722). They represent the non-normative sexual behaviour, the bad sex, all which contribute to their marginalization and stigmatization within the society (cf. Rubin 1993: 151) and result in shame.

Paula conceptualized the shame she felt of being in prostitution. She had felt terrible and ugly after the first time she had worked in prostitution. “I didn’t like other people to touch my body, but I needed money for my daughter, sometimes she got sick and I needed to buy medicine.” she said quietly. Without words she gave me the greatest inside to the pain and shame connected to being in prostitution. I asked her: “Do you think there is any difference between having sex with a client and a lover?” She responded: “Yes, they pay me well and some ask me for other things” I asked her what they asked for. She sat quiet for half a minute. The air was tense like a balloon getting threatened by a needle. I said that she did not have to answer the question, then she said in a low voice: “Que lo hagan por atrás (That they want to do it in the behind)”

Foucault argues that silence as well as words can speak (1990: 27), which was what Paula did during the half minute of silence. She demonstrated the powerlessness she felt during the encounter she had with her clients. She manifested a subordinate position connected to what is thought of as “bad sex”, both regarding her position as a woman in prostitution and that they asked for sexual activities she did not really approve of (cf. Rubin 1993: 151). Within her narrative, she demonstrated the feeling of both being the object and subject of shame as this shame was both connected to her physical body, being in the situation where the client asked
for things she associated with shame, and the feeling of the inner self conceptualizing shame as she became the non-normative women from inside and out (cf. Ahmed 2004: 104-108).

*The shameful body*

Being conscious of the social norms surrounding their location, the young women conceptualized shame in the narratives. They spoke of being stigmatized by their families, partners, friends and by themselves, associating themselves with badness (cf. Ahmed 2004: 105). They recognized themselves as “sexual generated disturbances for the production of themselves as respectable” (Skeggs 1997: 162), both in relation to living on the street and working in prostitution. By failing to follow the traditional heteronormative rules, they stigmatised themselves, and by people in their surroundings and the imaginary others in the society. Their shameful position as mothers, daughters, wives and women are not only due to their profession and drug addiction, but incorporating within their class status and racial belonging. Their darker complexion and low class status is intertwined with their social roles. For example, coming from poor conditions they are viewed as offspring of ‘unnatural’ mothers and are therefore not following the normative ideal connected to both their own and their children’s childhood (cf. Barrig 1982: 15). In other words, shame is an encapsulation arriving from the sexist and racist social structures incorporating the hierarchical structure under which the young women of this study live. Their location within the social divisions of race, class, gender and sexuality is conceptualized with a certain degree of shame even without the notion of them as working in prostitution or being addicted to drugs.

5.2 The culpable body

Religion relates to the ultimate meaning of life connected to cultural norms and values (Yuval-Davis 1997: 43-47). These norms are highly connected to the woman as either the Madonna or the whore in the Peruvian cultural context (cf. Alcalde 2010: 147). The cultural-religious hierarchies of desirability within the national collective boundaries (Yuval-Davis 2012: 44) are excluding the women representing the role of whore. The young women were thought of as dishonouring the normative establishments that has been constructed. Within this position, God is used as a symbol to justify stigmatization: to teach them to be culpable in the eyes of God, being everything wrong with the society. Within the narratives, religion and culture has created hierarchies of desirability enforce the measurements of inclusion and
exclusion (cf. Yuval-Davis 1997: 42-43), where they have or are on the way to tip over the edge to be excluded.

**Consequences of being sinful**

The catholic binary oppositions of the good and bad woman, in for the form of the Madonna/whore dichotomy (Arrizón 2009: 193), is constantly highlighted in the narratives. As touched upon in the previous section, Annie had felt very sad when her mother called her a whore before she had run away to the streets of Lima. After she had told me a story of how she came in contact with a woman who helped her sell her virginity I asked how she felt after her first time working in prostitution. “Horrible! It finished with my dreams of being a teacher, to live with my husband, everything got off. I was afraid, he was an old man of 42 years,” Annie responded. In other words, Annie thought that she certainly had crossed the line from the Madonna to the whore, an irrevocable curse as: “The chicken that eats eggs doesn’t change”. After entering the fixed position of a “whore”, Annie expressed thoughts of embodying the image of the whore. With that, she was indifferent to what people called her on the street. She said:

If they say: “You are a whore!” you reply “Shit”. Your face is hard if they tell you: “Fucking bitch” you reply: “A fucking bitch, I am!” You don’t have dignity already. To us, it doesn’t matter. But to other persons who do not work in this, that hurts.

