

# FOUR HUNDRED THOUSAND SWEDISH PERVERTS

**Don Kulick**

In 1998 Sweden suddenly acquired hundreds of thousands of new perverts. Their existence was asserted in a report, commissioned by the government, called *Sex in Sweden*. The 284-page report discussed the results of a questionnaire survey, the first of its kind in thirty years, in which 187 of 2,810 respondents answered yes to a new question, “Have you ever, with money or other remuneration, paid to be together sexually with someone else?” That 187 Swedes, all of them men, claimed to have paid for sex at one time or another was regarded as so disturbing that the report devoted an entire thirty-page chapter (more than 10 percent of the text) to trying to understand it and similar phenomena, such as that 725 men also reported that they had seen one or more pornographic films during the previous year.<sup>1</sup>

The 187 men who answered yes to the question about paying for sex constituted 12.7 percent of the male respondents to the survey (see table 1). The report extrapolates this figure to claim that one in eight men in Sweden has purchased sexual services. In sheer numbers this must mean, the report tells us, that “more than four hundred thousand men over eighteen years of age have at some point in their lives paid for sexual services.”<sup>2</sup> This figure has circulated widely in Sweden, most prominently in a 2002 government-financed campaign to promote public awareness of a law passed several years previously that made it a crime to purchase sexual services. The campaign included posters on billboards throughout the country that announced that “one man in eight has bought sex” (fig. 1).

The *Sex in Sweden* survey did not come right out and say that the four hundred thousand men supposed to have paid for sexual services at one time or another were perverts. However, this kind of quantification is one of the processes that is leading to the pathologizing of a new group—one that had been regarded, not unlike Foucault’s famous sodomite, as a temporary aberration, as individuals who transgressed socially accepted norms of sexuality but whose transgres-

Table 1. Percentages of men and women who responded that they had “paid to be together with someone sexually” (*betalat för att vara sexuellt tillsammans med någon*)

| Paid for sex                     | Men              | Women            | Figures averaged   |
|----------------------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| No                               | 82.8             | 96.9             | 89.5               |
| No, but have fantasized about it | 1.9              | 0.2              | 1.1                |
| Yes                              | 12.7             | 0.0              | 6.7                |
| No answer                        | 2.6              | 2.9              | 2.8                |
| Total                            | 100.0            | 100.0            | 100.1 <sup>a</sup> |
|                                  | <i>n</i> = 1,475 | <i>n</i> = 1,335 | <i>n</i> = 2,810   |

Source: Månsson, “Den Köpta Sexualiteten,” 236

<sup>a</sup>The percentages do not sum to 100.0 in this column because of rounding.

sions did not render them “a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood.”<sup>3</sup> Indeed, when I teach Foucault, I always use the example of the client of sex workers to explain the difference between the sodomite and the homosexual. In both English and Swedish, words like *client*, *punter*, and *torsk* allude to something a man does—that is, exchange money for sexual services. It is not clear that the man’s client status has any salience beyond that context. Is the same man still a client when he goes to work the next morning? Is he a client when he reads his children a bedtime story? Do clients have a similar nature, distinct from the nature of nonclients? Will researchers someday claim to have discovered a “client gene”? Can we look at a six-year-old child and whisper, “That boy’s gonna grow up to be a client”?

The students I teach in Sweden generally laughed at those questions and found them far-fetched. This drove home the pedagogical point I wanted to make with them, namely, the difference between sexuality as behavior (the sodomite and the client) and sexuality as identity (the homosexual). What is happening in Sweden today, however, means that my well-worn example of this difference is losing its explanatory purchase, because the clients of prostitutes are making the transition from “temporary aberrations” to “a species.” This essay outlines this transition as a contemporary example of what Foucault called the deployment of sexuality. What I believe is ultimately at stake in this transition is a much wider phenomenon, namely, the entrenchment of an official sexuality, a national sexuality, to which all Swedes should adhere, not because they will be punished if they do not (although, as we will see, they *are* punished if they do not) but because the official sexuality is good sexuality, the morally comprehensible way to be.

En man av åtta  
har någon gång köpt sex



Att köpa sex är ett brott

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REGGERINGSKANSLIET

Figure 1. "One man in eight has bought sex. . . . Buying sex is a crime."

Source: Jämställdhetsenheten, Näringsdepartementet, Regeringskansliet

### Good Sex in Sweden

I am writing a book about discourses of sexuality in Sweden that has the working title *Good Sex in Sweden*. The title plays on the fact that Sweden, unlike many countries, has a generally affirmative attitude toward sex, even sex between unmarried people or teenagers. Sex, Swedish authorities and politicians tell us, is good. The catch is that for sex to be good, it has to be good sex. That is, it has to be socially approved, mutually satisfying sexual relations between two (and only two) consenting adults or young adults who are more or less sociological equals. It must not involve money or overt domination, even as role-playing. It should occur only in the context of an established social relationship. This relationship does not have to be a particularly deep one, and sex on a first date is acceptable, with the proviso that the date has to have happened and there has to have been conversation. Sexual practices that diverge from this understanding of “good sex”—for example, the wordless sexual encounters many gay men enjoy in saunas and parks, or group sex of any kind, or sadomasochistic role-playing—set off alarms and raise concerns about exploitation and abuse, concerns that the state feels obliged to address.

And address them it does, with a vengeance. It may come as a surprise to learn that Sweden has some of the harshest sex laws in Europe—sex laws justified not by moral prudishness or religious conservatism but by individual fulfillment and the social good. Sweden is the only European country, for example, where during the early years of the AIDS epidemic, in 1987, a national law was passed to abolish gay bathhouses.<sup>4</sup> Besides having been spurred by a media-induced frenzy that dubbed gay saunas “AIDS brothels,” the law was justified in a number of ways. The one that gets my nomination for the “Bio-Power of the Year Award” was that gay men who went to gay saunas were being exploited by unscrupulous businessmen, who provided them with places to have sex only because they wanted their money. For the good of these poor gay souls, the government had a duty to step in and prevent this.<sup>5</sup>

Sweden is also one of the few places in the world where persons with HIV can still be incarcerated without a criminal trial, simply because doctors believe that they will not follow instructions to inform their sexual partners that they are HIV positive. It is also one of the only places in the world where it is impossible to remain anonymous as a person with HIV. Many countries require that the person’s name be reported to public health authorities for case-counting reasons, but by law the information is confidential. In Sweden, it is not: if you test positive at any state-funded or private clinic, your physician is legally obliged to register your

identity with the health authorities, and you are then legally obliged to report to a doctor regularly with information about your sexual encounters and relationships. You are legally obliged to inform everyone with whom you engage in oral sex or in anal or vaginal penetration that you are HIV positive. Finally, you are legally obliged to use or have your partner use a condom during sex.<sup>6</sup> In 2003 one twenty-seven-year-old gay man was sentenced to three years in prison and fined 600,000 kronor (US\$80,000) because he did not inform his sexual partners—none of whom became infected with HIV—that he was HIV positive.<sup>7</sup>

In Sweden, pornography was decriminalized in 1971 but is still subject to regulations about how it can be displayed in public. Child pornography is completely illegal, as it is throughout Europe. But in Sweden the production and distribution of pornography considered “violent” have been illegal since 1991. *Violence* is defined broadly and includes all representations of sadomasochistic sex, so no spanking or fisting can be depicted in Sweden.

Activities such as erotic dancing and posing are regulated by numerous laws and are more or less illegal in Sweden. According to police reports from 2000, there are a total of five tiny sex clubs in the country. The strongest beverage served in these clubs is Coca-Cola, and the most scandalous sexual act that undercover policemen have been able to document consisted of a woman flashing her vagina at a man from behind a barrier of chicken wire.<sup>8</sup>

Legal regulation of “procuring” (*koppleri*) is very harsh and can result in imprisonment for up to four years. It is illegal to profit in any way from sexual services performed by anyone else. Among other things, this means that newspapers, magazines, and Web sites are forbidden to carry advertisements for sex workers or escort services; landlords are forbidden to rent apartments or commercial spaces to anyone who might use them for sex work; and the partners of sex workers are classified as pimps as soon as they receive any benefit from their partner’s income (e.g., if the sex-working partner contributes to the rent or other household expenses).

