Unexpected Agency: An Analysis of the Individual and Collective Coping Strategies of Children of Sex Workers

Maartje van der Meulen | Universiteit van Amsterdam
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Research Master International Development Studies
Graduate School of Social Sciences
Universiteit van Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Supervisor: dr. Hülya Kosar Altinyelken
Second Reader: dr. Olga Nieuwenhuijs

Maartje van der Meulen 5737281
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Abstract  
(Key Words: Children of Sex Workers, Participation, Coping, Empowerment)  
This thesis looks at the challenges faced by children of sex workers and seeks to explore the dynamics between resources and coping strategies used by this group. Children of sex workers suffer from social exclusion and stigma. They are at high risk for dropping out of school, HIV/AIDS, sexual abuse and are often exposed to drugs and alcohol abuse and violence. There have been very few studies conducted into the agency of these children and their voices have been missing from the academic discussions on youth participation. This thesis aims to address that void, by answering the following research question;  
How do children of sex workers engage in individual and collective coping strategies and how and by what is this supported and challenged?  
The research draws on data from 50 interviews, two group sessions and three participatory sessions collected during a five-month fieldwork period in Kolkata, India. In total 105 people participated in this research, among them 75 children of sex workers. Strategies are analysed using the framework of Redmond (2008) of various forms of agency, namely ‘getting by’, ‘getting back at’, ‘getting out’ and ‘getting organized’.  
Agency is not always empowered and certain individual strategies can form an obstacle towards participation. It was found that when risks and stressors begin to diverge for boys and girls during adolescence, their strategies also diverge. Moreover, the spaces and opportunities for participation of girls in the red light districts diminish more and more once they become adolescents. Youth is however not an island and in order to create spaces and opportunities for meaningful participation, community support as well as intergenerational cooperation is needed. The hierarchy of voice must therefore not only be addressed through the inclusion of children, but also by challenging the views and perception of adults about the value of children’s voices and their competence.
Acknowledgments

It is amazing how sometimes something very small, something you see or hear almost by chance, can have a great impact on your life. For me this happened when Dr. Olga Nieuwenhuijs showed our class a video made by a group of children from the red light districts in Kolkata. It is now almost two years later and a lot has happened in that time, resulting in this thesis that you see before you today. The first person that I would like to thank is therefore Dr. Nieuwenhuijs, for introducing this topic to me but also for her efforts, guidance and supervision in the initial phases of this research. I am very glad that the process has come full circle, with her as my second reader. The job of guiding me through the labyrinth of turning my data into a thesis, was passed on to Dr. Hülya Kosar Altinyelken. I also want to thank her for her patience, support and encouragement when I could no longer imagine that this thesis would ever see the light of day.

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With warm regards,

Maartje van der Meulen
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Acronyms

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<td>Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPM</td>
<td>Communist Party of India</td>
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<td>CRC</td>
<td>Convention on the Rights of the Child</td>
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<td>DMSC</td>
<td>Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee</td>
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<td>HIV</td>
<td>Human Immunodeficiency Virus</td>
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<td>Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act</td>
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<td>STD</td>
<td>Sexually Transmitted Disease</td>
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<td>TMC</td>
<td>All India Trinamool Congress</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Policy concerning children is informed by a particular set of ideas on what constitutes a child and what is considered to be a good childhood. The childhood of children of sex workers is not in line with these ideas in that they are subject to particular risks and stressors unique to their situation as well as those more generally associated with poverty. Moreover, participation of children is gaining currency in development policy and practice since the UN General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1989. This provided policymakers and academics with a new discourse of rights regarding issues concerning children (Balagopalan 2011:291). However, many questions remain regarding the extent of children’s agency and the way in which they can participate.

1.1 Problem Statement

That being said, adults are in a power position over children and there is a tension between the rights of children to have their needs met and their right to participate and express themselves. The ideal is thus that children have the opportunity to participate and that their views and input are respected, but the problem is that their right to express their agency collides with their need to be protected. In order to resolve this tension we must know more about the variations in which agency is expressed. Academics as well as policy makers have by in large concurred that children are participating members of society. This is translated more and more into policy practice, but many questions remain about what children can and cannot do, what is appropriate and what the role of adults should be in all this.

