Victim-offender overlap: the sex worker's case

Abstract:	In recent years, an increasing amount of research has focused on the study of the association between victimisation and offending, or victim-offender overlap. Although research in this area has repeatedly demonstrated the stability and relevance of the concept of overlap in the study of the life paths of individuals who are victims or perpetrators of a crime, it remains an under-exploited field. Based on an analysis of police data from the city of Liege (Belgium), the purpose of this article is to provide empirical evidence to demonstrate the relevance of this approach in the study of a particular population: women involved in prostitution (N=297). Results of this study underline the presence of overlap in this population and highlight the distinction existing according to the type of prostitution envisaged (in or outdoor). In addition, they point to the importance of considering the contexts in which the reported events occur (in the family sphere, during the activity or outside these contexts). These elements attempt to provide insights for developing a more comprehensive approach to the phenomenon of prostitution, but also the need to further develop research and theoretical knowledge around the concept of victim-offender overlap.

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Introduction

The relationship between victimisation and delinquency trajectories has for many years been the subject of considerable interest in the field of criminology (Jennings et al., 2012). The study of this relationship, which transcends traditional research and theories focusing on victim or perpetrator trajectories, has largely highlighted the superimposition of these classic figures of crime (Lauritsen and Laub, 2007). Known as the concept of "victim-offender overlap", this understanding of crime, and more particularly of the perpetrator-victim dyad, questions the categorisation of individuals in one box or another, by focusing on persons who have both experienced victimisation and been the perpetrator of delinquency or crime. Moreover, the concept of overlap also raises the question of the links between being a victim of a certain type of crime and a perpetrator of another type of crime. It should be noted from the outset that the aim here is not to renew theories linked to the notion of the "guilty victim", but to consider the juxtaposition of figures and thus the *overlapping pathways* of some individuals.

Although research in this area has repeatedly demonstrated the stability and relevance of the concept of overlap in the study of the life paths of individuals who are victims or perpetrators of a crime, it remains an under-exploited field. The concomitance of victimisation and delinquency experiences within the life course, while considered the most consistent association in the explanation of crime, has not aroused sustained interest within the scientific community. In contrast to research using approaches focusing on *either* the study of victims *or* perpetrators, explanatory theories on these intertwined or even overlapping pathways remain rare (Jennings et al., 2012) and the attention given to the correlation between victimisation and delinquency is relatively recent (Cops and Pleysier, 2016). As a result, the knowledge surrounding this concept continues to be filled with many gaps, both in terms of its theoretical developments and the empirical observations required to validate them.

While a growing number of studies focus on this juxtaposition of trajectories within populations neglected by this field of research - for example, youth and adolescents (Cops and Pleysier, 2016), women remain, for their part, relatively absent. The under-representation of this population can be partly explained by the type of victimisation

and/or delinquency considered. In this sense, it is possible to observe that phenomena studied in this field are mainly related to juvenile delinquency, homicides, or more recently domestic violence (Muftić and Deljkić, 2012).

Based on these considerations, this contribution aims to explore the victim-offender overlap with a specific population, i.e women who are engaged in sex work. This choice is driven by the double emblematic (and stigmatizing) figure of *victim* and *deviant* (or even *delinquent[1]*) attributed to the person involved in prostitution. More precisely, the objective is to attempt a double overcoming - conjectural and conceptual - of this antagonistic figure. First, in extending the apprehension of these two opposing attributes by not stopping at the practice of prostitution (a conjectural element regarding the life course of the individual), but, on the contrary, by embracing the whole of the singular life course of prostitutes. Then, in questioning this binary categorisation of victim and offender, by exploring the notion of *victim-offender overlap*, which describes the *juxtaposition* of experiences of victimisation and delinquency in the life of a single individual.

The proposed angle of analysis also attempts to echo two constant demands of the actors in connection with the sex work phenomenon: the refusal of individuals engaged in prostitution to be inherently categorised as victims, on the one hand, and the consideration of the various forms of prostitution as distinct realities, on the other.

Some presuppositions and observations regarding the dual role of victim and offender attributed to prostitutes

Since the establishment of Belgium (1831), those engaging in prostitution have been assimilated to deviance (sanitary and moral). But the turn of the 20th century assigns them a new attribute: that of victim. As Chaumont (2008) reminds us, under the influence of the Anglo-Saxon feminist movement led by Butler – and then supported by the *Société*

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[1] By "delinquency" we mean the commission of offenses. The use of this terminology is intended to be generic and applies to any behaviour sanctioned by a legal norm.

publique de moralité belge – the link between prostitution and human trafficking became consubstantial[2].

While the attribute of the victim became inherent, from a legal and political point of view, to any individual engaging in prostitution (because of the exploitation to which he or she is subjected), scientific research has been slow to take an interest in the empirical objectification of this qualification. This gap was partially filled at the instigation of a radical feminist movement in the scientific sphere. Study results began to pile up, revealing the physical or sexual violence to which most women involved in prostitution are subjected. These women, characterised by multiple victimisation experiences, are referred to as "survivors" (Farley et al., 2003).

Despite the partial or total questioning of the conclusions drawn from this field of research due to its ideological orientation and the biases linked to the use of a specific, non-representative, population ("survivors"), to particular forms of prostitution (mostly street prostitution), and to unclear methodological and analytical frameworks (Weitzer, 2005), the presence among prostitutes of victimisation events in their life courses (Pasko and Chesney-Lind, 2016 ; Wilson and Butler, 2014) or during their activity (Connelly et al., 2021; Finn et al 2015; O'Doherty, 2011) remains a widely identified and only partly demonstrated element.