She defines a difference between women like her (in prostitution, a whore, a bitch) and normative women who would be offended at being called those names. She does not have dignity, while normative women do. Annie was describing a normative hierarchy, built on cultural and religious norms, which results in the stigmatization she and other women face in prostitution as the bad “other”, in accordance with the Madonna/Whore dichotomy (cf. Arrizón 2009: 193). Being placed within this category may have great consequences for women being seen as sinful: God may decide to punish them.

Annie and Maricielo expressed themselves as sinful mothers and that this was the culprit of their children’s sickness. When Annie’s daughter was sick, five months previous to our encounter, her sister had sat by her daughter’s side with a bible in her hand. She had told Annie to place her hand on the bible and promise to God that she would never do prostitution again. Annie and her family held her responsible for her daughter’s life: she was the reason for her sickness and she could be the reason for her recovery in the eyes of God. Maricielo, likewise, thought that her sins of prostitution and drugs, was the reason for why her son was dying of tuberculosis when I met her. She remembered the times when she was a street child
with happiness. Fleeing from abusive home conditions, she found laughter and drugs on the streets when she was eight years old.

While Annie and Maricielo still viewed themselves as not being excluded from the love of God as long as their children were still alive, Lucía lost her son a year before I met her. She thought that her son’s death was her fault. Her son died, at only six months old “when he choked on milk”, Lucía said sadly. Her life has been full of abuse: being raped for the first time at the age of eight by her neighbour, being constantly beaten by her father during her childhood and being kidnapped and raped for a day by a taxi driver. Never mind the horror she has gone through, the worst thing in her life was losing her son. She believed that God wanted her to change and that he is giving her tests, which made her feel sad, bad and hurt. She was very angry towards God: “[…] because he took away from me what I wanted the most. I was changing! I wasn’t smoking, I wasn’t drinking, I never left him alone. I was always with him in the hospital. I was changed!” God, in Lucía’s testimony, has so much power that He can decide to punish her for her non-normative lifestyle. God took her son away, which made her feel angry. At the same time, she blamed herself for this death.

The culpable body

The young women and people in their surroundings view their bodies as culpable, looking through the cultural and religious creation of a patriarchal heteronormative system. This is highly connected to the Catholic faith’s creation of the dualistic woman. Women should preserve their virginity until marriage, provide pleasure for their husbands and give birth to children (DeBoer & Tse 2010: 69). They expressed a feeling of being sinful due to their profession and drug addiction. At the same time as God does not judge and loves all his children, he might take the life of your child as a punishment for your sinful lifestyle. He can also choose to save the life of your child, if you swear on the Bible to never do sins again. The stories of Annie, Maricielo and Lucía illustrate how they are excluded and oppressed and cite religious narratives as being the culprit of their children’s illnesses. These norms hold the woman in prostitution culpable for deaths or misfortunes that happen to them. Religious norms have been incorporated into hegemonic traditions in Peru. God seems to be used as a tool to shame and culprit the women in prostitution, making them the sinful and culpable bodies.
5.3 The sexual body

The female body as sexualized is such a basic construction within the sociocultural panorama that the source of this construction is invisible. Consequently, the social order within the society has been valorised by men’s needs and desires (Irigaray 1977: 171). Through history, men have exploited women and have seen the female body as useful: they mirror the need and desire of men (Irigaray 1977: 181). In that sense, the female body has been placed in a biological essentialist world where the worth of the female body is actualized in its role to fulfill the sexual thirst of men’s unstoppable sexuality. While the young women I talked to did not have any direct ‘pimps’ but rather worked in their own conditions, they all demonstrate structural forces that brought them to and keep them within prostitution.