The jewel in the crown of Swedish sex law is the 1999 law prohibiting the purchase of sexual services. This law criminalizes only the buyer of sex, not the seller. In reality, however, the law has had entirely predictable and deeply negative consequences for street prostitutes, who by all accounts do not number more than 650 to 1,000 in the entire country. These consequences include increased police harassment; reduced power to choose between clients, since they have become scarcer (hence prostitutes tend to find themselves with precisely the violent and unstable clients they would have avoided before); and the immediate deportation of non-Swedish sex workers discovered in the company of men arrested for pur-

chasing sex.<sup>9</sup> Despite these outcomes, the law is touted by government representatives as a beacon of hope in what they term “the fight against prostitution,” and they spend a great deal of time and energy promoting it, particularly throughout the European Union and eastern Europe.<sup>10</sup>

### So Why the Reputation?

Given what I have reported about Swedish sex law, one may well wonder why Sweden has a reputation in much of the world as a sexually liberated wonderland. This has to do precisely with the idea of “good sex” and is the result of two phenomena that occurred in the 1950s. The first was that in 1955 Sweden became the first country to make sex education obligatory in schools, from the age of seven. A main reason for this legislation was that since the 1930s Sweden’s birthrate had been one of lowest in the world. Sex education in schools was part of a much larger Social Democratic project of reforming the Swedish population to become more rational and enlightened and hence to understand that having children was good for both married couples and the state.<sup>11</sup> The law making sex education obligatory was widely reported outside Sweden, and the tone was uniformly one of astonishment: headlines such as “Sex Revolution Staggers the World,” “The Most Daring Experiment in the World,” and “Sweden—Land of Sexual Liberty” both illustrate the tenor of the law’s reception by the international press and laid the foundation for Sweden’s reputation as outlandishly sexually liberal.<sup>12</sup>

The second phenomenon was the turn taken by Swedish films in the early 1950s. Arne Mattson’s *One Summer of Happiness* (*Hon Dansade en Sommar*, 1953) and Ingemar Bergman’s *Summer with Monica* (*Sommaren med Monika*, 1953) shocked non-Swedish art house audiences by portraying naked bodies and sexual intercourse, and they were instrumental in establishing what came to be called the “Swedish sin.” This image was cemented in later years with the release of films like Vilgot Sjöman’s *I Am Curious Yellow* (1967), which showed breasts and a flaccid penis but was about tensions in Swedish Social Democratic politics, and Ingemar Bergman’s *The Silence* (1963), which no one knows what it is about, but which contained relatively explicit scenes of both sexual intercourse and female masturbation. Films like these were regarded as racy outside Sweden, almost as pornography—yet the “Swedish sin” was never decadent or perverse. On the contrary, such films most commonly represented sex by lingering on clean, fresh, svelte women who without hesitation or guilt had intercourse with their clean, fresh, svelte boyfriends. The “Swedish sin” was healthy, natural, good sex.

What is normally referred to as the “sexual revolution” in the West

occurred in Sweden between 1962 and 1965. The issues that were most vigorously debated during this time were sex education in schools (what should be taught and how), the abolishment of censorship laws for sexual texts and images, greater tolerance of sexual minorities, and the right to abortion on demand, that is, abortion for which the only requirement was a woman's wish to terminate her pregnancy. The debates around these issues sometimes did not result in changes until later—abortion on demand, for example, was first proposed in 1961 but was not passed into law until thirteen years later<sup>13</sup>—but the terms of subsequent discussion were set during this time.

One notable and consequential feature of the sex debates in Sweden during the early 1960s was that the principal actors in them were men. Although the entire public discussion was sparked by a polemical book by a female journalist who called into question the double standard conveyed by sex education in schools,<sup>14</sup> virtually no women took part in the debates about censorship, sexual minorities, or, remarkably, abortion. This was not because women had no public voice. On the contrary, issues of sexuality had for a long time been addressed by highly visible and respected women, like Alva Myrdal and Elise Ottesen-Jensen, one of the founders of the Swedish Organization for Sexual Education (RFSU). In the early 1960s, however, many women were devoting their energies to encouraging women to enter the paid workforce and to ensuring that there were institutions such as state-run day care centers that allowed them to do so. In addition, many women were also suspicious of the ideas of the young “sex liberals.” For example, women's organizations and organized feminists initially opposed abortion on demand partly because, they argued, it would put women in an even weaker position in relation to men who pressured them to have sex, since the eventual consequences of that sex could be erased.<sup>15</sup>

The relative absence of women from the debates of the early 1960s was the single most significant feature of a Swedish landscape that has since changed radically, with consequences that are crucial for the pathologizing of the clients of prostitutes. By the early 1970s women were launching a backlash against the sex debates. Feminists criticized 1960s “sexliberalism” for having lacked a gendered analysis of many phenomena, such as pornography, that they wanted “liberated.” This lack paved the way, these women argued, for an amoral movement that did not liberate women but instead enslaved them further.<sup>16</sup>

These familiar arguments unarguably contain some truth. Outside Sweden they are arguments most closely associated with feminist writers and polemicists like Catharine MacKinnon, Andrea Dworkin, Janice Raymond, and Shiela Jeffreys and were vigorously debated among feminists in the late 1970s and early 1980s,

during the so-called sex wars in many English-speaking countries. In those countries the debates still simmer and occasionally boil over, but on the whole the discussion has become more nuanced and complex.

In Sweden, however, the sex wars never happened, and the feminist sexual critique associated outside Sweden with writers like MacKinnon and Dworkin established itself as the hegemonic form of state feminism. (In fact, the Swedish government regularly invites feminists like Jeffreys and Raymond as keynote speakers at seminars on sexuality.) Exactly how this happened has not been documented. It is clear, though, that during the 1970s many women who were active in the leftist feminist organizations opposed to “sexliberalism” moved into positions of power in politics, the media, the academy, and the trade unions.<sup>17</sup> In the early 1990s a group of prominent Swedish feminists who called themselves the Support Stockings (Stödstrumporna) threatened to form a Women’s Party unless the established political parties promoted more female candidates and paid more attention to feminist issues. Media coverage of this threat was extensive, and according to some polls, up to 40 percent of voters said they would consider voting for a Women’s Party candidate. In response to this threat, and in anxiety over elections that were expected to be extremely close, most Swedish political parties, including the Social Democrats, the largest party, adopted a policy of gender parity in which every other parliamentary seat was reserved for a woman.<sup>18</sup>

The 1994 elections saw the return to power of the Social Democrats (who have governed Sweden for sixty-five of the last seventy-four years). The gender parity scheme has ensured that the representation of women in Parliament and elsewhere in the government in Sweden is the highest in the world (in 2003 it was 45 percent in Parliament, compared to a paltry 13 percent in the United States and 18 percent in the United Kingdom). While not all female members of Parliament are feminists, across party lines there is a shared commitment to what is called *jämställdhet*, or gender parity. Indeed, one observer notes that *jämställdhet* is “an area of Swedish political culture where we find total consensus in public statements”; it “is not an issue you can voice an opinion against (unless, as a Swede, you want to stay outside the moral universe of Swedishness).”<sup>19</sup>

I will return to the idea of *jämställdhet* (pronounced “yem-steld-het,” with stress on the first syllable) below. But what is most interesting in this context is that, as an ideology, *jämställdhet* requires the clear delineation of men and women so that they can be made equal. So paradoxically, to eliminate gender imbalances in society, *jämställdhet* must invoke and continually reinforce the idea that women and men differ from one another. And indeed, the ideology resonates strongly with 1970s radical feminism, which insisted that men and women have fundamentally

different characteristics. Nancy Chodorow's ideas about how separation from the mother affects girls and boys differently are cited in all kinds of contexts, as are studies that claim that women are more naturally nurturing, sharing, and communicative than men and are not aroused by or interested in sexual imagery.<sup>20</sup>

### The Genealogy of the Client as a Species

This last point brings me back to the clients of prostitutes. The genealogy of the client as a species is traceable to the backlash against the "sexliberalism" of the early 1960s. During the 1960s sexual revolution in Sweden, prostitution was not widely discussed. When it did arise in debates, it was often presented, and again always by male authors and cultural commentators, as a positive social force that provided men, particularly handicapped men and sexual minorities, with valuable sexual opportunities.<sup>21</sup> Several of these authors called for the establishment of government-run brothels, where sexual desires could be dealt with "rationally." "For the unmarried man," one widely read book proposed, "brothels would be a huge time-saver . . . which would give him more time to devote to his education. Sexually worn-out wives would get relief by sending their husbands to these houses of joy, and they wouldn't need to worry about any complications."<sup>22</sup>

Although such proposals generally met with skepticism, specifically feminist criticism of them did not appear until the 1970s. But once it did appear, it was harsh. Not only did it ask *for whom* prostitution was supposed to be good and valuable, but feminist criticism also arose from the radical political Left; hence phenomena like prostitution and pornography were declared decadent bourgeois habits that needed to be crushed.<sup>23</sup>

Already in the 1970s there were calls to criminalize the purchase of sex, not separately but along with all activity connected to prostitution.<sup>24</sup> It was never suggested, however, that men who purchased sexual services were fundamentally different from other men. They might have more money or be lonelier, or they might be older or suffer from some physical disability, but they did not have a distinct personality structure.<sup>25</sup>

In 1981 the first typology of clients appeared in a 656-page report on prostitution in Sweden. The report was written by a group of women and men who explicitly espoused the radical feminist view that prostitution degraded all women and must therefore be abolished.<sup>26</sup> In a manner that became characteristic of such typologies, this one begins with quotations from prostitutes about how they classify clients. Although the quotations indicate that the prostitutes' understandings of their clients are nuanced and complex, they are typically presented only so they

Table 2. *Types of clients*

| “I Buy What I Want”  | “There Are No Other Women”   |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rational choice</li> <li style="padding-left: 20px;">Sure-fire sex without having to worry that the woman you bought dinner or drinks for might not put out</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Shyness or fear</li> <li>- Old age</li> <li>- Physical or mental handicap</li> <li>- Isolation</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sex with no responsibility</li> <li>- “My wife doesn’t want to”</li> <li>- Special sexual desires</li> <li>- Relieve stress</li> <li>- Prostitute as a thing to have fun with               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It’s fun/different/exciting to have sex with a prostitute</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |  |

can be dismissed by the researchers.<sup>27</sup> “Seeing the buyers through the eyes of the women,” this 1981 report tells us, “is like looking into a kaleidoscope and seeing a lot of shapes dancing before your eyes: it is hard to see the whole picture.”<sup>28</sup> The researchers then proceed to give the whole picture, in the form of a typology of clients.