Paradoxically, while some studies have looked at the pathways of sex workers in terms of their experiences of victimisation, very few have investigated their potential experiences of delinquency *apart from engaging in prostitution* [3]. Moreover, the study of delinquent behaviours within this population is generally limited to drug-related crime. While the use, purchase, or sale of drugs, as well as violent conflicts linked to these behaviours, have been pointed out as constituting an (even) greater risk of victimisation for the person involved in prostitution (Katsulis et al., 2015), Finn et al. (2015) observe that drugs are also the primary reason for the arrest of prostitutes.

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[2] This link was given legal form when Belgium ratified the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others in 1965.

[3] To our knowledge, only the study by Finn et al. (2015) addresses this directly by investigating the issue of *victim-offender overlap* among people engaged in prostitution.

Others have suggested a more structural association between delinquency and prostitution. Gilfus et al. (1992), for example, examined the life course of female offenders. Most women from their study reported having been involved in prostitution. What these women had in common was a childhood marked by violence, and their entry into delinquency (mainly prostitution, thefts, drug offenses) was interpreted as a survival strategy. This understanding of delinquency suggests that delinquent behaviour should be seen in a linear perspective as a *consequence* of multiple victimisations.

This last point can be associated with theoretical models of criminal aetiology that are based on a causal relationship between victimisation and offending. These models identify the experience of victimisation as a major catalyst for entry into a criminal trajectory (Gunnison et McCartan, 2005). The development of this kind of relationship can be found in more details in feminist studies using the *Feminist Pathways Approach*, which proposes a dynamic causal model of "something A leads to something B" to explain entry into a criminal pathway (Belknap et al., 2007).

As an example, Belknap et al. (1997) present the case of an incest victim who runs away, finds herself without resources to survive, ends up in prostitution, uses drugs, starts dealing, etc. This sequence has been demonstrated many times (Chesney-Lind and Pasko, 2013). Among the forms of victimisation identified as triggers for these "deviant" trajectories, physical or sexual violence during childhood are substantial risk factors (Gunnison and McCartan, 2005). This association, in its purest form, actually reflects the "abuser-abused" perspective, which postulates that the sexually abused individual is more likely to become a sexual offender/deviant, particularly for females, by engaging in prostitution (Freund and Kuban, 1994). However, the causal association between these two types of experiences obscures the complexity of their relationship and their potential coexistence in an individual's life course.

Objectives and methods

Considering these elements, the present contribution aims to reduce the blind spot left in this field of research. The objective is therefore to analyse both the victimisation and delinquency (outside of prostitution[4]) of people involved in prostitution in the City of

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[4] Although prostitution is not in itself illegal, the fact that most of the means by which it is practiced may lead to a person being punished for this activity (e.g. soliciting, keeping a brothel, advertising, etc.).

Liege. Three questions were considered: First, to what extent do the women engaged in prostitution fit into the traditional roles of victim and offender? Second, does the location of prostitution (in- or outdoor) affect the roles of victim and delinquent? Third, to what extent are all these facts related to prostitution?

The data used in this study come from databases of two different sections of the Liege police[5]: vice squad and the Zonal Task Force[6,7]. The choice of referring to police data from the city of Liege is explained by several particularities which make it a privileged field of study. Indeed, Liège has the specificity of concentrating one of the most important prostitution activities in the country. Moreover, prostitution there takes several visible forms, exclusively female, namely street prostitution, or indoor prostitution (window prostitution and massage parlours)[8].

In brief, street prostitution is illegal and constitutes an infraction of the penal code (solicitation). However, this is not prosecuted by the public prosecutor's office, which leaves it to the municipal authorities to manage the daily manifestations of this phenomenon[9]. In Liège, street prostitution takes place mainly in one area: the historical centre of the city (the *Cathédrale Nord* district). Although this area is the object of various requalification projects, it is linked to drug related problems (sale and use) and prostitution. It is also a neighbourhood with a large foreign population. In practice, street prostitution is very marginal. Even though it involves more than a hundred women per year[10], the number of women present on the streets, in the same place and at the same time, rarely exceeds 10 people.

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[5] These data were collected and analysed for the first time in 2018 by L. Borleteau as part of her final thesis for a master's degree in Criminology at the Faculty of Law, Political Science and Criminology of the University of Liege. The theoretical framework and the analyses presented in this contribution are the result of the author's own work.

[6] The Zonal Task Force is a section specific to the Liege Police Zone and is a local service specialized in the fight against urban disorders.

[7] The data collected was initially compiled in order to draw up a list of all persons identified as being engaged in prostitution on the territory of Liège following police checks carried out between 1er January 2017 and 31 December 2018.

[8] The rest of the "invisible" prostitution reflects "private" forms of prostitution (apartment, hotel, etc.).

[9] For more details on the Belgian legislation see André (2007).

[10] Census carried out by the non-profit organization "Icar Wallonie", which assists prostitutes and was directed by the author between 2017 and 2020.