Sexual assault

The young women’s narratives express how they have learned, from an early age, that their bodies are sexual from sustaining sexual assault. Their relation to men is complex because they have been exploited by men their entire lives. Sexually, they have been exploited and raped by: clients, police officers, stepfathers, brothers-in-law, uncles, cousins, neighbours, strangers, friends, their partners and taxi drivers. The majority of them have been raped when they were between eight and eleven years old. This has been a culminating factor as to why they have preferred to live on the streets than with their parents. Their bodies have, all their lives, been sexualised and used by men.

Lucía was raped by her neighbour when she was eight years old. “When I passed by he covered my mouth and gave 100 soles to my sister and raped me.” She still held a grudge against her sister for what she did. Ten years later, a taxi driver kidnapped Lucía for an entire day. She expressed fear when she encountered a client that she felt had “a face of badness”, similar to her rapist. Then she gave someone five soles to go with her because “you don’t know with what kind of psychopath you’ll sleep with.” Lucía, along with the rest of the girls, expressed a lot of fear. Magali was also eight years old when her stepfather raped her. Since then she is afraid of the dark, as she cannot overcome the trauma: remembering hearing his voice yelling at her in the complete darkness while raping her. She never told her mother, who died when she was eleven, about the abuse. Nicole and María, however, were asked to leave their homes after they told their mothers of the rape by their stepfathers. Nicole was raped from the age of nine until thirteen years old. Her stepfather had thrown out all of her siblings, except for her and her sister. When she was fourteen she told her mother: “Mom, why do you
think he doesn’t want me to leave? Because he touched me! He touched me with sexual intentions. He touched my body”. Her mother got very angry with her. “That’s a lie”, she replied, “He cannot do that! He’s kind to you! How could he do that to you!? If you’re gonna say such a thing, you better get your stuff and leave, now!” Her mother never came looking for Nicole on the streets. Nicole was alone. For Nicole and Maria, the rape meant getting thrown out of their homes, being accused of being the culpable cause of the sexual assault. Their bodies were sexualised and seen as the problem of why their stepfathers raped them.

Starting to work in prostitution
The narratives demonstrate how the young women have learned to use their bodies as sexual merchandise, both by friends and by strangers trying to exploit them. The young women of this study started to work in prostitution between the ages of eight and eighteen years old. They felt a certain kind of force to enter into prostitution. While this force has been conceptualized in different settings, they have all been under a structural force of poverty to enter prostitution. They have gotten encouragement from friends, have been persuaded by men or seen no other option to feed themselves and/or their children. Afterwards, all the women talked of feeling disgusted, dirty, bad, filthy, horrible, and/or felt a need to take a shower. Some have connected the first time in prostitution to when they have been raped some years previously.

Nicole, Annie and Catrin were forced to start working in prostitution by people taking advantage of their situation as street children. Their bodies have been seen as sexual merchandise that people have sought to use. Catrin was only eight years old, and at the time living on the street, when a lot of people told her: “You’re young, you’re pretty, we can help you.” But this help was in exchange for having sex with her. Likewise, Nicole was forced to work in prostitution by a woman who said: “I’m gonna buy new clothes for you.” Afterward she said: “You have to pay all that I gave to you”. She brought Nicole to Avenida Iquitos, and forced her to work in prostitution. Nicole was in shock, she did not know what to do, and did exactly what the lady said. Annie was not forced in the same sense as Nicole and Catrin. However, after her bus ride from Tingo María she ended up in central Lima sleeping on Manco Capac Square, where lots of ‘piranhas’ (little thieves) stole her shoes and everything she had. When a 24-year-old girl came up to her and offered to help selling her virginity Annie “didn’t care”. The girl took half of the money Annie got. “The next day I was bleeding, I went to the hospital and then I continued working,” she said to me, concluding that she had given in to her fate of being a woman in prostitution.
The sexual body

From the narratives of the young women, there are traces of how their bodies have been sexualised and considered sexual merchandise for men’s sexual thirst. Their bodies have been used for sexual exploitation during most of their lives. Their sexualisation might be affected by their position within the social divisions of gender, race, age, class and sexuality. As women with indigenous ancestry they have been sexualized since the colonial era, and considered “rape-able” during the internal conflict between 1980-2000, according to Boesten (2006: 360-367). In addition, women coming from poor surroundings of Lima have been stigmatized as highly sexual (Alcalde 2010), constituting both their racial and class belonging sexualized. Even their status as street children might have affected their bodies as sexual as they have been marginalized as bad children (cf. Lieten & Strehl 2014: 36; 37). In conclusion, their bodies have been considered sexual due to a combination and intra-connectedness of their status within the social divisions of gender, race, age and class.