1.2 Relevance and Research Questions

Until now there has hardly been any research into the lives and agency of children of sex workers. The information that is out there emphasizes their vulnerabilities and they are often framed as victims. I argue that the question should not be if children of sex workers have agency, but how this is expressed and how it can be enabled. Children of sex workers can engage in resistance to risks and stressors but this can be hindered by societal constraints, other actors and internalized stigma and there is still much unclear on how and by what the coping of children of sex workers is challenged or supported. The research thus hopes to add to the academic discussion on the agency of children in general and children of sex workers specifically. This is not only academically relevant, but also socially if we are serious about the empowerment of stigmatized and marginalized group. The main research question is therefore as follows:

How do children of sex workers engage in individual and collective coping strategies and how and by what is this challenged and supported?

To answer this question, three sub-questions have been devised:

Which risks and stressors are relevant to the lives of children of sex workers?

What are the individual and collective coping strategies that children of sex workers draw on?

How and by what is coping among children of sex workers challenged and supported?

The research draws on data from 50 interviews, two group sessions and three participatory sessions collected during a five-month fieldwork period in Kolkata, India. In total 105 people participated in this research, among them 75 children of sex workers. Strategies are analysed using the framework of Redmond (2008) of various forms of agency, namely ‘getting by’, ‘getting back at’, ‘getting out’ and ‘getting organized’.

1.3 Background of the Research

Coming into this research I had some preconceived notions of sex work, the agency of sex workers and the agency of children in general. This led me in part to seek out Kolkata as a research site and probably also influenced my research in other ways, therefore I feel it prudent to be forward about these notions. Whenever you enter a red light area you cannot help but begin to form opinions and try and make sense of what is in front of you. It does not matter if it is the touristy red light district of Amsterdam or the infamous squalor of Sonagachi, the reality that you see forces you to confront your ideas on morality and sexuality. What do you think when you see women lined up beside the road selling their bodies? What do you feel when you see children playing in what you know to be a brothel? And what do you make of the cement cells in which much of the lives of the sex workers and children of Kalighat and Khidderpur take place? The conclusions that flow from this abrupt confrontation might lead you to hold on strongly to previous convictions, change them completely or leave you bewildered. This confrontation is not a singular event and every time I entered into the various red light districts of Kolkata I felt its impact.

I had decided early on to keep an open mind to all that I observed and experienced and to everyone that I encoun-
tered. To have an open mind does not however mean that you are neutral. One idea was particularly important in this regard and that is that I did not adhere to the notion that sex workers are victims or fallen women. Sex workers have agency and use this in various ways. One of those ways is the choice to start doing sex work. Yes, this choice is often made in a particular context, one in which perhaps not many options are available, but this makes it no less a choice. During my research, I worked with the sex workers collective Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee and the collective of children of sex workers, Amra Padatik. Both concur that sex work is work. By in large I agree in that the sex workers and their choices should be respected, that their rights should be recognized. However I do not think that sex work is the same as all other work. There are probably not many professions that are so stigmatised throughout the world as sex work and there are not many professions outside of being in the armed forces that bring with it so many dangers as sex work.

My point of view on the agency of children is similar in that I see children and youth as stakeholders and not as mere beneficiaries. In a way this of course makes sense, because to question how children engage in coping strategies, one must first accept that they undertake these strategies and thus have agency.