Concerning the indoor prostitution, the phenomenon is currently confined to two types of establishments: window prostitution[11] and massage parlours. In 2008, the city of Liège closed all the windows that were based in the *Cathédrale Nord* district (where street prostitution takes place). Window prostitution is exclusively allowed in one street (*Rue Varin*), which is located along the main train station of the city (*Gare des Guillemins*). Their number is now limited to 8 windows. Massage parlours are spread throughout the city (not visible from the street). A municipal regulation lists the authorized premises on its territory (currently 11 establishments)[12].

297 prostitutes, exclusively of the female sex, were identified. These women are recorded in the database only for facts related to their activity of prostitution[13]. From this list, screening was carried out within the database centralizing all the offenses brought to the attention of the police since 1996. The compilation of the results made it possible to identify, for each person in our sample, data on both victimisation and delinquency (excluding offenses relating to solicitation)[14]. All these facts were classified according to 13 categories of victimisation and 17 categories of offenses[15]. Another distinction was made in the data by sorting incidents related to the prostitution activity (e.g. theft from a client, beating by a client, sexual exploitation, etc.) or not. A further precision was also made to identify facts involving the family sphere (the couple, the ex-companion, the close family, the children).

It should be noted at this point that although these databases make it possible to obtain information that is difficult to access, they are not without limitations: Firstly, *temporal*, since the centralized database only includes events from 1996, whereas some of the people in our sample may have been involved in earlier events; secondly, *methodological*, since it concerns acts reported to the police (although we know how important the dark

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[11] In this kind of erotic business, the prostitute is inside, behind a (large) window, usually sitting on a stool in underwear. She is therefore visible from the sidewalk. In this kind of place, clients can also consume champagne, which is why they are called "*Bar à champagne*" in french.

[12] For more details on the evolution of prostitution in Liège, see André (2020).

[13] Women in the database were still involved in a prostitution activity between 2016 et 2018.

[14] As a reminder, offenses related to solicitation are exclusively reserved for street prostitution. Although it is an infraction of the penal code, it is not prosecuted by the authorities. Nevertheless, the police sometimes use this offense to "clean" the streets of prostitutes (by locking them up in a cell).

[15] For more details see Table 2.

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figure can be[16]) and only in the Liège police zone (thus not taking into account acts detected on the whole national territory or abroad); and finally, *conceptual*, since it concerns acts for which the persons were identified as victims or perpetrators, without necessarily having been convicted.

Results

The average age of the women in our sample (N=297) was 36.4 years (S.D.= 8.58; min = 20; max = 65)[17],[18]. Most of them were of Belgian origin[19] (59.9%) and European origin (24.9%).

As the first table shows, there is an important difference in terms of nationality between women who work indoors and those who prostitute on the street. The people who work on the street in Liege have a very specific profile. They are mainly Belgian women, often from Liège, who have drug addiction and homelessness problems. They do not practice prostitution as a professional activity but as a means of survival, day by day. The women who work indoors do so as their main professional activity. They generally do not have any problems with drug addiction or homelessness. They are socially integrated. For them, prostitution is a "business". Among these women, a large number comes from Eastern Europe (Albania, Romania, Bulgaria, etc.). They stay in Belgium for several years, sometimes settling there or returning to their country. They illustrate what some call "sexual migration". Namely, they leave their country deliberately and "consciously" to engage in prostitution in Western Europe. It remains nevertheless extremely difficult to distinguish this category of women from those who are victims of sexual exploitation (André, 2020).

Among the population studied, 63.3% were identified as victims of at least one incident and 69% as suspected perpetrators. However, these percentages are strongly related to the group of prostitutes considered (*in - or outdoor*). Indeed, among street prostitutes, 80.4%

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[16] Police data make up what is called "apparent crime" (offenses known but not necessarily prosecuted), which does not coincide with "actual crime" (all offenses committed). The difference between the two is the dark figure of crime or unrecorded crimes.

[17] The average age is calculated on the basis of the year of birth of the reported sex workers.

[18] The absence of minors in the database is due to the fact that teenage girls are automatically reported as "victim of sexual exploitation", not as "prostitutes". Since minors' cases are registered in other databases.

[19] Belgian origin includes both people born in Belgium and those who have obtained Belgian nationality.

were victims (compared to 54.2% among indoor prostitutes) and 86.0% were at least once perpetrators of an offense (compared to 59.5% among indoor prostitutes).

The prevalence of persons corresponding to the "*exclusive victimisation*" category is 10.4%. Conversely, 15.8% of the sample was identified as belonging to the "*exclusive delinquency*" group. Thus, only one quarter (26.2%) of the individuals in the sample corresponds to the binary categorisation of victim *or* offender, which therefore fails to capture the situation of nearly three out of four individuals. People with the status of both alleged victim and alleged offender ("*overlap")* represent more than half of our sample (53.2%), while 20.5% of the individuals do not correspond to either of these categories, which seems to indicate that one individual out of five has never been recorded as a victim or offender for acts that led to police intervention[20].

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[20] These women are recorded in the database only for facts related to their activity of prostitution.