5.4 Conclusion: The intersectional stigmatized body

The narratives of the young women in this study demonstrated that deeply socialised and dynamically shaped historic and social relations affect their position as outsiders in the Peruvian society. This can be traced in the conceptualisation of their bodies as shameful, sexual, culpable and sinful in the eyes of God. They tend to view their role as fixed in the binary opposition of the ideal good woman in patriarchal heteronormative structures. Within these structures, they are oppressed and stigmatized due to their geopolitical locatedness, and are subjects of sexism and racism. Their position has been constructed during their entire lives though events, actions and encounters they have had between other bodies (cf. Puar 2012). This was demonstrated in narratives where they constantly recognized real and imaginary others judging them within their community (cf. Skeggs 1997: 13).

The consequence of their situatedness and locatedness has been an intersectional stigmatization since they are subordinated in all social divisions of their belonging. A subordination expressed to them from family members, friend and the constant imagined eye of the community. Within the power relations of cultural and religious imaginaries they demonstrate how they place themselves as excluded, or on the edge to be excluded, within hierarchies of desirability, through their class, gender and sexuality status (cf. Yuval-Davis, 1997: 43). Consequently, the narratives show that they conceptualize shame and guilt over
their position. Their emotions have been used to secure the social hierarchy and have become attributes of bodies that are transformed as lower or higher into bodily traits (cf. Ahmed 2004: 4). This is demonstrated in their narratives of shame connected to their social positioning and in their guilt of being sinful. Being so sinful that harm is thought to come to their families due to God’s punishments and them being blamed for sexual abuses of stepfathers as their bodies were considered sexual. Their narratives express stigmatization within power structures that constantly pinpoint them as the opposite of goodness.

According to Foucault, power is transmitted by and through the society. It exerts pressure upon everyone, as can be seen in the narratives of the young women conflicted by the duality of women. At the same time as the power relations go “into the depths of society” (Foucault 1995: 27), the young women resist the grip that normative power relations have on them, as I will further describe in following chapter.
6 Strategies for respectability

While the previous chapter demonstrates how the young women in this study express their stigmatization of their bodies, this chapter will show how they challenge their stigmatized position. The young women demonstrate strategies, in their narratives, that try to increase their social status and respectability. By seeking to approximate a social ideal they may reduce their shame in relation to their community (cf. Ahmed 2004: 107). Therefore, there is a need to challenge their stigmatized position in public in the sense that “claiming respectability is a public characterization” (Skeggs 1997: 163). I will firstly discuss how the young women of this study challenge their bodies as shameful. This will follow by a discussion surrounding how they have taken measures to increase their social status. Lastly, I will conclude how their struggles are situated within the framework of normativity in Peru.

6.1 Challenging the shameful body

Resistance has an intimate relation to power. While the power structures strive to make individuals more “obedient”, resistance is constantly in process within power structures (Foucault 1990: 95-96). While this resistance looks different in each and every narrative, it is recurrently intertwined with the narratives of the young women. They employ different strategies to challenge and resist shame. They have found methods to distance themselves from the shame by finding explanatory models for their situation while reclaiming possible respectability and futures. They project badness and shame on their clients and try to both submit to and resist the normative role of motherhood.