Sonagachi became world famous in an instance when the documentary Born into Brothels, about the lives of children growing up in this red light district, won the 2004 Academy Award for best documentary. It paints a horrid picture of children of sex workers as ultimate victims, abused by their uncaring mothers and destined to become pimps and sex workers themselves. These assumptions are not unique to this film, in fact much policies geared towards children of sex workers are informed by them. While international press was praising Born into Brothels, a different reaction could be heard in Kolkata. Why did the movie not reflect that the sex workers of Kolkata for over 20 years have been involved in community activism? Why did it not show that this has been so successful that they are considered to be an example to others by the World Health Organisation? Why did it show sex workers as horrible mothers, when in fact for many of them caring for their children is their number one priority? Why was everything so black and white? Several of the children whose lives and voices were supposed to be represented by this film, felt they could not sit by idly and they made a documentary of their own: We are Foot Soldiers. It was this documentary, that tells a very different tale one of diversity in experiences, one in which they are not waiting for a saviour but are very capable themselves, that inspired this research.

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 2 considers the theoretical framework on which the research is based. Here we will take a closer look at the academic debate on children’s agency. Furthermore we regard the current literature on the lives of children of sex workers and try to establish what is now known about the risks relevant to them. Following this the concepts of stress and coping are reviewed. Lastly the agency framework of Redmond (2008) is put forward, whereby the various coping strategies have been analysed. Chapter 3 focuses on the context in which this research took place and will delve further into the background of Kolkata as a research site. A brief description is given of sex work in India and Kolkata in particular. Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee and Amra Padatik will also be introduced. Chapter 4 continues with the methodology that was used in this research. The research sample, various qualitative research techniques, method of analysis, limitations to the research and ethical considerations will be discussed. Chapter 5, the first results chapter, will turn to the question of what risks and stressors are present in the lives of children of sex workers. Chapter 6 will continue with the analysis of the findings regarding the various individual as well as collective coping strategies. Chapter 7, the last findings chapter, is aimed at answering the question what supports or challenges coping among children of sex workers. Chapter 8 will conclude the thesis and give some suggestions for policymakers and further research.
Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

In this section I will first discuss how ideas about childhood have evolved and how a paradigm shift has occurred after the end of the cold War, whereby international politics and practice became the subject of global governance.

Secondly I consider the role of children’s participation in development policy. What are the prerequisites for children’s participation to take place and what are the benefits? Next, I turn to the various risks and stressors that are relevant to children of sex workers. In order to further understand the agency of children of sex workers within the context of these risks and stressors I will discuss the concepts of stress and coping. Finally, I consider how children engage in various forms of coping, namely ‘getting by’, ‘getting back at’, ‘getting out’ and ‘getting organized’ (Redmond: 2008).

2.1 Changes in Ideas about Childhood

The model of the ‘idealized childhood’ that informs much development policy, has its roots in the 18th century European enlightenment (Edwards, 1996:815). It was during this time that children first started to be considered as a separate category with as its most defining quality their vulnerability. Children were increasingly being withdrawn from the labour force, and thereby from the public sphere, where after their new role and place was to be either in the safety of the private home or the educational system (Roche 1999:479; Hart 1992:20). The child came to be considered as being of no economic value but of high emotional value, thereby becoming the so-called ‘priceless child’ (Edwards 1996:815, 816). A good childhood is one that takes place within a nuclear family, whereby there is plenty of time for play and schooling, which will help children to become fully functioning adults. The focus is thus on what a child ‘becomes’ instead of on what a child ‘is’. According to Edwards (1996:814) children are seen as half-formed adults, whereby their voices are excluded from the debate and decision-making processes, reinforcing the view of children as passive and dependent. In other words, children are not able of knowing their own needs and interests and are therefore in need of protection and looking after (Roche, 1999:477). Another notion, concerning the idealized childhood, is that of innocence, whereby being a child is often equated to being ‘innocent’ (Sircar and Dutta, 2011:334; Orchard, 2007:2387; Kehily and Montgomery, 2009:84).

Under colonial rule a dualistic understanding of childhood existed. The childhood of the Indian child was constructed as one that was inadequate and lacking. Western childhood was seen as culturally superior due to its basis in advanced scientific and technological knowledge as well as the ‘discovery’ of universal human rights (Nieuwenhuys 2009:147). After decolonization much policy is still based on this rational whereby Indian children are in need of saving. Postcolonial research has been concerned with reconstructing ideas on Indian childhood as constituting a multiplicity of experiences that are not inferior to the Western experience of childhood. Critical social science specifically seeks to uncover children’s active participation in struggles for social justice (Nieuwenhuys 2009:150). Children are thus not just seen as victims of circumstance, but as social actors within a specific context. I therefore now turn to ideas on the child as a social actor and in particular what his or her agency is or could be.