Table 1. Description of the sample by type of prostitution activity (N=297)

	Total Sample	Indoor	Outdoor
Sample			
Population	100%	64%	36%
	(297)	(190)	(107)
Nationality			
Belgium	59.9%	54.2%	70.1%
	(178)	(103)	(75)
European Union	24.9%	26.3%	22.5%
	(74)	(50)	(24)
Non-EU country	12.8%	17.9%	3.7%
	(38)	(34)	(4)
Indetermined	2.4%	1.6%	3.7%
	(7)	(3)	(4)
Age	*M = 36.4 years*	*M = 35.7 years*	*M = 37.8 years*
18 to 25 years	9.1%	11.1%	5.6%
	(27)	(21)	(6)
26 to 35 years	40.7%	44.7%	33.7%
	(121)	(85)	(36)
36 to 45 years	34%	30.5%	40.2%
	(101)	(58)	(43)
46 to 55 years	13.5%	12.1%	15.9%
	(40)	(23)	(17)
Over 55 years	2.4%	1.6%	3.7%
	(7)	(3)	(4)
Indetermined	0.3%	0%	0.9%
	(1)	(0)	(1)
Category « victim/offender »			
Exclusive victim	10.4%	14.7%	2.8%
	(31)	(28)	(3)
Exclusive offender	15.8%	20.0%	8.4%
	(47)	(38)	(9)
Overlap	53.2%	39.5%	77.6%
	(158)	(75)	(83)
None	20.5%	25.8%	11.2%
	(61)	(49)	(12)

* p < .05 ; ** p < .01 ; *** p < .001

If we focus first on the distribution of our two populations (*indoor/outdoor*), according to the types of criminal acts recorded, the first observation is obvious: persons in an *overlap* situation represent 77.6 % of the *outdoor* group and 39.5 % of the *indoor group*. Conversely, the proportion of people who are not involved in any police intervention is one woman in ten in the *outdoor* group, compared to one woman in four in the *indoor* group.

Furthermore, regarding *offenses*, almost half of the 311 offenses related to the 59.5% of women working *indoors* (exclusive offenders and *overlap*) are related to administrative offenses or public disorders (26.0% and 17.7% respectively). Administrative offenses are mainly related to the fact of not being recorded in the population register or to being in illegal stay. Public disorder is mainly related to illegal dumping.

Of the 1,896 incidents linked to the 86% of the *outdoor* population presumed to be involved in offenses, more than half are linked to theft and drug offenses (28.8% and 23.4% respectively). The data collected show that 61.7% of the women in the *outdoor* group were accused of theft or extortion during the study period (compared to 11.6% of the women working *indoors*). The difference between the two groups is even more remarkable with regard to drug offenses, as these are attributed to 63.6% of the women working on the street, compared to 4.2% of those working *indoors*.

Among the other types of offenses listed, it is also possible to draw attention to the possession of weapons. Although this phenomenon is more marginal, it should be noted that it is almost exclusively linked to street prostitution. In fact, 42 women were charged for carrying illegal weapons, 41 of whom were street prostitutes. Almost two out of five of the streetwalkers have been registered at least once for this type of crime.

By analysing these results using the non-parametric Mann-Whitney test[21], it can be seen that the observable differences between the two groups (*indoor/outdoor*), depending on the type of offense considered, are statistically significant and associated with a large effect size, in the case of theft (r_b =-0.55 ; p<0.001), drugs (r_b =-0.54 ; p<0.001), weapons

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[21] This test compares the data for each individual in the *indoor* group with the data for the *outdoor* group and determines whether there is a statistically significant difference between the number of recorded offenses according to the group to which they belong.

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(r_b =-0.39 ; p<0.001) and fraud (r_b =-0.36 ; p<0.001)[22]. An analysis of the observable differences between these two populations for all the offenses recorded confirms these results, with a significant difference and a very large effect of the type of prostitution practiced on the number of offenses associated with the individuals. In this respect, persons practicing *outdoor prostitution* are presumed to have committed a significantly higher number of offenses (U = 16,981; p<0.001; r_b = 0.67)[23].

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[22] The results show significant differences between the two groups for all types of incidents (except for those related to human trafficking) but with a smaller effect size (r_b<0.35*).*

[23] In more detail, the Mann-Whitney U test shows that a pairwise comparison of the number of offenses associated with each individual in the *outdoor* group (n $_1$= 107) with each individual in the *indoor group* (n$_2$= 190) reveals that out of 20,330 possible combinations (n_1 x n_2), individuals in the *outdoor group* have a higher number of offenses associated with them in 83.5% of cases (U = 16,981; p<0.001; r_b = 0.67).

Table 2. Reporting crime type according to the type of prostitution activity (in- or outdoor)

DELIQUENCY	TOTAL SAMPLE	INDOOR GROUP	OUTDOOR GROUP	U Mann Whitney	Effect size (rb)
Theft and extorsion	26,1% (575)	9.3% (29)	28.8% (546)	<0.001	0.545
Degradation	2,9% (64)	4.2% (13)	2.7% (51)	<0.001	0.200
Fraud	6,8% (150)	10.0% (31)	6.3% (119)	<0.001	0.364
Assault and battery	8,1% (178)	11.3% (35)	7.5% (143)	<0.001	0.337
Human trafficking	0,3% (7)	1.6% (5)	0.1% (2)	n.s	-
Moral integrity					
• _Threat and harassment_	2,2% (49)	5.1% (16)	1.7% (33)	<0.01	0.103
• _Defamation, calumny_	0,5% (12)	1.0% (3)	0.5% (9)	<0.01	0.059
Family	2,8% (62)	6.1% (19)	2.3% (43)	<0.001	0.181
Administrative	8,5% (187)	26.0% (81)	5.6% (106)	<0.001	0.267
• _Illegal stay_	2,3% (50)	7.1% (22)	1.5% (28)		
• _Population register_	6,0% (133)	17.7% (55)	4.1% (78)		
• _Heath_	0,2% (4)	1.3% (4)	0.0% (0)		
Public disorder	11,9% (263)	17.7% (55)	11.0% (208)	<0.001	0.302
• Illegal dumping	_3,9% (87)_	10.6% (33)	2.8% (54)		
• Alcohol	_6,3% (138)_	4.5% (14)	6.5% (124)		
• Rebellion	_1,7% (38)_	2.6% (8)	1.6% (30)		
Weapons	6,2% (137)	0.3% (1)	7.2% (136)	<0.001	0.388
Drug	20,6% (455)	3.5% (11)	23.4% (444)	<0.001	0.544
OTHER	3,1% (68)	3.9% (12)	3.0% (56)	-	-
TOTAL	100% (2207)	100% (311)	100% (1896)	<0.001	0.668