*Distancing oneself from the shame*

The young women have taken measures to distance themselves from shame by trying to locate an explanation for their situation. They seem to have lived under strict control from their families. Some even portray that their have almost lived under slave-like conditions during their childhood. Some had to do everything in their house: clean, cook, wash and look after their siblings. In addition, both psychological and physical abuse has occurred in all of the young women’s narratives of their childhoods. They have been scolded, tied, burned, hit with different objects, sexually abused, and kept inside of the house. They expressed a feeling of not having another option than to run away from their abusive home situation. Within this
discourse they reclaim possible futures and respectability as an act of resilience. For example, Paula, who lost her mother when she was very young did not think that she would have lived on the street if her mother had been alive. Likewise, Judith thought that she would have had a different life if her parents were still together. “If my mom hadn’t broken up with him [my father], I wouldn’t have become a prostitute, I wouldn’t have taken drugs, I would have finished my studies instead.” Within these narratives they try to locate an explanation for living on the streets and working in prostitution. At the same time, they resist the fixed position of being the opposite of the ‘good woman’ by locating the origin of their situation. In other words, these narratives work as a tool to distance themselves for the shame they are enduring in their current social positions.

The resistance demonstrated in the narratives can be traced back to their conceptualization of their bodies as both the subject and object of shame. The feeling of shame requires witnesses, making their bodies’ personified shame in the eyes of others. On the other hand, their subjective feeling of shame, expressed through their thought of embodying “badness”, is challenged when the young women locate causes of their situation (cf. Ahmed 2004: 104-108). In other words, they find strategies to distance themselves from shame by reclaiming possible futures, possible respectability and disconnecting from their past.

Silence is an additional method used to resist and challenge shame. The majority of the young women keep their profession a secret for their families, friends, and lovers. Here, the present desirability hierarchies play a big role of setting strict boundaries for what should or should not be said. By keeping their profession a secret, they limit their level of shame by showing the appearance as ‘the normative woman’ by claiming to sell candies on the street. Silence demonstrates normativities and the desirability of hierarchies affect the young women in this study. Discretion is exhibited as a required strategy within the underlying discourse (cf. Foucault 1990: 27), where the women have been placed in a duality position of female behaviour. The narratives of the young women show that working in prostitution is a source of economic survival. The discretion of their profession may be means of social survival: not to lose social respectability in the eyes of others. Their choices and strategies are constantly in conflict with the normative system, especially the binary opposition placing them in the shoes of the “bad woman”. Silence as well as finding explanatory models of their situation work as an act of resilience, challenging them as belonging to the subject and object of shame.
Placing disgust on their clients

As discussed in the previous chapter, the young women present a complex relation to men due to their history of being abused and exploited. Within their narratives surrounding their relations to clients, they challenge the power relations between them. The power relations are demonstrated in the exchange of having access to their bodies for money. While Annie challenged her clients’ power over her by stating: “Have they bought us, have they?” while shaking her head in disapproval, many of the young women thought their clients had power over them.

To challenge this subordinate position they disconnect pleasure with their relations to their clients and place disgust over them. When uttering disgust over clients bodies, the young women demonstrated relations between disgust and power. They place their own bodies as more attractive, raising themselves and their own bodies on the hierarchical scale of attractiveness, when uttering disgust over clients (cf. Ahmed 2004: 88). Ahmed suggests that “the object that is felt to be disgusting: it is not just about bad objects that we are afraid to incorporate, but the very designation of ‘badness’ as a quality we assume is inherent in those objects” (2004: 82). In other words, the young women are placing the badness on clients’ bodies when they say things as: “it is repulsive when a client kisses me!” They express a feeling of filth, disgust and dirtiness after having been in contact with clients’ bodies, generating an inherent badness about those bodies rather than their own. They are transferring the shame connected to “bad sex” in accordance with the Christian traditions to their clients (Rubin 1993: 150). In this sense, they transcend the shameful body to their clients. In this way the origin of their shameful position is placed onto the bodies of their clients.

To further challenge the subordinate power relations between clients and the women, Annie, Judith and Magali stole from them their clients. “When they abuse us, we steal from them” Annie said with a big smile. In the house where the three young women work, they have made holes in the plywood walls to make a hand easily slip in and steal the content in a client’s wallet. This is a way for them to exercise power over their clients and to resist their subordinate and often oppressed position.