Based on interviews with an unspecified number of men,<sup>29</sup> the typology divides clients into two groups: those who maintain more or less stable relationships with women and go to prostitutes for something different, and those who do not have relationships with women and find it difficult to establish relationships with them. The first group is summarized with the words “I buy what I want,” and the second with the words “There are no other women.” These two groups are then subdivided (table 2).

What this understanding of clients foregrounds is partly the men’s social situation—whether or not they have stable erotic relationships with women—and partly their motives for seeking out prostitutes. There is no suggestion here that the clients of prostitutes are in any fundamental way abnormal or disturbed. On the contrary, it is stressed repeatedly that they are typical men. The only difference between men who buy sexual services and men who do not is that the former engage in what the report calls a “pure” form of oppressive patriarchal sexuality.<sup>30</sup>

The definitive move toward pathologizing occurred three years later in the first book-length study in Swedish to focus on clients. Titled *Sexuality without a Face*, this study proposed for the first time that special projects and social services

should be devoted to men who buy sex.<sup>31</sup> The authors of *Sexuality without a Face*, a professor of social work and a student of psychology, agree with the 1981 report that clients are the predictable outcome of a patriarchal society.<sup>32</sup> Drawing on the ideas of Jung and Marcuse, they argue that learning to be a man “prevents or at least obstructs a genuine encounter with a woman [ett verkligt möte med kvinnan]. . . . In addition, learning to be a man means that the ‘womanly’ resonances in every man remain mute; that is, the qualities that are usually called ‘womanly’—softness, quietness, and nearness—are excluded.”<sup>33</sup>

Men who learn these manly lessons too well and too uncritically become clients of prostitutes. Furthermore, on the basis of sixty-one interviews conducted at a hospital with men who were there for treatment of a venereal disease and who had answered yes to the question “Have you ever had sex with a female prostitute?” the authors of *Sexuality without a Face* claim that there are two kinds of men who do so: “occasional buyers” and “habitual buyers.”<sup>34</sup> The occasional buyers constituted the vast majority of the clients interviewed by the authors (70 percent), but it is the habitual buyers—that is, the seventeen men who reported that they had purchased sexual services on more than ten occasions—who need help. “Behind these habitual buyers’ actions,” the report concludes, “there are not infrequently personal and social problems that ought to be heeded and remedied.”

With those words, the stage is set for a move from a focus on behavior to a focus on personality types. This move occurs in the next book on clients, the one that is continually cited as the definitive statement on men who purchase sexual services. Written by four social workers, *The Sex Buyers* appeared in 1996. “Who is the man who buys sexual services?” the authors ask, in language that Foucault taught us to attend to closely. “What does he look like? Why does he buy sex? What lies behind the buying?”<sup>35</sup> The authors explain that “if one wants to understand the male buyer of prostitutes, one has to get behind the myths and the stereotypes and see him both from his personal perspective, his childhood and family situation, and in a societal, historical, and cultural perspective” (53). On the basis of interviews with forty men who have purchased sexual services at one time or another, the authors argue that there are five types of clients (table 3).

All of these categories invite detailed analysis for what they reveal about these social workers’ understandings of how men and women should act and be. In addition, the therapeutic interventions recommended in this study are worth an analysis in their own right. For example, one of the suggestions is that clients should be given “manliness training” (*manlighetsträning*) to learn to “judge the ‘right wavelength’ in relation to women, and to dare to make contact with ‘liv-

Table 3. *Types of clients*

|               | The omnivorous consumer<br>( <i>Allkonsumenten</i> )   | The relationship avoider<br>( <i>Relationsundvikaren</i> )   | The supplement buyer<br>( <i>Kompletteringsköparen</i> )   | The relationship seeker<br>( <i>Relationssökaren</i> )  | The refused<br>( <i>Den Refuserade</i> )  |
|---------------|--|--|--|---|---|
| Personality   | Positive self-image; radiates<br>authoritativeness, self-<br>confidence. Does not have a<br>bad conscience about<br>buying sex. Unconsciously<br>afraid of impotence.                      | Terrified of close, long-term<br>relationships with women.<br>Buys sex to avoid demands<br>in a relationship; sees<br>nothing wrong with this.   | Has difficulty talking about<br>feelings; empathetic but<br>lacks understanding of<br>“the mutual play of the<br>relation between the sexes.” <sup>a</sup><br>Prostitution leaves his real<br>needs unfulfilled. | Low self-confidence; has<br>difficulty establishing<br>social contacts.   | No self-confidence, few<br>friends; desperately wants a<br>relationship with a woman<br>but feels unworthy and ugly.  |
| Relationships | In a stable heterosexual<br>relationship; has others on<br>the side; consumes<br>pornography.  | Has no stable relationships<br>with women but many<br>temporary ones; consumes<br>pornography.   | In a traditional heterosexual<br>relationship. Values the<br>relationship but is unhappy<br>with the sex.  | Few relationships with<br>women; buys sex in<br>between these<br>relationships.   | Only relationships with<br>women are with prostitutes;<br>consumes a lot of<br>pornography.   |
| Childhood     | Happy childhood<br>characterized by love and<br>affection but too few limits.  | Disturbed relations with<br>mother and other women<br>during childhood have<br>resulted in fear of<br>dependency and closeness.  | Happy childhood; no<br>particular problems<br>during childhood or puberty.   | Disturbed relationship<br>with mother.  | “Cold” upbringing.  |
| Cure          | Needs therapy to get in<br>touch with his true feelings,<br>and “training in maleness”<br>to understand that “real<br>men are not just hard, but<br>also sensitive and soft.” <sup>b</sup> | Needs therapy to get in<br>touch with his true feelings,<br>and “training in maleness”<br>to understand that “real<br>men are not just hard, but<br>also sensitive and soft.” <sup>b</sup> | Needs therapy, both<br>individually and with his<br>partner; needs contact with<br>social workers and men’s<br>support group.  | Needs therapy and contact<br>with social workers and<br>men’s support group “to<br>provide him with the<br>opportunity to acquire a<br>clearer role as a man.” <sup>c</sup> | Needs therapy and contact<br>with social workers and<br>men’s support group “to<br>provide him with the<br>opportunity to acquire a<br>clearer role as a man.” <sup>c</sup> |

Source: Sandell et al., *Könsköparna*

<sup>a</sup>Sandell et al., *Könsköparna*, 153

<sup>b</sup>Ibid., 267

<sup>c</sup>Ibid.

ing' women [as opposed, somehow, to prostitutes] in open and equal ways" (261). The authors suggest that "perhaps this kind of activity could offer 'borrowed in' women [*inlånade' kvinnor*] as conversational partners. The goal would be to give the men an opportunity to better learn about women's needs and wishes, thoughts and expectations" (262). One might perhaps be forgiven for thinking that the offering up of "borrowed in" women as part of "manliness training" for men sounds an awful lot like prostitution—without the sex, and undoubtedly much more badly paid.

The point to note is that with this kind of diagnostic typology, there is no longer any possibility of paying for sex without being psychologically disturbed in one way or another. In other words, in this framework it is impossible to be both normal and well adjusted and also a purchaser of sexual services. The act of buying sex is no longer separable from a more general personality type. Instead, it is a metonym for the personality—it signifies it—and the personality is, by definition, deviant and psychologically disturbed.<sup>36</sup>

This is most striking in the authors' discussion of their first two categories: the "Omnivorous Consumer" and the "Relationship Avoider." The men in these groups, the authors lament, are their "problem children" (*sorgebarn*).<sup>37</sup> The majority of them have no problem with the fact that they sometimes purchase sexual services; indeed, they enjoy it. They have good jobs, positive self-images, and solid and warm social relations with women and other men (209–10, 266). On the surface, they are well-adjusted, normal men. What they fail to realize, however, is that they in fact have "an extremely poor ability to emotionally reflect on themselves." They "have difficulty in emotionally relating to other people." They go to prostitutes to have "an anonymous encounter without any emotional engagement or responsibilities" (266). That the men are self-confident and happy means that their childhoods were probably characterized by love and affection. Nonetheless, something was missing: "limits." The parents of these men did not set enough limits, and they raised them to be egotistical. So as adults, the men either avoid the constraints of intimate relationships with women or escape them by going to prostitutes. These seemingly well-adjusted and happy men need another kind of "manliness training": not training to teach them how to be confident with women but training to teach them that "real men aren't only hard, but are also sensitive and soft" (267).