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For each of the groups, most of the *victimisation* events relate to theft or physical harm, although the proportions are reversed between these two groups. Thus, of the 332 cases of victimisation related to the 54.2% of *indoor* workers who were identified as victims (*exclusive victims* and *overlap*), 34% were thefts and extorsions and 22.3% were physical attacks. Of the 610 events related to the 80.4% identified as victims in the *outdoor population* this time, theft and extortion accounted for 27% of all victimisation and physical harm for 39.5%. Although these results suggest a certain similarity in the distribution of offenses, there is a significant difference in the actual numbers between the two groups for these types of offenses, indicating that *outdoor* workers are victims of a significantly greater number of these types of offenses[24].

By focusing more specifically on these two types of acts, it is also possible to highlight two very interesting things about the context in which they occur. First, in the case of theft and extortion, it appears that one out of every ten theft incidents in the *indoor* population is committed by a client. On the other hand, only three incidents of physical assault were linked to prostitution. In each case, it was an assault and battery by a client. Furthermore, it is possible to note, still for people working *indoor*, that more than 70% of victimisation cases by assault and battery are linked to the domestic environment. This observation, although slightly less pronounced (63.5%), is true for the *outdoor* group. For this group, where physical harm is the most frequent form of victimisation, it is important to note that 10% of these incidents are related to prostitution. The situations encountered here, while they mostly refer to violent clients, can also involve either a pimp or a fight with another sex worker. A total of 114 women in our sample reported having been victims of assault and battery (65.4% of street prostitutes compared to 14.8% of indoor prostitutes). Regarding the different forms of victimisation identified, it is also possible to underline a significant effect of the form of prostitution on the number of attacks on physical integrity. Once again, people working in *outdoor prostitution* are more likely to be victims of such acts (r_b = -0,50; p<0.001)[25].

The fact that *outdoor* workers are victims of a significantly greater number of offenses can be generalized to the difference observed for all victimisation events (W=5258; r_b =-0.48; p<0.001). It should be noted that among the *indoor* population, forms of victimisation against the person (relating to physical, moral and sexual integrity and to

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[24] Theft and extorsion (r_b =0.25; p<0.001); Physical attack (r_b =0.50; p<0.001).
[25] Results show significant differences between the two groups for other types of facts (sexual attacks, degradation, human trafficking, moral integrity) but with a smaller effect size (r_b <0.25).

trafficking of human beings) remain significant (48.5% of victimisation incidents), especially in view of the low reporting rate for this type of incident[26,27], although once again, they are even more prevalent among *outdoor prostitutes* (63.6% of recorded victimisation incidents).

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[26] By way of illustration, the Directorate General for Security and Prevention (IBZ) estimates a reporting rate of 10% for sexual violence.

[27] To be considered in light of the scope of the period under analysis.

Table 3. Reporting victimisation according to the type of prostitution activity (in- or outdoor)

VICTIMISATIONS	TOTAL SAMPLE	INDOOR GROUP	OUTDOOR GROUP	Mann-Whitney	Size Effect (rb)
Theft and extorsion	29.5% (278)	34% (113)	27.0% (165)	<0.001	0.246
Degradation	3,9% (37)	4.8% (16)	3.4% (21)	<0.05	0.068
Fraud	3,5% (33)	5.1% (17)	2.6% (16)	n.s.	-
Physical attack	33,4% (315)	22.3% (74)	39.5% (241)	<0.001	0.500
• *Assault and battery*	32,2% (303)	21.7% (72)	37.9% (231)	<0.001	0.491
• *Other*	1,3% (12)	0.6% (2)	1.6% (10)	-	-
Sexual attack	7,9% (74)	5.1% (17)	9.3% (57)	<0.001	0.229
• *Rape*	6,8% (64)	3.3% (11)	8.7% (53)	<0.001	0.242
• *Other*	1,1% (10)	1.8% (6)	0.7% (4)	-	-
Human trafficking and sexual exploitation	4,4% (41)	3.9% (13)	4.6% (28)	<0.001	0.149
• *TEH*	1,5% (14)	2.1% (7)	1.1% (7)	-	-
• *Sexual exploitation*	2,9% (27)	1.8% (6)	3.4% (21)	-	-
MORAL INTEGRITY	12,6% (119)	17.2% (57)	10.2% (62)	0.001	0.151
• *Threat and harassment*	11,9% (112)	15.2% (52)	9.8% (60)		
• *Defamation, calumny*	0,7% (7)	1.5% (5)	0.3% (2)	-	-
Family	3,6% (34)	6.0% (20)	2.3% (14)	n.s.	-
Other	1,2% (11)	1.5% (5)	1.0% (6)	-	-
TOTAL	100% (942)	100% (332)	(610)	<0.001	0.458