Being the sacrificing mother & daughter

The young women both resist and submit to power structures surrounding motherhood in their narratives. They conceptualize their bodies as shameful in relation to their role as mothers (see section 5.1). On the other hand, they challenge this conception by submitting to the role
of the sacrificing mother. Within Marianismo, women have been given the role of the vulnerable, emotional and self-sacrificing mother (DeBoer & Tse 2010: 68). In addition, a woman’s role as the bearer of the collective’s honour is to teach cultural norms and values (Yuval-Davis 1997: 45-46) and is connected to the understanding that children are the future. Consequently, being a mother generate pride and respect. The roles of the mother and child are constantly highlighted in the young women’s narratives. The young women wanted to provide a middle-class childhood for their children, rather than a life of poverty they have lived under. As a consequence, they use motherhood as a central factor to combat stigma by making their engagement with prostitution a sacrifice for their children (cf. River-Moore 2010: 722). The image of their children is present in narratives that discuss starting and quitting work in prostitution. They argued that they would work in prostitution until their children have finished kindergarten or school to be able to provide their children with necessities connected to their schooling. Even Carmen who was pregnant with her first child when I met her told me that she did prostitution for the sake of her unborn child, even though prostitution has been her occupation for years before her pregnancy.

The young women conceptualize resilience in that, although they are seen as shameful mothers, they can employ the role as the sacrificing mother, thus making the work (prostitution) justified for their children. As mothers, the young women are practicing Marianismo: the image of the self-sacrificing mother. It is a part of the properly feminine role in the society, which may be used to increase their respectability (cf. Wade 2009: 231; 242). Motherhood is a desirable state for a woman, which generates respectability. Within this discourse, they raise their own value as mothers in relation to their stigmatised position as women in prostitution. Motherhood is both used as a tool to increase the young women’s self-image and increases their respectability as caring and sacrificing mothers.

6.2 Increase social status

The class indicator of the young women is fundamental in creating their exclusion (cf. Skeggs 2004: 161-162), which they resist within their narratives. The cultural-religious regulations of the proper woman is constructed both by appearance and behaviour (Yuval-Davis 1997: 45-46), which leaves room to appear as the proper woman by challenging class markers. The women of this study do this by investing in their femininity (cf. Skeggs 2004: 157).
Material consumption as an act of status

For the young women, money seems to be an important aspect of receiving respect and social status. Annie argued that money is connected with respect by saying: “[...] If they respect you it is because you pay money.” Prostitution is regarded in the narratives as “easy money”. Even Catrin who was forced into the industry at only eight years old, said that being in prostitution as a child gave her “easy money” as she earned well. Easy money is referred to the time spectrum related to other jobs where you will have to work longer to receive the same amount of money. Their status as street children exclude them from the labour market, leaving few options for supporting themselves. Most of the young women use ‘selling candy’ as a cover to hide their profession from their families and lovers. Selling candy is time consuming while working in prostitution brings more money in a short period of time. Therefore, being in prostitution is sometime a strategic choice based on the amount of money it gain in relation to the time spectrum (cf. Rivers-Moore 2012: 209).

Beauty is an important aspect of desirability within adolescents in Lima (Yon 1998: 32). Physical attractiveness and beauty may be a marker of class and a form of corporeal capital. Investing in femininity to achieve beauty can, potentially, generate value and middle-class respectability (Skeggs 1997: 102; 110-111). While the young women conceptualized a fixed role in their cultural and religious stigmatization, using fashion may be a way to legitimize oneself towards others in the community (cf. Colloredo-Mansfeld 2010: 128). This was highly visible in some of the young women’s narratives regarding their entrance into the prostitution industry. Seeing friends in prostitution with new clothes, cell phones and shoes, was seen as temptation in the narratives. “I also wanted to buy clothes and be so much like them, so I started working as a prostitute, mostly by necessity” Judith said, who was encouraged by her friend to start working in prostitution. She connected the will to increase her social status with need. Living on the streets in extreme poverty made her view clothes and other symbols of status as necessities. Likewise, Araceli had seen her friends working in prostitution and earning money: “and I wanted to buy clothes, for need too.” Being in prostitution does, in this way, increase the social status of the young women.