When *The Sex Buyers* came out, it was received uncritically and with enthusiasm. To this day, whenever clients are discussed in the mass media, the book is cited as *the* authoritative text on the topic.<sup>38</sup> As recently as October 2003 Sweden's largest daily newspaper, *Dagens Nyheter*, printed a two-part series on a

social services organization devoted to reforming men who buy sex.<sup>39</sup> The organization is run by some of the same people who wrote *The Sex Buyers*. In one article in the series, which appeared under the headline “Buying Sex Is a Cry for Help,” one of the social workers involved in the project asserts that men who buy sex “are also victims.” This social worker explains that “many [of these men] suffer from prolonged angst and depression because they were not treated as they should have been as children.”

To drive this point home, the series included a full-page article titled “Now I Can Stop with the Filth.” The article told the story of “Peter,” a thirty-year-old man whom the organization had cured of his “destructive lifestyle” after a year of therapy. Peter’s story contains many of the elements that seem to be crystallizing as one type of client childhood. Adopted from an Asian country when he was only a few months old, he always felt “different and without roots.” The article reports that “seen from the outside, Peter’s childhood . . . was normal and relatively harmonious.” But “the family had a secret and shameful problem”: Peter’s adoptive father drank a lot during the weekends. This behavior, I can testify, having lived in Sweden for almost twenty-five years, is in fact anything but deviant; it is precisely how most Swedes consume alcohol—they avoid it during the week and bring out the bottles to get drunk on Friday and Saturday nights. And while excessive drinking on weekends may well have negative consequences for families in which it occurs, in the Swedish context it seems exaggerated to label the behavior “a secret and shameful problem.” The label appears motivated by the idea that a protoclient’s childhood should include some shameful family secret. In any case, Peter’s father died when Peter was nine years old, and Peter interprets this as a reason that he is always afraid of being abandoned.

Peter’s mother is also blamed as a source of Peter’s interest in prostitutes and pornography. Peter describes his mother as both distant and close: “She wanted to kiss me on the cheek and hug me even when I was a teenager. ‘Don’t come near me with your disgusting body,’ I thought. At the same time, I noticed clearly that she didn’t understand me. She wasn’t so interested in me.” This led to a strong feeling of angst. When Peter was fourteen or fifteen years old, he remembers, “I had thoughts of suicide, and I . . . masturbated a lot.”

Eventually, Peter began to consume pornography, which led him to visit strip clubs and, in time, to seek out prostitutes for sex. Feelings of guilt compelled him to phone a men’s hotline, which referred him to the social workers who rehabilitate clients. Therapy with them enabled him to stop buying sex, and he has had only a few “relapses” into pornography during the past five years. Peter is now in a stable relationship with a woman who recently gave birth to their child,

and he is determined to stop consuming sex once and for all. “For normal people, you know,” says Peter, “lust and sex go together with love and warm, intimate moments. I hope I can get there one day.”

Peter’s story concisely illustrates what Foucault would call “a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form.”<sup>40</sup> Foucault, of course, used those words to describe the nineteenth-century homosexual. They are just as apt in describing the twenty-first-century Swedish client of sex workers.

### **Sex, Love, and National Identity**

The pathologizing of clients is not, in some senses, a uniquely Swedish phenomenon. The client discourse in Sweden finds resonance and support in the diagnosis of “sex addiction” that was first proposed in the late 1970s in the United States and that has gained increasing salience in many places.<sup>41</sup> However, the client discourse in Sweden has its own genealogy, independent of “sex addiction.” Whereas the “sex addiction” diagnosis was developed in the United States first by men who believed that they suffered from it and later by clinicians and therapists, the Swedish idea that clients are a particular kind of person originates in the writings of academics and social workers who are financed by the government to combat prostitution. These academics and social workers all agree, moreover, with the radical feminist analysis of prostitution: that it is demeaning to all women and that each time a client purchases sexual services offered by a woman, all women are degraded.<sup>42</sup>

Researchers who have critically examined “sex addiction” have remarked that such diagnoses depoliticize sex, explaining it as an individual dysfunction rather than a social phenomenon. This is not true of the client discourse in Sweden, which is grounded in and explicitly linked to specific political ends. One of the most interesting—and most disturbing—aspects of those political ends is that they are pursued through the powerful stigmatizing force of pathologization. Buying sex in Sweden is rapidly coming to signify not merely a politically unenlightened male but a disturbed male, a deviant male, an unintelligible male. And that very deviance and unintelligibility is, predictably, paving the way not for a celebration of sexual diversity but for demonization, criminalization, and punishment.

If everything I have discussed applied only to the clients of sex workers, many readers might react with a shrug. “Who cares?” one might respond, along with most Swedish feminists. “Buying sex is morally repugnant, so good, they

deserve to be punished.” The problem is that the phenomenon I have described has consequences that are potentially much broader than the pathologization of a relatively limited group of men. In all discourse on clients in Sweden, the purchasing of sexual services is conceptualized as only a symptom of a deeper, more serious problem, namely, the separation that these men are held to maintain between love and sex. This separation is not only unacceptable; it is increasingly being presented as pathological. Recall Peter, who wanted to be cured of his desire to consume pornography and buy sex: “For normal people, you know,” he explained, “lust and sex go together with love and warm, intimate moments. I hope I can get there one day.” Compare that to this quotation from a psychoanalyst cited with approval in *The Sex Buyers*: “When a person has sex without love, or sex just for the sake of experiencing sex, I see that as a serious psychological defect. . . . For reasonably normal people, love and sex go together.”<sup>43</sup> Or this, from a sexologist also quoted with approval in the same source: “All sexually deviant behaviors have a dehumanized object; there is an inability to feel empathy, an inability to love. The more love there is in a relationship, the less perversion there is. In its compulsive form, buying sex can also be characterized as a perversion.”<sup>44</sup>

Views like these are reiterated every time prostitution is discussed in Sweden, in everything from public statements by the minister for gender equality, to letters to the editor in the country’s newspapers, to published discussions with teenagers.<sup>45</sup> Thus they propound and establish a very particular view of what sexuality is and how it should be practiced.

This is a view that has particular social consequences. For example, it has already resulted in the resolute dismissal of sex workers *as* sex workers from any public discussion of prostitution. Women would never willingly separate sex from love and sell sex, the argument goes; hence any woman who claims to do so is self-delusional. A few years ago it generated a national moral panic that young women were being forced by their boyfriends to have anal sex because the boyfriends had seen this on pornographic cable channels, which the minister for culture has expressed a desire to ban.<sup>46</sup> The underlying idea here is that anal sex is not loving sex—it is humiliating sex, something no woman would freely “submit to,” and hence bad sex.<sup>47</sup> Male homosexual relations, needless to say, fare poorly in this view of sexuality, both because of their association with anal sex and because of their association with anonymous sex, which is seen as a sad substitute for people who lack access to a loving relationship, or else is confused with prostitution. Heterosexual group sex is also coming under scrutiny, and several recent cases in which groups of men accused of gang rape were acquitted have prompted calls to make group sex illegal on the grounds, once again, that no woman would ever want

to have sex with more than one man at a time; hence group sex should by definition be rape.<sup>48</sup>

So my point is that Sweden at the beginning of the twenty-first century is in the midst of a potentially far-reaching reorganization of sexuality. The pathologizing of clients is only one strand of a larger web of discourses. Under the guise of gender parity, progressive feminism, individual fulfillment, and the social good, sex is once again becoming harnessed to love in ways that may seem benign but that Foucault, as well as many feminists, taught us to regard critically, with our eyes focused on the nature of the power channeled through this benignity, power that ensures, for example, that many women, even in what they themselves would label progressive heterosexual partnerships, continue to do all the housework and accommodate their husbands' moods, desires, and decisions, even when they object to or disagree with them—not because they have to but because they “love” their husbands and see their accommodating behavior as evidence of that love.<sup>49</sup>

The reasons for this reorganization of sexuality are complex. They are clearly related to large-scale changes in the Swedish welfare state, which over the past two decades has lost much of its distinctiveness, withering from the proud Social Democratic *Folkhem* (People's Home) of the 1950s to a neoliberal management state with an underfunded public sector, much like many other countries. Many Swedes view these changes with alarm, and there is a tendency to link them to Sweden's entry into the European Union. Hence throughout the country there is great skepticism of the European Union, an attitude most recently and clearly manifested in September 2003 in the voters' decisive rejection of the government's proposal to join the European Monetary Union and adopt the euro.<sup>50</sup>

I mention the European Union here because one topic that stands out in Swedish debates about the European Union is sexuality. For example, prior to the 1994 referendum on whether or not Sweden should join the European Union, prostitution emerged as an argument for staying out. It was claimed by opponents to the referendum that if it were approved, Sweden would be hit with a double whammy: it would be flooded by tens of thousands of foreign prostitutes clamoring at the gates, and it would be infected by a “liberal view of prostitution” that was said to be “spreading throughout Europe.”<sup>51</sup> Swedes ended up voting to join the European Union by a narrow margin.<sup>52</sup> However, the law prohibiting the purchase of sexual services was passed not long afterward, and it is spoken of in Sweden as a message to Europe that Sweden does not accept a “liberal view of prostitution.” It is also significant that since the country joined the European Union, high-profile Swedish parliamentarians in Brussels have devoted much of their time to lobbying for what they identify as the Swedish position on prostitution and pornography.<sup>53</sup>