If we now consider the context in which the reported incidents occurred, we can observe that 14.3% of the victimisation was related to prostitution and 35% was related to the family sphere. This result was found in both populations in our sample, although the

group of street prostitutes is more affected by family victimisation (36.7% of victimisation) than indoor prostitutes (31.9%). Conversely, the percentage of reported victimisation related to prostitution is slightly higher for indoor prostitutes (15.4%) than for outdoor prostitutes (13.8%). However, there is a notable difference between the two groups in terms of the type of victimisation in the context of prostitution. While the main type of victimisation recorded for both groups concerned human trafficking and sexual exploitation, for the indoor group, the next most common types of victimisations are theft and threats. For the outdoor group, it is rape, assault and battery (Table 4).

More particularly, the case of rapes is very striking, as we know that the reporting rate is extremely low for this kind of victimisation. The data collected show that 41 women reported at least one rape (13.8% of the total population). Three quarters of these women are outdoor prostitutes. Rape concerns nearly 30% of this population. Of the incidents reported (N=53), 34% occurred during their work. This last result tends to underline the notable difference between these two groups in terms of the conditions of their practice.

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Table 4. Reporting victimisation according to the type of prostitution activity (in- or outdoor) and the context of appearance

VICTIMISATIONS	INDOOR GROUP (Total)			OUTDOOR GROUP (Total)		
	Family sphere	Prost. Rel.	Out of prost. &Fam.	Family sphere	Prost. Rel.	Out of prost. &Fam.
Theft and extorsion		34% (113)			27.0% (165)	
	4.4% (5)	10.6% (12)	85.0% (96)	3.6% (6)	6.1% (10)	90.3% (149)
Degradation		4.8% (16)			3.4% (21)	
	31.3% (5)	6.3% (1)	62.5% (10)	23.8% (5)	0.0% (0)	76.2% (16)
Fraud		5.1% (17)			2.6% (16)	
	5.9% (1)	35.3% (6)	58.8% (10)	12.5% (2)	0.0% (0)	87.5% (14)
Physical attack						
• *Assault and battery*		21.7% (72)			37.9% (231)	
	72.2% (52)	2.8% (2)	25.0% (18)	64.9% (150)	7.4% (17)	27.7% (64)
• *Other*		0.6% (2)			1.6% (10)	
Sexual attack						
• *Rape*		3.3% (11)			8.7% (53)	
	27.3% (3)	36.4% (4)	36.4% (4)	9.4% (5)	34.0% (18)	56.6% (30)
• *Other*		1.8% (6)			0.7% (4)	
MORAL INTEGRITY						
• *Threat and harassment*		15.2% (52)			9.8% (60)	
	34.6% (18)	15.4% (8)	50.0% (26)	41.7% (25)	6.7% (4)	51.7% (31)
• *Defamation, calumny*		1.5% (5)			0.3% (2)	
	0.0% (0)	40% (2)	60% (3)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	100% (2)
Human trafficking and sexual exploitation		3.9% (13)			4.6% (28)	
Family		6.0% (20)			2.3% (14)	

Other	1.5% (5)	1.0% (6)
TOTAL	100% (332)	100% (610)

Finally, the data collected reveal an extremely strong significant relationship between victimisation and delinquency (r=0.659; p<0.001.), which indicates a linear relationship for which the more a person is associated with a large number of acts of which he or she is the presumed victim, the more he or she is associated with a large number of acts of which he or she is the presumed perpetrator.

In addition, the effect of socio-demographic variables such as age and nationality, was controlled using a series of partial correlations. The results of these analyses confirm that these two variables have only a limited influence on the observed relationship between the forms of prostitution and the extent of experiences of delinquency ($r_{p(age)}$=0.56; p<0.001; $r_{p(nationality)}$=0.56; p<0.001) and victimisation ($r_{p(age)}$=0.41; p<0.001; $r_{p(nationality)}$=0.39; p<0.001).

As mentioned, the data collected focus on incidents recorded *outside* the scope of prostitution activities. Although soliciting is not an actual offense that is prosecuted, it is nonetheless the subject of reaction by law enforcement. Thus, the police respond to the phenomenon in a repressive manner at various times. The intensity of this type of action can be perceived through the reports drawn up in relation to the solicitation. Between 2001 and 2018, 590 police reports have been addressed to street prostitutes who still work in the neighbourhood[28]. Some of them have been reported more than 30 times.

Discussion and conclusions

These results underline several fundamental elements in the understanding of women engaged in prostitution. Firstly, the analyses carried out demonstrate the inadequacy of the categories traditionally used to characterize individuals (as either victim or

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[28] It is not possible to access the total number of reports for all the prostitutes during this period. The count only concerned the "active" prostitutes between 2017 and 2018.

delinquent). As this contribution attempts to point out, nearly three out of four persons in the sample studied do not correspond to an individual categorisation, but instead have a mixed picture.