Their narratives demonstrate both a resistance of their class status and a will to invest in their own femininity. They are challenging the image their community has constructs of them: their status as street children, piranhas, rats and drug addicts (cf. Lieten & Strehl 2014: 36). Therefore, some of the young women were convinced to enter prostitution due to the social status it would generate in relation to their appearance in their community. Selena’s friend
convinced her to start working in prostitution due to the social status it would give her: “When your mom comes for you, you’re gonna be standing there properly, well dressed, looking good”. As for Selena, she wanted to invest in her femininity to increase her social status, specifically in the eyes of her mother. In one way, they used the money from prostitution as a tool to ‘salir adelante’, to get ahead (cf. Rivers-Moore 2010: 717) and to continue living the street life as a drug addict while still challenging their class stigmatization. Annie, for example, brought her family from Tingo María and built a house for them in the suburbs of Lima.

Material consumption is a way of resisting the class status the young women seem to connect with exclusion. In addition, investing in femininity decreases shame and increase respectability. Within this process they are disidentifying and dissimulating themselves of their class status (cf. Skeggs 1997: 150) as an act of resilience to their subordinate position in their community and the Peruvian society.

6.3 Conclusion: Strategies for respectability

From their narratives, the young women challenge their socio-economic location by employing strategies of resistance to decrease stigma and increase their social status. The constructed normative ideal of women in Peru, conceptualized by these narratives, is in many aspects the contrast to their social location within social divisions such as race, class, ethnicity and sexuality. While the contemporary, patriarchal heteronormative structure limits them from becoming the ‘proper woman’, as this implies different racial and class in heritage, they resist the location of being the opposite of the ‘proper woman’. Their strategies demonstrate that they disidentify themselves with their social position. They express a desire to be respectable, middle-class women by trying to erase the traces they had of living on the street through the act of material consumption (cf. Skeggs 1997: 164). Additionally, they distance themselves from their past by finding explanatory models to resist the shame they expressed while being in prostitution. From this vantage point, they challenge their role as shameful mothers and place the ‘badness’ connected to their profession onto their clients in the form of disgust as an act of resilience.

In conclusion, the young women of this study demonstrate incredible resourcefulness and initiative to cope with their harsh surroundings (cf. Panter-Brick 2002). At the same time, they distance themselves as victims by responding with resilience to the power structures that
function to subordinate and stigmatize them. They challenge the politics of belonging and challenge the way the construction of belonging has affected them (cf. Yuval-Davis 2012: 266).
7 Conclusion

This study has orbited around the narratives of fourteen young women who have been working in prostitution since they were street children in central Lima. By combining narrative method with an intersectional analysis I have, through a multi-layered loupe, analysed the young women’s interpretation of themselves and their social world. In the first analytical chapter I focused on how the young women conceptualized their bodies within their narratives. Their narratives demonstrate an intersectional stigmatization of their bodies as subordinate within all social divisions they belong to, affected by both historical and social power relations. This subordination is conceptualized in their narratives shown in the encounters between the young women and their family members, friends, lovers and the imaginary community. Within this framework they see their bodies as shameful, culpable, sinful and sexual within a fixed role as the binary opposition of the ideal good woman in patriarchal heteronormative structures. In hierarchies of cultural and religious desirability, the young women demonstrate that these hierarchies are built upon exclusion and inclusion where they were on the edge of exclusion due to their class, gender and sexuality status (cf. Yuval-Davis, 1997: 43). This was exposed in their narratives when they referred to their bodies as culpable, in that it was God’s punishment for their sins to impose sickness and cause death to family members. It was also demonstrated in their bodies being shameful due to their contradictory positions as mothers, wives and daughters, which are not the norm so long as the women are involved in prostitution. Their bodies are conceptualized as sexual, in relation to male unattainable desire. People exploit their bodies as sexual merchandise and the young women were blamed for sexual assault they had sustained from stepfathers. While they all had been under the structural force of poverty to enter prostitution, racist and sexist social structures that incorporate the hierarchical structures encapsulate shame. Their emotions regarding their social position was traced in their race, class, age, sexuality, gender, and ethnicity working to secure social hierarchies, thus transforming their bodily traits as lower standing in relation to the ideal woman (Ahmed 2004: 4). In conclusion, the way power structures affect them demonstrates an intersectional stigmatization of their social position as young women who have been working in prostitution since they were street children.