A paradigm shift has occurred with the ending of the Cold War, whereby new spaces for global governance opened up and new tools, such as the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, emerged in which children are not only considered to be social actors in their own right, but there is also recognition of the existence of a multiplicity of childhoods (Harper 2002:1076,1077; Edwards 1996:814, 815; Balagopalan 2011:295). Children are not seen as being the same as adults, quite the contrary, they are considered to have distinctive needs and interests, but there is recognition of the ways in which they contribute to and act within the social context in which they find themselves (Roche, 1999:487, Harper, 2002:1078; Edwards, 1996: 814). For example, children contribute to their family’s income in numerous ways, by means of performing labour outside the home, doing domestic tasks or taking on care responsibilities for younger siblings (Edwards 1996:816).

This paradigm shift has been accompanied by a change in discourse. Instead of emphasizing the risks and needs of children, it is their own ability to address these issues that is at the centre of attention (Boyden and Cooper 2007:3, 4). According to White and Choudhury (2007:535) it is the recognition of agency of children that facilitates new approaches in policy and academics to consider them as subjects in their own rights, instead of objects of charity. In a similar vein it is no longer only children's needs that are considered to be of importance, instead the debate focuses more on assets. This change in discourse has also been of effect on policies concerning children, whereby recognizing them as capable agents means that it is their strengths that informs practice. A third change in discourse is that children are not just considered in terms of ‘becoming’ but that there is also recognition of children as ‘being’ (Roche 1999: 486). Stepping away from the construction of children as becoming means that it becomes more feasible that they are considered as active citizens in the here and now (Lister 2007:697,698).
All of this does not diminish the fact that children are being exploited and that there are large groups of children suffering due to various causes such as poverty, war, social marginalization and stigma. It does give the opportunity to change the perspective on what can be done about this and by whom it should be done. However, stating that children are social actors, carriers of rights, needs and interests embedded in a social context who have agency does not tell us much about what this agency is or how it manifests itself. What are the resources that children draw upon and how do they make use of these resources to resist exploitation are therefore central concerns of this research. The tension between children's needs and their right to participate and to be heard remains. This tension is exemplified by the case of children of sex workers whose agency, one can argue, is questioned even more than that of other children. The limited research that is available on the subject emphasizes the risks and needs relevant to children of sex workers, but fails to shed light on their agency. I will argue here that one can discern different types of coping, but that not all are necessarily empowering. Furthermore, it is important to gain a deeper understanding of the factors and mechanisms that challenge and support various types of coping. Until now not much is known about what these factors are and how this process takes place with regard to children of sex workers. There is thus a discrepancy between the aims of policy, to stimulate empowerment through children's participation, and our knowledge of what the role of children of sex workers is within their community and what coping strategies they employ in their daily lives. The following section will consider what is meant by participation, what is needed for participation to take place and why it should be desired.

### 2.2 The Emergence of Participation in Development Policy

Through participation children can not only acquire knowledge and skills, but also improve their self-esteem and come to critically reflect upon their own situation. The process of participation is thereby in its own right an example of empowerment. In order to understand how children of sex workers resist risks and stressors, it must also be understood what challenges and supports this. The issue is thus not only what constitutes children's agency and what types of coping are conducive to long-term improvement in their overall position, but also how this can take place. The next section focusses on what the prerequisites are for genuine participation, how this then could be organized, and lastly the issues concerning citizenship of children are discussed. First, a brief overview is given as to how the Convention on the Rights of the Child led to the current focus of development policy on children's participation.