As various authors have repeatedly pointed out, traditional theories and empirical research have considered perpetrators and victims as separate groups. However, there is a large body of evidence that demonstrates the coexistence of victimisation and offending events in the trajectory of a single individual, conceptualized as overlap (Sampson and Lauritsen, 1990; 1994; Lauritsen et al., 1991; Lauritsen and Laub, 2007)[29]. Despite this evidence, "the concept of victim-offender overlap has not been directly applied to the study of women involved in the sex industry despite evidence that involvement in sex work increases opportunities for both offending and victimisation" (Finn et al, 2015: 87). Moreover, the distinction between the different forms of prostitution (notably indoor vs. outdoor) has never been, to our knowledge, the subject of a comparative analysis in this field. Indeed, as Oselin noted (2010: 536) "Given that street prostitutes are highly visible to law enforcement, it is not surprising that all the women in this study have been arrested for prostitution at some point throughout their career." However, limited attention has been paid to those involved in other forms of sex work, particularly indoor prostitution. To our knowledge, only the work of the *Urban Justice Center* of New York (Thukral and Ditmore, 2003; Thukral et al. 2005) provides qualitative insights into the experiences of both victimisation and delinquency of this particular group. The present research attempts to demonstrate that it is nevertheless necessary to make a distinction according to the form of prostitution considered.

The case of the street workers regarding their involvement in delinquent activities is consistent with the literature that highlights the prevalence of the association between street prostitution, acquisitive delinquency (theft, extortion, fraud) and drugs (Thukral and Ditmore, 2003). The analysis of the data shows that women working indoors are not only victims but also perpetrators of certain acts. However, they are, in fact, mostly involved in delinquency for minor offenses, related to administrative failures and public disorders. Moreover, the frequency of these offenses is low, since most of them concern only one or two events over the last twenty years, which means that their status as "offenders" is extremely relative, as is the *overlap* observed. One of the hypotheses that

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[29] For a literature review, see also Jennings et al. (2012).

can be put forward in relation to the high rate of administrative offenses, particularly those related to the non-compliance with the rules concerning registration in the foreigners' register or illegal residence, is certainly the exposure of people working in prostitution. Although the "prostitutes' registration" is a non-legal practice, people who work indoors are subject to recurrent police controls. This means that they are more likely to be checked than if they were engaged in any other type of activity. In that sense, they also experience the labelling and stigma - usually attributed to street workers (Sander, 2016)- because of their work.

It is also important to consider the particularities linked to the indoor prostitution sector in terms of both victimisation and delinquency. As the data presented underline, the indoor group is more composed of foreigners but also of people who have acquired the Belgian nationality. As a result, the data collected here are only related to events that took place on the territory of Liège, which means that there is still a significant blind spot regarding the past of these women[30]. This hypothesis should also be considered in relation to the group of girls working on the street, which is composed mainly of Belgians who grew up in the area of Liège.

Although these results must be viewed within their methodological limits, they tend to demonstrate the important distinction that must be made between the paths of persons involved in different forms of prostitution. As many authors and stakeholders have repeatedly argued, the results support the existence of two distinct realities between *indoor* and *outdoor* prostitution, but also the link between *outdoor* prostitution and the juxtaposition of victimisation and delinquency trajectories.

Furthermore, results of this study can be interpreted as empirical support for theoretical developments around the concept of overlap. Indeed, many authors have tried to explain

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[30] Concerning the victimisation of the indoor group, there is another aspect to consider, linked to this socio-demographic component, which is the distrust of foreign prostitutes towards any third party (whether it be the police or aid and care associations). This overall distrust can be explained in part by a culturally biased relationship with law enforcement, but also, in some cases, by the involvement of these foreign women in forced prostitution and threats from a pimp or network.

the occurrence of overlap by relying on a classic theory in criminology: routine activities. From this perspective, authors have argued that the fact that victims and offenders share several demographic and behavioural characteristics can be explained by the lifestyle and routine activities of the individuals. As summarized by Klevens et al. (2002), an individual's occupations, such as going out alone at night, or using substances (alcohol, drugs), may lead them to increase their attractiveness as a target for a motivated offender in the absence of a guardian. One explanation for the similarity in characteristics among victims and offenders, from this standpoint, is the "homogamy principle" whereby people who share characteristics with potential offenders are more likely to interact with them and thus be victimized by them (Cohen et al., 1981, as cited by Klevens, p.207). Another explanation for these similarities between perpetrator and victim is that, in fact, they may relate to one single individual (overlap).

Several findings suggest that being an offender is the most important "lifestyle" risk factor for being a victim. "Participating in criminal or delinquent activities can place individuals at greater risk of victimisation because of the nature of offending behaviour itself, the increased contact with other offenders, the lowered chance of offenders calling the police or being believed if they did, and their tendency to engage in activities that lower their guardianship potential (i.e., drinking and drug use). Criminal and violent behaviours are also associated with a number of activities traditionally included in the routine activities approach, such as time spent away from home or drinking excessively, independent of demographic variables (Osgood, Wilson, O'Malley, Bachman,&Johnston, 1996; Riley, 1987). This would suggest that it is deviance that leads to their choice of activities and places them at higher risk (Klevens et al., 2002: p.207)".

Beyond the debate about the causal relationship between delinquency and victimisation, the argument echoes a set of elements that characterise street prostitution. This kind of prostitution does not generally occur just anywhere but in "arenas of heightened violence" (Weitzer, 1999). The prevalence of the overlap within the street sex workers leads us to question the meaning of this entanglement and, what it reveals about the environment (physical, cultural, and social) in which the persons involved in street prostitution evolve. Questioning this environment in the light of the presence of such a multitude of acts of victimisation and delinquency makes it possible to envisage the violence characteristic of the overall life course of this population.