The candidate whom the Social Democratic Party placed at the top of its list in the June 2004 EU elections was the former chair of the Social Democratic League of Women, a politician who led the campaign for the law prohibiting the purchase of sexual services. This candidate said that in her opinion, the “sex slave trade is the most important EU issue.”<sup>54</sup> Since the official Swedish position on prostitution makes no distinction between “the sex slave trade” and “sex work,” or between trafficking and migration, “the sex slave trade” means *any* form of sex work. Another incumbent candidate summed up the Swedish position more succinctly: “There’s too much sex in Europe,” he declared.<sup>55</sup>

Linked to anxieties like these about how the sexual morality of other countries might affect Sweden (and the crystallization, hence, of a nationally authorized position on sexuality) is another concern, namely, that during the past thirty years Sweden has changed from a relatively homogeneous society to a multicultural one, in which about 10 percent of the population is non-Swedish. Although overtly racist public statements concerning immigrant groups remain stigmatized in Sweden, anxieties about cultural difference are regularly ventilated in talk about sexuality. Immigrant groups are routinely characterized as weighed down by traditional, patriarchal views on sex, and “immigrant” men are singled out as potentially dangerous.<sup>56</sup> For instance, three recent cases of “honor killings” (in which young girls from Muslim families are murdered by family members) have attracted enormous media attention. Newspaper coverage of the 2002 murder of one young woman, for example, nearly equalled that of the assassination of Prime Minister Olof Palme in 1986 and of Foreign Minister Anna Lindh in 2003.<sup>57</sup> In addition, media coverage of arranged marriages for teenagers, of female genital mutilation, and of gang rapes in which young “immigrant” men are accused is extensive.

One recurrent thematic in media coverage and public discussion of such events is that they are *not* Swedish. Indeed, scholars of ethnicity in Sweden have criticized the way that talk about tragic events like gang rape or honor killing has become a central arena in which immigrant culture is homogenized and demonized, in ways that allow a benign “Swedishness” to emerge. Discussions about immigrant sexuality stress its backwardness, its enduring roots in a premodern world, its patriarchal structure, and its hostility to gender equality. Against this background, Swedish sexuality confirms itself as progressive, enlightened, and superior. It is particularly galling to critics that crimes like rape, when they are committed by “immigrant” men, tend to be explained by reference to “immigrant culture.” When the same crimes are committed by Swedish men, psychological and social factors, rather than cultural ones, are offered as explanations.<sup>58</sup>

In other words, Swedish men rape because of psychological or social problems; “immigrant” men rape because of culture.

Both in Swedish responses to the European Union and in Swedish discussion of “immigrant” sexuality, the formulation of a national Swedish sexuality is evident. This sexuality is articulated in explicit contrast to forms of sexuality that are presented as antithetical to Swedish understandings and practices. Most important, those contrastive forms of sexuality are held to be antithetical to the Swedish discourse of *jämställdhet*, or gender parity.

Emerging as it does from radical feminist sexual critique, the discourse of *jämställdhet* insists that sexual acts are microenactments of social hierarchies and that social change both reflects and depends on changes in individuals’ sexual practice. This view sanctions far-reaching state intervention in individuals’ sexual practices: during a spring 2004 public hearing called by the government on what it is labeling the “sexualization” or “pornogrification” of the public domain, for example, the minister of gender equality affirmed her view that the “public domain” does not exclude “everything one does in one’s own home.”<sup>59</sup>

To be socially and politically acceptable, sexuality, in the words of a former minister for gender equality, must be synonymous with “genuine closeness between two people . . . [in ways that] eliminate the possibility of objectification, manipulation, and ‘buying’ one another.”<sup>60</sup> It is neither coincidental nor trivial that the activities targeted for elimination—“objectification, manipulation, and ‘buying’ one another”—are symbolically marked in this discourse as quintessentially male. In the discourse of *jämställdhet*, a central message is that male sexuality needs to be reconfigured for society to evolve. Male sexuality must shed its preoccupation with objectification, manipulation, and commodification to become more like female sexuality, which, again according to this view, is emphatically opposed to these processes, being instead deeply invested in “genuine closeness between two people.”

With the reconfiguration of male sexuality as its goal, the discourse of *jämställdhet* produces for itself a problem that it subsequently has trouble resolving: How can we know that men have reformed? Where is the evidence? Here, I believe, is a key to understanding the pathologization of clients.

Swedish public discourse often asserts that while there is still a lot of work to be done, Sweden is something of a “gender-equality paradise” (*jämställdhetens paradis*) compared to every other place on the planet.<sup>61</sup> One form of evidence offered in support of this idea is that Swedish men, whatever their faults, are at least generally more enlightened than non-Swedish men, be they Continental men

who have a “liberal” view of prostitution or “immigrant” men who sanction the genital mutilation and arranged marriage of their daughters and the patriarchal oppression of their wives. In both instances, examples of nonprogressive male sexuality from other countries secure the progressiveness of Sweden.

This narrative of sexual progressiveness becomes complicated, if not threatened, when Swedish men behave in ways that blur the boundaries between good, Swedish sex and bad, non-Swedish sex, for example, when Swedish men rape women, when they consume pornography, or when they purchase sexual services. In these cases, the idea of a characteristically enlightened Swedish sexuality (and hence Swedish national character) is disrupted. Traditional radical feminist analysis would view behaviors like rape or pornography consumption as the predictable outcome of male socialization in a patriarchal society. As we have seen, until the 1980s feminist understandings of the clients of prostitutes promoted this understanding of all men as potential clients.

Politically, however, portraying the socially unacceptable or criminal behavior of some men as characteristic of *all* men is a problem, particularly when sexual behavior is rhetorically connected to the Swedish national character. Government-sponsored campaigns to raise public awareness of violence against women in the late 1990s met with criticism when they included posters with the slogan “Violence against women is men’s responsibility,” and when they showed a cowering, crying child with the caption “Do I have to go see Daddy tomorrow?”<sup>62</sup> The campaigns were criticized as too general, as pointing a guilty finger at all men for the crimes of some men. Similarly, a national uproar arose in January 2002 when Gudrun Schyman, then leader of the Left Party, suggested in a speech that the structures that led to the oppression of women were the same in both Taliban Afghanistan and Sweden.<sup>63</sup> Schyman’s speech was reported and received as though she had called Swedish men Talibans, and commentators of both genders and across the political spectrum hurried to condemn her.

What Schyman’s “Taliban speech” and the campaigns about violence against women failed to do, then, was to ratify the image of enlightened national sexuality that Swedish rhetoric encourages. What was missing from the speech and the campaigns was the contrast: the men with the bad, non-Swedish sexuality in opposition to whom the men with the good, Swedish sexuality might emerge.

The clients of sex workers supply that contrast. By being minoritized and counted, furnished with specific childhoods and personalities, and given recommendations as to specific therapeutic “cures,” clients embody the sociocultural excess that the discourse of gender parity produces in order to eliminate. Pathologized clients constitute the contrast that allows a radical feminist discourse of

gender oppression to continue to circulate without alienating most men, even as it secures the idea of a normative national sexuality, grounded in love, that all Swedes are exhorted to share.

So like all perverts, the four hundred thousand new Swedish ones do crucial social and cultural work. Their breach of the precepts of *jämställdhet* situates them “outside the moral universe of Swedishness,” but of course this “outside” is part of what constitutes the inside.<sup>64</sup> Clients’ pathological separation of sex and love makes the linkage between sex and love healthy; their abnormality makes others normal. Like Foucault’s nineteenth-century homosexual, the twenty-first-century Swedish client is a site at which particular configurations of knowledge, power, and discourse converge and kindle. The deployment of sexuality continues to produce new species. By identifying them and examining them, we advance Foucault’s work of illuminating the processes through which modern life is constituted.

### **Afterword: A Note on My “Agenda”**

Since I hope that this text will be read by Swedish scholars and activists, among others, it is important that I make explicit why I have written it.

Whenever I speak about prostitution in contexts outside Sweden, no one ever questions my “agenda.” My impression is that for feminists, queer researchers, and other academics outside Sweden, the issues I discuss are sufficiently compelling in themselves to merit critical research.

In Sweden, however, I have discovered that I need only raise the issues I examine in this essay—that is, broach the topic of prostitution in a noncondemnatory way—and audiences immediately question my own interests and my own morals. When I presented a short version of this essay at the inauguration of the Center for Gender Studies at Stockholm University in the autumn of 2003, the reaction was one of unsettledness. Both the audience and several of my colleagues at the center were clearly uncomfortable, and I was asked what my “agenda” was. As I understood it, discomfort was raised not so much by the specifics of my analysis as by the very fact that I had attempted one at all. The mere fact that I had examined Swedish prostitution discourse in a critical light seemed to imply that I was antifeminist, morally dubious, and somehow “for” prostitution, whatever that might mean. (In another public context in Sweden where I spoke on these issues, the first question from the audience, asked in a belligerent, demanding voice, was, “So tell us: have you ever purchased sex?”)