In 1989 the UN General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) providing policymakers and academics with a new discourse of rights regarding issues concerning children (Balagopalan 2011:291). Here we find the tension between the extremes of universalism versus cultural relativism. What is of specific concern here are articles 12 to 15 that deal with issues of participation and which confer on children, who are considered capable of forming their own views, the right to express these freely in all matters that concern them, to have the right of freedom of expression, freedom of thought, conscience and religion and freedom of association (White and Choudhury 2007:532). Article 12 also states that the views expressed by the child will be given its due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child. This already brings to light three issues surrounding children's participation, namely who decides and on what grounds if they are capable of participation, how does age reflect on this and how can one assess maturity? The CRC in accordance with the discourses on resilience and assets has made children's participation an important part of development policies, but it remains unclear as to what counts as genuine participation (White and Choudhury 2007:536).

For participation to be genuine there are four general requirements that need to be fulfilled (Hart 1992:11). First of all children need to understand the aims and intentions of the project. Secondly it needs to be known to them who is making decisions regarding their involvement and why. Thirdly their role should be meaningful and not just decorative and finally it should be made clear what the project is about before they volunteer. To make participation meaningful for children of sex workers and other marginalized groups it is also of importance that they are given the opportunity to reflect upon their own position (Hart 1992:24). Related to this it should be recognized that self-esteem is critical to successful participation (Hart 1992: 31).

These general requirements are prerequisites for genuine participation, but it does not tell us how participation is organized. Redmond posits (2008:10) three models by which children's participation can take place, namely the adultist, the children's rights and the children's movements model. In the adultist model it is adults who set the agenda, identify the needs of the children and base decision-making on professional knowledge. In this model children are seen as passive and although their views might be sought, they are filtered by adults who assess what is of importance and what is not. In the children's rights model it is still adults who make most of the decisions, but children are viewed as competent social actors. Furthermore, there is recognition of the unequal power relations that exist between children and adults. Competence is viewed as an evolving capacity. Lastly, in the model of children's movements it is children...
who set the agenda and who are in control of any further action, whereby action is aimed at achieving societal change. Amra Padatik seems to fit this model, in that it is run by children of sex workers, elected by their peers and it is them that set the agenda. Although much of the decision making power seems to lie with children, it does not mean that there is no influence or collaboration with adults.

These three models are similar to the top three rungs of the ladders of participation as put forward by Hart (1992:8), namely adult initiated, shared decisions with children, child initiated and directed and child-initiated with shared decision-making with adults. In answering White and Choudhury’s (2007) question, regarding what constitutes meaningful participation, it can be concluded that in both accounts it is the level of decision-making by children that differentiates the different types and that these types of organization could meet the general requirements for genuine participation. A second question is then, what should this participation be about?

If children are understood as being social actors and in moving away from the discourse of ‘becoming’ to one of ‘being’ children can no longer be seen solely as future citizens. This also means that we need to consider the extent of their current citizenship (Lister 2007). Although children are not part of the political community in that they have the right to vote, they are members of the civil community. It is then the relation to the community that makes them eligible to participate in it and thus constitutes them as citizens (Lister 2007: 700,701). The second aspect of citizenship that is considered here is that of rights. This refers to formal rights, such as the right to vote, that only become available to citizens when they come of age, but there are also rights which may not have codified but that are customary or so evident that they do not need to be codified (Lister 2007:703-705). It is when these rights, that were perhaps before implicit, are not being recognized or extended to socially marginalized groups such as sex workers and their children, that they will explicitly demand them.

Seeing that children cannot formally participate in electoral politics, their rights to participation in other forms become more important. A third expression of citizenship is that of having and taking responsibilities within society. Here children not only have public responsibilities, but also private ones to their families and communities. Finally, there is respect and recognition, of children as citizens because of their societal role, their rights and the responsibilities that they take on (Lister 2007:709). Marginalized groups such as sex workers and their children are demanding respect and recognition of their position in the community and their rights, which is based on ideas on social justice.