Meanwhile, the results tend to indicate that a change of workplace, and hence of the type of prostitution, results in a lower prevalence of both victimisation and delinquency. In our view, the differences observed between the indoor and outdoor groups can be explained by factors linked to the environment in which the activity takes place (safer indoors than on the street), but also by individual factors, particularly those linked to the individual's prior life. In this respect, the perspective of routine activities does not explain everything... As our analyses demonstrate a significant portion of victimisation events are not related to the individual's prostitution activity or lifestyle but to his or her direct family environment (father, mother, brother, sister, and companion). Whether it is growing up in a neglectful or abusive family, or later having a negative relationship, understanding the individual's social environment is also critical.

Behind these averages and percentages, it is important to remember that we are dealing with a set of facts that relate to distinct individuals and must also be considered through the uniqueness of their life course. If we consider each case in its proper context, it is possible to perceive the complexity of these paths.

Take Cathy (not her real name), for example, who was 32 years old in 2018. For the past 16 years, she has been the victim of rape by one of her family members, starting when she was still a minor. She later filed a complaint for harassment and threats against her rapist. At the age of 20, she was reported for the first time for street prostitution. The following years were marked by repeated complaints of physical and psychological conjugal violence. 2012. Her father has been accused of exploiting the prostitution of his daughter. Cathy was carrying a weapon at that time. The police intercepted it during a control in the prostitution district. The following year, her companion was arrested for exploitation of prostitution. Cathy has also a child. The father is violent. Since then, Cathy has separated from him. The youth protection service was seized for endangering a minor because of her prostitution activity and Cathy's drug addiction. Cathy has now been arrested three times for possession and sale of drugs.

Anne was 40 years old in 2018. Since she was 18, she has been charged with 51 offenses. The first ones were some minor crimes: threats, fights, drunkenness on the street. But over time, things got worse. At 30 years old, she was charged with armed robbery. She was also caught for selling drugs. However, the thefts did not stop and were committed again and again, several times a year. When Anne was released from jail, she found

herself on the street, begging. She met someone. At the same time, she filed numerous complaints of assault and battery from her companion. Anne has made several suicide attempts along her journey, the fourth one took place in 2018.

These last portraits, far from being exhaustive, allow us to catch a glimpse of the lives of the people who fill this database. Thus, they attempt to highlight the complexity of individuals' lives by translating the statistics to which they refer into a narrative. These narratives also reveal a crucial and (too) often neglected element in the problematization of "prostitution", namely the fact that prostitution does not constitute, for a significant part of the population considered, the major problem. As the juxtaposition of these numbers shows, prostitution is often only one of the symptoms of the global precarity and violence of the life paths of individuals. In this respect, the link we have tried to demonstrate between the frequency of victimisation and the frequency of delinquency is an indicator of the interaction between traditionally opposed trajectories, which in turn reflects the complexity of the life paths of the people studied.

Denying this by resorting exclusively to socially constructed categorisations and the knowledge derived from them is a major obstacle. This obstacle does not only refer to a proper understanding of any "problem" - understood here as a phenomenon identified as a "problem" by decision makers - but also, by *ricochet*, to the creation of solutions that could be provided. As Finn and al. pointed out, this kind of apprehension of women working as prostitutes "has resulted in confusion as to how to respond to such women who present complexities in their victimisation and offending experiences" (Finn and al., 2015 :87). Against this simplifying temptation, it is therefore necessary to question and challenge, again and again, the prejudices and stereotypes that shape even the way we construct our scientific research. This is the only way to restore the consubstantial complexity of the subject studied, which is a prerequisite for any conscious and appropriate political action.

A wider view must also be taken of the more global context in which the prostitution activity takes place, namely that of urban renewal. As with the statistics on solicitation, the street prostitution area is cyclically the target of "crackdowns" by the municipal authorities. This type of repressive actions by the police against street prostitution must be read as a more global strategy of "cleaning up the city centre" (Hubbard et al., 2008; Hubbard and Prior, 2013). It is very clearly an implementation of a "zero tolerance

policy" towards populations that are not desirable for the city (Sanders, 2009; Séchet, 2009). This point is all the more relevant since the prostitution district, as the historic centre of the city, is the subject of a major requalification program. Nevertheless, the arrests made for solicitations (which have no legal consequences) only result in the immediate neutralization, for a few hours, of the women who prostitute themselves on the street.

Finally, it is especially relevant to emphasize that studying prostitution is often a major challenge at the scientific level, since the debates surrounding the phenomenon are so polarizing. They almost systematically test the researcher's position and ethics, as well as the sacrosanct axiological neutrality to which he or she may or may not try to conform. Seeking to describe, understand, explain, and theorise about prostitution requires a particular commitment on the part of the researcher, because of the rigidity of the frameworks of thought which all too often enclose both the phenomenon of prostitution and the individuals involved in it, in a set of presuppositions and stereotypes. This commitment must, therefore, also lead to questioning a series of commonplaces in the field of knowledge associated with the phenomenon under study. The researcher's commitment to a "problematic" population, before being ideological, must therefore consist in understanding and restoring this complexity. The desire to study this type of population must inevitably, and perhaps even more so in the criminology area, lead the researcher to become involved in this complexity.

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