Because of the extreme tension that this topic raises in Sweden (a tension

that is at the heart of my interest in this area), I need to be explicit. In addition to the concerns discussed in the conclusion of the main text, I am interested in prostitution in Sweden, and in issues like clients in particular, for three main reasons.

The first is pure intellectual curiosity. As I hope I have indicated in the main text, what is happening in Sweden is a potentially very far-reaching reorganization of sexuality. Historians of the future will look back on and want to document it. However, following the well-worn Swedish adage “Gräv där du står” (Dig where you stand), which is dear to the hearts of feminists and social historians, I do not plan to wait for a Foucault of the future. I am interested in critically analyzing change now, as it occurs.

The second reason for my interest in these issues is that I see intriguing parallels between what is happening to sex workers and their clients now and what happened to homosexuals in the past. As I see it, a demonization is occurring, and strategies of unintelligibility are being mobilized. Prostitutes and their clients are becoming unintelligible, unimaginable.<sup>65</sup> Why anyone would willingly sell sex, or buy sex, is becoming increasingly difficult to imagine outside discursive frameworks of victimization and psychological disturbance: sex workers are traumatized victims; clients are psychologically disturbed men. Think how closely this perspective parallels social attitudes toward homosexuality until very recently: the idea that nobody would willingly have homosexual sex unless he or she was sick or the victim of seduction.

This leads me to the third reason that I am interested in this topic. At a conference on heteronormativity in the Swedish city of Göteborg several years ago, I declared during a plenary panel session that in my opinion, the queerest people in Sweden are not gays or lesbians, not bisexuals, not even transsexuals (who often are the top contenders for that prize), but prostitutes and their clients. Why? Precisely because they are the focus of massive attempts to make them unintelligible.

It is perhaps worth remembering that one of the reasons that scholars found queer theory so invigorating in the early 1990s was that it allowed us to concentrate not on how social phenomena became intelligible but on how they became *unintelligible*. In other words, it taught us that the problem was not homosexuality; the problem was the processes that made homosexuality the problem. Queer theory taught us to look at the processes by which gay and lesbian relations came to seem incomprehensible. It encouraged us to examine the strategies that made certain sexual subjects unspeakable. It insisted that we document the ways that heterosexuality's investment in power was unseen, unacknowledged, unimaginable.

So, reconnecting to this foundational, hugely significant current in queer

theory, I offer the analysis I develop in this essay as a specifically *queer* analysis that draws attention to and unsettles the processes by which certain people and certain behaviors come to be seen as incomprehensible and bad.

## Notes

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1. Sven-Axel Månsson, “Den Köpta Sexualiteten,” in *Sex i Sverige: Om Sexuallivet i Sverige, 1996*, ed. Bo Lewin (Stockholm: Folkhälsoinstitutet, 1998), 253. All translations from the Swedish in this essay are my own.
2. *Ibid.*, 238. In a subsequent newspaper report the figure was inflated to 450,000 men (“Att Köpa Sex Är Att Ropa på Hjälp,” *Dagens Nyheter*, October 28, 2003).
3. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley, vol. 1 (London: Pelican, 1981), 43.
4. The mass media panic and the subsequent debate focused exclusively on gay saunas; indeed, the name by which the law is commonly referred, *Bastuklubbslagen*, means “gay sauna club law.” It is unclear whether any similar venues existed for heterosexuals at the time that the law was passed. In principle, though, they would have fallen under the law, which prohibited the establishment of venues that “facilitated sexual activity with another visitor” (from law no. 1987:35, cited in Finn Hellman, “Bastuklubbslagen: En Studie av Dess Tillämpning och Konsekvenser” [C-uppsats vid i Kriminologiska institutionen, Stockholm University, 2001], 5). Since the law was passed, a number of heterosexual “swingers’ clubs” have been established in Stockholm and Göteborg, Sweden’s second largest city (“Hjärterum,” *Dagens Nyheter*, October 3, 2003). Of the four establishments prosecuted during the law’s existence, one was a swingers’ club where undercover police reported witnessing two women having

oral sex on what they described as a stage. The club's owners were sentenced to two months in prison, but the sentence was overturned on appeal. Among the other prosecutions, one resulted in a one year's suspended sentence and fines of 5,600–9,000 kronor (US\$750–\$1,200), and another in a sentence of one and a half years (in this case, however, contravention of the sauna law was only one of six charges for which the club's owner was prosecuted; see Hellman, "Bastuklubbslagen"). The law was repealed in 2004, when a new package of laws concerning infectious diseases took effect; several of these laws introduced more severe penalties for people who were HIV positive but did not inform their partners (see n. 6). The law prohibiting gay saunas was repealed because it was never proven to help contain the spread of HIV; indeed, evidence presented by gay activists indicated that it may have had the opposite effect, by eliminating a venue where information about AIDS could reach men who did not self-identify as homosexual and hence did not participate in gay information networks. Although the repeal of the law went into effect on July 1, 2004, as of late October 2004 no gay saunas had opened in Sweden.

5. See Jens Rydström, "Tvåsamhetens Brunn: Registerat Partnerskap i Norden," in *Queer Sverige*, ed. Don Kulick (Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, in press); Hellman, "Bastuklubbslagen"; and Benny Henriksson, *Fiendebilder: Vinklingar av Homosexualitet i Massmedierna* (Stockholm: Institutet för Sociala Studier, 1990).
6. In practice, this law is enforced as follows: Together with patients who test positive, doctors agree on a schedule of regular visits for checkups. The frequency varies, but the most common pattern is once every three to four months. During these visits, questions about sexual activity are asked. If the doctor is not satisfied with the answers, if the patient shows up with a sexually transmitted disease such as gonorrhea, or if the patient repeatedly misses his or her appointment, the patient can be reported to the government's Infectious Diseases Authority (Smittskyddsenheten). In all of the above cases, the doctor is legally obliged to report the patient. In practice, this reporting varies: some clinics immediately report all infractions; more lenient ones deal with patient "lapses" by contacting the patient's sexual partners and by counseling the patient (this happens, for example, with first-time or infrequent lapses when the patient is remorseful and cooperative, helping the doctor track down his or her sexual partners). Once the patient has been reported to the Infectious Diseases Authority, he or she is liable to be condemned to incarceration (*tvångsisolering*, literally "forced isolation") until doctors decide that the patient understands that he or she must abide by the legal regulations pertaining to persons with HIV. About eighty people have been incarcerated during the past twenty years, the overwhelming majority of them drug users or African immigrants or refugees who, I heard from several people I interviewed on the topic, "don't understand Swedish culture" and have refused to abide by the Swedish regulations. The longest any person has been incarcerated is more than ten years (that person is still there). One woman died during incarceration after having been interned for seven years.

7. Anna-Maria Sörberg, "Hela Skulden?" *Kom Ut* 8, no. 3 (2003): 9–11. This case later went to the Swedish Supreme Court, where the sentence was reduced to one year and the fine to 152,000 kronor (US\$23,000) ("HD Sänker Straff för Hivman," *Dagens Nyheter*, April 6, 2004). The case is a landmark, because for the first time a court took into consideration the fact that none of the man's sexual partners had become infected with HIV. They also considered the fact that under the current law people with HIV were under significant risk of blackmail by sexual partners who could claim that they had not been aware of their partner's HIV status. The Swedish Federation for HIV-Positive Persons (RFHP) is documenting the content and outcome of legal cases in which HIV-positive persons are charged with breaking the infectious diseases law. See also their report, "*Human*": *Brott och Straff*, [www.rfhp.a.se/folkhalso.htm#hivman](http://www.rfhp.a.se/folkhalso.htm#hivman).
8. Socialstyrelsen, *Kännedom om Prostitution, 1998–1999*, report 5 (Stockholm: Socialstyrelsen, 2000), 56–57.
9. Don Kulick, "Sex in the New Europe: The Criminalization of Clients and Swedish Fear of Penetration," *Anthropological Theory* 3 (2003): 199–218; Petra Östergren, "Synden Ideologiserad: Modern Svensk Prostitutionspolicy Som Identitets—och Trygghetsskapare" (MA thesis, Stockholm University, 2003), [www.petraostergren.com/svenska/magisteruppsats.pdf](http://www.petraostergren.com/svenska/magisteruppsats.pdf).
10. See Margareta Winberg and Louise Eek, "Männen, Makten och Människoföraktet," *Expressen*, May 15, 2002.
11. Statens Offentliga Utredningar, 1936:59; *Betänkande i Sexualfrågan Avgivet av Befolkningsskatten* (Stockholm: Isaac Marcus Boktryckeri, 1936); Lena Lennerhed, *Frihet att Njuta: Sexualdebatten i Sverige på 1960-talet* (Stockholm: Nordstedts, 1994), 34–36.
12. Lennerhed, *Frihet att Njuta*, 89.
13. The law authorizes abortion up to the eighteenth week (*ibid.*, 145).
14. Kristina Alhmark-Michanek, *Jungfrutro och Dubbelmoral* (Malmö: Cavefors, 1962). Alhmark-Michanek's title (*Belief in Virgins and the Double Standard*) refers to the fact that sex education in Swedish schools was conservative, not progressive, and promoted the idea that sexuality reached its fullest and most mature incarnation only when it was an expression of love. Alhmark-Michanek argued that temporary sexual relations "for friendship's sake" (för vänskaps skull) were valuable and desirable, so long as they were grounded in mutual respect. For a discussion of this book and its significance for the Swedish sexual revolution see Lennerhed, *Frihet att Njuta*, 99–111.
15. Lennerhed, *Frihet att Njuta*, 146–52.
16. *Ibid.*, 234–37, 248–51; Jeanette Gentile, "Sexliberalerna Röjer Väg för Pornografi och Prostitution," in *Ett Onödigt Ont: En Antologi mot Porr och Prostitution*, ed. Gunilla Fredelius (Stockholm: Ordfront, 1978), 56–72.