In the second part of this study I elaborated on how the young women challenge their marginalized and stigmatized position within the Peruvian society. They showed resistance to
power structures stigmatizing them as opposite to the ideal woman. The contemporary, patriarchal heteronormative structure, with traces from the colonial era, limit the ideal woman to different racial and class background than the women of this study. At the same time, the young women challenge their stigmatized position by employing strategies of resistance. These strategies included a disidentification from their social position and an emphasis on finding explanatory models so that the women can distance themselves from their past and claim possible futures and social status. Furthermore, in resilience to enter the role of the ‘other woman’, the majority of the young women kept their occupation a secret. Instead they employed the role of the sacrificing mother, highly connected to gender roles constructed through the discourse of Marianismo. They employed this role by claiming to work in prostitution for their children, thus challenging the existing thoughts that their profession is contradictory to their role as mothers. Additionally, the young women placed disgust onto their clients, associating clients’ bodies with badness and filth. In this way, they transcend the origin of their shameful position to the bodies of their clients.

Further strategies include a disidentification with their social position. They expressed desires of respectability, which they employed by investing in their femininity (cf. Skeggs 1997: 164). Some of the young women had started working in prostitution due to a will to raise their social status through material consumption. Using consumption and investing in femininity is a way to resist their class status and their stigmatized position in the Peruvian society. They challenged and resisted the way politics of belonging has affected them (cf. Yuval-Davis 2012: 266).

In conclusion, while they were exposed to intersectional stigmatization and exposed in their narratives surrounding their bodies, they constantly resisted and challenged this position, demonstrating incredible resourcefulness to survive with their harsh surroundings.

7.1 Discussion

With this thesis I have tried to show the complexity of injustice created in the relation between violence, power and emotions. As Sara Ahmed says: “Injustice is a question of how bodies come into contact with other bodies” (2004: 196). This injustice has brought me through a combination of emotions: the anger of the current situation and the hope that the injustice the young women in this study suffer will come to an end. I would not have been able to write this thesis if I did not believe that it could bring possible change for the situation
of street children in prostitution and women in prostitution in Lima. This thesis has brought light to the situation under which the young women live. At the same time, it is limited to the narratives of fourteen young women. Further and more elaborate research regarding the lives of both the street children in prostitution and women who have been working in prostitutions since they were street children is needed to further highlight this stigmatized position. In addition, I believe that male sexuality and the sexualisation of female minors is the major problem with minors in prostitution and the sexual exploitation these young women had endured their entire lives. While I have not touched upon the problem with pros and cons regarding prostitution, as that has not been the subject of this thesis, I highly believe in criminalization of buying sex from minor girls in prostitution. Furthermore, the structural poverty leading the young women into prostitution is an immediate cause for their social position within all social divisions they belong to. There is a need to further analyse the structural surrounding of poverty and its effect.

With these last words of this thesis, I speak against the situation the young women in this study are under: The stigmatization of their bodies and their need to strive for being respectable in a society which constantly stigmatizes them as outsiders. Thus, I call for action.
8 References


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**Publication Title**
The Intersectional Stigmatization of the Piranha in Prostitution: A case study of young women in prostitution in central Lima

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**Abstract**
This study is constructed upon narratives of fourteen young women, who have been working in prostitution since they were street children in central Lima, and acknowledges their stigmatization in the Peruvian society, and how they challenge their socially constructed position. By combining narrative method with an intersectional analysis I have, through a multi-layered loupé, interpreted the young women’s interpretation of themselves and their social world. I will bring forward how these young women view their subordinate and stigmatized position through their narratives surrounding their bodies as shameful, culpable, sexual and fixed. This stigmatization is intersectional as it surrounds all parts of their lives and situatedness within the Peruvian society. This situatedness is complex, involving hierarchical structures that have been present in Peru since colonization and imperialism (cf. Wade 2009). In addition, I will bring forward how the young women engage in strategies to challenge this stigmatization by applying measures to increase their respectability (cf. Skeggs).

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