17. Works that discuss this period in Swedish history and its aftermath include Annika Baude, ed., *Visioner om Jämställdhet* (Stockholm: SNS Förlag, 1992); Elisabeth Elgán, ed., *Kvinnorörelsen och '68: Aspekter och Vittnesbörd* (Stockholm: Samtidshistoriska institutet, 2001); Yvonne Hirdman, *Med Kluven Tunga: LO och Genusordningen* (Stockholm: Atlas, 2001); Lena Lennerhed, ed., *Riv alla murar! Vittnessemärrier om Sexliberalismen och om Pockettidningen R* (Stockholm: Samtidshistoriska institutet, 2002); Gunilla Thorngren, *Grupp 8 och Jag* (Stockholm: Pan, 2003); and Petra Ulmanen, *(S)veket mot Kvinnorna och Hur Högren Stal Feminismen* (Stockholm: Atlas, 1998).
18. For a history of this development in English see Agneta Stark, "Combating the Backlash: How Swedish Women Won the War," in *Who's Afraid of Feminism? Seeing through the Backlash*, ed. Ann Oakley and Juliet Mitchell (New York: New, 1997), 224–44. See also Susanna Popova, *Elitfeministerna: Ett Spel för Gallerierna* (Stockholm: Bonnier Fakta, 2004), 99–110; and Ulmanen, *(S)veket mot Kvinnorna*.
19. Annika Rabo, "Free to Make the Right Choice? Gender Equality Policy in Post-Welfare Sweden," in *Anthropology of Policy: Critical Perspectives on Governance and Power*, ed. Cris Shore and Susan Wright (London: Routledge, 1997), 107, 115.
20. The books on clients that are discussed in this essay, such as Sven-Axel Månsson and Annulla Linders, *Sexualitet Utan Ansikte: Könsköparna* (Stockholm: Carlssons, 1984), and Göran Sandell et al., *Könsköparna: Varför Går Män Egentligen till Prostituerade?* (Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 1996), are typical, drawing on Chodorow, Fromm, and Marcuse to argue that women and men have fundamentally different stances in the world. An increasing number of analyses from diverse disciplines draw critical attention to this dimension of *jämställdhet*. See Fanny Ambjörnsson, *I en Klass för Sig: Genus, Klass och Sexualitet Bland Gymnasietjejer* (Stockholm: Ordfront, 2004); Ulrika Dahl, "Progressive Women, Traditional Men: The Politics of 'Knowledge' and Gendered Stories of 'Development' in the Northern Periphery of the EU" (PhD diss., University of California, Santa Cruz, 2004); Popova, *Elitfeministerna*; Bo Rothstein, "Feminister tror inte på jämställdheten," *Dagens Nyheter*, July 18, 1997; and Håkan Larsson, *Iscensättningen av Kön i Idrott: En Nutidshistoria om Idrottsmannen och Idrottskvinnan* (Stockholm: HLS Förlag, 2001).
21. Jörgen Eriksson, *Svenska Botten: En Debattbok om De Asociala Minoriteterna* (Stockholm: Prisma 1965); Lars Ullerstam, *De Erotiska Minoriteterna* (Göteborg: Zinderman, 1964); Per Ahlmark, Thomas Hammarberg, and Ernst Klein, *Många Liberaler* (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1966).
22. Ullerstam, *De Erotiska Minoriteterna*, 122.
23. See, e.g., Ingegärd Waaranperä, "Porr och Prostitution Splittrar Kvinnor och Män," in Fredelius, *Ett Onödigt Ont*, 120–25.
24. Jan Myrdal, "Tal Hållet vid Opinionsmöte 25/II 1978," in *Ta Strid för Kärleken—Kamp mot Porr och Prostitution: En Antologi Utgiven av Aktionen Kamp mot Porr och Prostitution*, ed. Jeanette Gentile (Stockholm: Ordfront, 1978); Margareta Garpe

- and Suzanne Osten, "Förbjud Prostitutionen-Kriminalisera Kunden," in Fredelius, *Ett Onödigt Ont*, 123–27.
25. See Britt-Inger Lind and Torsten Fredriksson, *Kärlek för Pengar? En Bok om Prostitutionsprojektet i Malmö, 1976–80* (Stockholm: Ordfront, 1980), 154–68.
  26. This report was written by members of a government-appointed committee on prostitution who left the committee prior to the report's publication because of a disagreement with the committee's chair, a member of the conservative party (*moderat*). Subsequently, these nine committee members published their own text as a kind of antireport (Arne Borg et al., *Prostitution: Beskrivning, Analys, Förslag till Åtgärder* [Stockholm: Liber, 1981]). According to one member of the committee whose name appears in neither the report nor the antireport, the conflict between the chair and the committee members centered on differences in how prostitution was viewed: "In the contacts that the committee had with prostitutes, who were all of the professional type who emphatically defended what they did, the chair was the one who was most willing to listen to the arguments presented by the prostitutes. When we discussed these contacts in the committee, it emerged clearly that [the chair] saw them as individuals who had made a free choice to prostitute themselves. . . . That she herself personally did not agree with what they did was of lesser importance. . . . Among the other committee members, the views expressed by the prostitutes met with little comprehension" (Leif G. W. Persson, *Horor, Hallickar och Torskar: En Bok om Prostitutionen i Sverige* [Stockholm: PA Norstedt och Söners Förlag, 1981], 216).
  27. The language with which sex workers' nuanced understandings of clients are dismissed is frequently patronizing. In a 1995 government-sponsored report on prostitution, for example, it is asserted that "prostituted women's descriptions of the men . . . are blurred and diffuse. The men are described as unconfident and as confident, as pathetic and as manly, as dominant and as passive. They are described as for the most part normal and pleasant, although there are clients who sometimes subject the women to violent abuse or rape" (*Betänkandet av 1993-års Prostitutionsutredning, SOU:15* [Stockholm: Socialstyrelsen, 1995], 112).
  28. Borg et al., *Prostitution*, 320.
  29. *Ibid.*, 282.
  30. *Ibid.*, 337.
  31. Månsson and Linders, *Sexualitet Utan Ansikte*.
  32. The professor of social work is Sven-Axel Månsson, who wrote, in the study with which I began this essay, that one in eight Swedish men had purchased sex. Månsson also coauthored the pamphlet *Brothel Europe*, which appeared during the Swedish referendum on EU membership in 1992. The pamphlet argued that a strong reason for Sweden not to join the European Union was that most European countries "actively encouraged" organized trafficking in sex (Sven-Axel Månsson and Maria Backman, *Bordell Europa: Nej Till EGs Skriftserie 3* [Göteborg: Nej Till EG, 1992], 15). I discuss this pamphlet in detail in Kulick, *Sex in the New Europe*. Månsson, who

- has written about prostitution since the 1970s, continues to be one of the Swedish government's most relied-on experts on the topic.
33. Erik Centerwall, Gunnar Smoliansky, and Ingrid Strömdahl, *Mansbilder: Om en Splittrad Verklighet* (Stockholm: Liber, 1978), 3, quoted in Månsson and Linders, *Sexualitet Utan Ansikte*, 27; italics Månsson and Linders's.
  34. *Ibid.*, 66–68, 91.
  35. Sandell et al., *Könsköparna*, 89. All the authors worked in a government-funded unit called Prostitutionsgruppen i Göteborg, one of three such units in Sweden that offer support services to sex workers and whose goal is to eradicate prostitution. See [www.prostitutionsradgivning.com/emotion/vadarprost.asp](http://www.prostitutionsradgivning.com/emotion/vadarprost.asp).
  36. This view, in some sense, is the opposite of the view of clients that had dominated Swedish social discourse a century earlier. Yvonne Svanström notes that during the 1800s ideas of respectability restricted men's access to marriageable women of their own class. However, men were assumed to need heterosexual outlets; hence prostitution was believed to serve an important social function. Whereas now the idea increasingly is that it is sick men who seek out prostitutes, in nineteenth-century Sweden the idea was that healthy men could become sick if they did not go to prostitutes ("En Självklar Efterfrågan? Om Torskar och Sexköpare Under Hundra År," in *Än Män Då? Kön och Feminism i Sverige under 150 år*, ed. Yvonne Svanström and Kjell Östberg [Stockholm: Atlas, 2004], 213–39).
  37. Sandell et al., *Könsköparna*, 266, 267.
  38. See "Därför Köper Män Sex," *Expressen*, *Exxet Söndagstidning*, August 11, 1996; "Därför Köper Jag Sex," *Arbetaren*, no. 21 (1998): 6–11; "Kränkta Pojkar Söker Tröst i Sex," *Dagens Nyheter*, October 5, 1998; "Sexmissbrukande Män Får Hjälp," *Dagens Nyheter*, October 3, 2003; and "Att Köpa Sex Kan Vara Rop på Hjälp," *Dagens Nyheter*, October 28, 2003.
  39. "Att Köpa Sex Kan Vara Rop på Hjälp," *Dagens Nyheter*, October 2003.
  40. Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 43.
  41. See Janice M. Irvine, "Regulated Passions: The Invention of Inhibited Sexual Desire and Sex Addiction," *Social Text*, no. 37 (1993): 203–26.
  42. See the article "Men, Power, and Contempt," published in Sweden's largest newspaper, *Expressen*, and coauthored by the minister for gender equality at that time, Margareta Winberg, and antiprostitution activist Louise Eek. "In a society with prostitution," they state, "all women suffer from the view that women can be bought. Between the man who buys and the woman who is bought [not 'the woman who sells'; note the passive form] there is a relation of subordination and domination that cannot be ignored. Every 'purchase' reproduces this power structure and in that way legitimates the general patriarchal structures in society" ("Männen, Makten och Människoföraktet").
  43. Eva Basch-Kåhre, "Sex Utan Kärlek Ser Jag Som en Allvarlig Psykisk Skada," *Ottar*, no. 1 (1992): 32, 33, quoted in Sandell et al., *Könsköparna*, 164.

44. Preben Hertoft, *Klinisk Sexologi* (Stockholm: Natur och Kultur, 1977), quoted in Sandell et al., *Könsköparna*, 164.
45. For public statements by the minister for gender equality see Winberg and Eek, “Männen, Makten och Människoföraktet.” For letters to the editor see *Dagens Nyheter*, July 23, 25, and 29 and August 3, 5, and 7, 2003. A small storm erupted in that paper after a male reader asserted that the law prohibiting the purchase of sexual services had adverse consequences for elderly, handicapped, or unattractive men because it limited their access to sexual relief, thereby increasing—the man writes that he heard this on the radio—the risk for prostate cancer. In the ensuing letters, other readers thoroughly ridiculed this view (with one exception; see *Dagens Nyheter*, August 3, 2003), chastised the man, and told him to seek psychological help. A cartoon that clearly referenced the original letter was published on August 8, 2003. It depicted a fat, drooling, bespeckled, dirty man who had urinated all over himself proclaiming, “I hold that it is my *right* to continue buying sex!” For a typical example of a discussion with teenagers see Veronica Hedlund, “Tänk Själv!” in *Vad Har Mitt Liv med Lilja Att Göra?* ed. Ola Florin et al. (Stockholm: Svenska Filminstitutet, 2004), a government-subsidized book devoted to *Lilja 4-ever* (2002), Lucas Moodysson’s unrelentingly bleak feature film about a young Russian girl abandoned by her mother, compelled to prostitution, and trafficked to Sweden. The film ends with Lilja committing suicide by jumping off a bridge. *Lilja 4-ever* received huge publicity in Sweden and is widely promoted by Swedish officials. Government representatives regularly screen it at international conferences on prostitution, and the Swedish Film Institute received 1.5 million kronor (US\$200,000) from the government to encourage high school students and members of the military to see the film at reduced prices. Hedlund, a journalist, interviewed eleven seventeen-year-old boys who had just watched the film, and told them: “One reason that I think prostitution is something that we should do everything to prevent is that it promotes a kind of motor sexuality [*motorsexualitet*—an odd neologism that is equally strange in Swedish] that really isn’t a sexuality but that is a kind of lack of genuine sexuality [*riktig sexualitet*]. As long as there are opportunities to buy sex, there isn’t a need to develop a mature sexuality” (107). *Vad Har Mitt Liv med Lilja Att Göra?* also contains several chapters on prostitutes’ clients that portrays them as fundamentally disturbed.
46. “Ulvslog Vill Ha Kabel-tv Helt Utan Porr,” *Dagens Nyheter*, February 8, 2002; Kulturminister Marita Ulvskog, Sveriges Riksdag Snabbprotokoll 1999/2000:72, February 24, 2000, Anförande 2.
47. Tanya Tydén, “Kvinnliga Studenter och Sex” (Institutionen för Folkhälso och Vårdnadsvetenskap, Uppsala University, 1998); *Ekot*, October 28, 1998; Barbro Johansson (member of Parliament), Riksdagens Snabbprotokoll 1998/99:76, March 26, 1999, Anförande 36.
48. Eva Hagström, “Förbjud Samlag på Löpande Band,” *Dagens Nyheter*, September 9, 1997.

49. See Carin Holmberg, *Det Kallas Kärlek: En Socialpsykologisk Studie om Kvinnors Underordning och Mäns Överordning Bland Unga Jämställda Par* (Stockholm: Alfa-beta, 1993).
50. The vote was 56.1 percent against, 41.8 percent for.
51. "Liberal Syn på Prostitution Breder Ut Sig," *Dagens Nyheter*, May 28, 1994; Månsson and Backman, *Bordell Europa*, 15. These texts are discussed in detail in Kulick, *Sex in the New Europe*.
52. The vote was 52.2 percent yes, 46.9 percent no.
53. See "Bakslag för Kampen mot Prostitution," *Dagens Nyheter*, March 17, 2004; "Genombrott i Porrkamp," *Dagens Nyheter*, April 8, 2004; "Svensk Sexrapport Ströks från Dagordningen," *Dagens Nyheter*, April 21, 2004; "Sahlin Besviken över Sexbeslut i EU," *Dagens Nyheter*, April 22, 2004; and "Mot Sexhandel och Påvemakt," *Dagens Nyheter*, June 5, 2004.
54. "Sexslavhandel Viktigaste EU-frågan," *Dagens Nyheter*, June 11, 2004.
55. "Det Är För Mycket Sex i Europa," *Dagens Nyheter*, April 3, 2004. The EU parliamentarian who said this was Olle Schmidt, from the Swedish Liberal Party.
56. The majority of the young men to whom this label is applied are not themselves immigrants but are the children of immigrants. Most of them have been born and raised in Sweden. See Anna Bredström, "Maskulinitet och Kamp om Nationella Arenor: Reflektioner Kring Bilden av 'Invandrarkillar' i Svensk Media," in *Maktens (O)lika Förklådnader: Kön, Klass och Etnicitet i det Postkoloniala Sverige*, ed. Paulina de los Reyes, Irene Molina, and Diana Mulinari (Stockholm: Atlas, 2002), 182–26.
57. Jan Guillou, "Medierna Förfalskar Verkligheten," *Journalisten*, February 3, 2004, [www.journalisten.nu/kronika.asp?Article\\_Id=6451](http://www.journalisten.nu/kronika.asp?Article_Id=6451).
58. Bredström, "Maskulinitet och Kamp," 197.
59. Mona Sahlin, comments transcribed by author from Web recording of "Hearing om Sexualiseringen av det Offentliga Rummet," May 12, 2004, [www.regeringen.se/sb/d/3709/a/23191](http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/3709/a/23191). The full quote is as follows: "What is the public domain? You [the previous speaker] made it sound as though everything one does in one's own home by definition isn't part of the public domain. That's *not at all* my view. Internet, TV, computer games, music videos—whether you watch these at home or somewhere that we call the public domain, that is part of the debate we are having here. That's how I, at any rate, define the public domain" (Vad är det offentliga rummet? På dig lät det som att allt det man gör hemma per definition inte skulle vara en del av det offentliga rummet. Så har jag *alls* inte tänkt. Internet, TV, dataspel, musikvideos, oavsett om du tittar på de hemma eller någonstans som vi kallar för ett offentligt rum, så är ju detta en del av den debatten som vi har nu. Så definierar jag i alla fall det offentliga rummet).
60. Winberg and Eek, "Männen, Makten och Människoföraktet."
61. Quoted in *Dagens Nyheter*, May 8, 2001, in a discussion of honor killings. Cited in Bredström, "Maskulinitet och Kamp," 182.

62. See the discussion of these campaigns in Svanström, “En Självklar Efterfrågan?” 216–17; and Maud Eduards, *Förbjuden Handling: Om Kvinnors Organisering och Feministisk Teori* (Stockholm: Liber, 2002), 108–11.
63. This speech can be accessed at [www.helgo.net/enar/politik/talibantalet.html](http://www.helgo.net/enar/politik/talibantalet.html).
64. Rabo, “Free to Make the Right Choice?” 115.
65. I do not focus on Swedish attitudes to sex workers in this essay, but I do in other work, e.g., Kulick, “Sex in the New Europe”; and Kulick, “La penalización de los clientes y ‘la política del ahjjj’ en Suecia,” in *Trabajadoras del Sexo: Derechos, migraciones y tráfico en el siglo XXI*, ed. Raquel Osborne (Madrid: Bellaterra, 2004), 223–36.