What is of importance here is not to extend the political right to vote to every child, but instead to recognize the ways in which they are already acting as citizens. Participation of children could aim at improving recognition and respect within society for the contribution that they make to their families and communities. Genuine participation is thereby not only a means to achieving specific goals, but also an end itself (Hart 2008: 407). The previous sections show that children are now seen as social actors, but that there is still a tension between fulfilling children’s needs and their rights to participate and have their voices be heard. Specifically the question arises what the role of adults is in all this, and thus also how this should be translated into policy.

Moreover, many unresolved issues remain regarding how children can be stimulated to engage with collective participation. In the case of the Sonagachi project internalized stigma and a lack of empowering experiences was seen to cause sex workers to have fatalistic attitudes, which prevented them from becoming active participants in community interventions (Cornish 2006:462). It attempted to challenge this stigma, by asserting that sex workers have rights and should be respected, providing examples of positive achievements of sex workers and by drawing parallels with other oppressed groups who had had political successes, in order to implement effective interventions. Amra Padatik is attempting to do the same for children of sex workers. The next section will further explore these mechanisms, which form the basis for community and children’s participation.

2.3 Engaging Children in Community Participation

Two things are of importance here, the first is that development interventions are deemed to be more effective if they can count on the active participation of the community members, the second is that internalized stigma undermines this type of agency. This section will consider why it is important that those who are marginalized are part of their own emancipation, followed by a discussion on how and why a new collective identity must be formed. Attention is given to the processes of creating an inclusive in-group identity and opposition to out-groups. I also argue, in accordance with Freire (2000), that fatalism needs to be overcome for collective action to take place and this will be discussed with regard to the use of narratives of social justice, connecting with other marginalized groups and creating new opportunities. Reflecting on the choices that are made in the process of collective action concludes the section. First we will take a closer look at the concept of ‘empowerment’, which lies at the heart of all participation thinking and practice.

Again and again we see the word empowerment pop up. It is a means to achieve other benefits such as recognition of rights and economic security, but it is also an end in itself.
Empowerment can be defined as a social-psychological state of confidence in one's ability to challenge existing relations of domination (Drury and Reichner 2005: 35). Collective action may engender experiences of empowerment for the individual as well as the collective. According to Drury and Reichner (2005: 38) there are four conditions that underpin empowerment, namely that there is an asymmetry of categorical representations between participants and out-groups as well as an asymmetry in power, that opposition to the out-group is seen as legitimate and finally that a more inclusive in-group self-categorization emerges. Power and legitimacy are thus separate dimensions, one can for instance have the power to do something, but not the legitimacy and vice versa (Drury and Reichner 2005: 49). It is the understanding that one has of his or her identity and position within a set of social relations that defines what can be considered as legitimate and possible actions. If someone considers him- or herself to be an individual with rights that should be upheld it also becomes possible to stand up for these rights when they are not being upheld. If one sees him or herself as not being worthy of the same societal rights and privileges, then that person will also not deem it legitimate to engage in actions that demand social justice (Drury and Reichner 2005: 36, 37).

According to Freire (2000:44) it is only the oppressed that can liberate themselves and by doing this they will also liberate those who oppress them. Attempts of the oppressor to do this will only result in acts of false generosity. This does not mean that others cannot be helpful in the process, but they should be aware of their own position and prejudices such as a lack of confidence in the abilities of people to overcome adversity (Freire 2000:60). It is precisely this internalized feeling of inadequacy that the oppressed need to overcome, to be able to engage in transformative action (Freire 2000:63). Internalized stigma leads to fatalism, which in turn hinders the use of coping strategies leading to empowerment and transformation (Cornish 2006:463). In order for these latter types of acts to take place, the stigmatized group must first start to see the societal structure as something that can be changed. When this happens collective action can take place. The new collective identity becomes a locus of possibility, action and transformation and empowerment (Drury and Reichner 2005: 54). This is precisely what Sircar and Dutta (2011:341) observed in the case of Amra Padatik:

‘This counter-lens, developed by Cindi Katz, allows us to foreground agency in place of victimhood to examine the ‘creative reworkings’ (Katz, 2004: 240) and the diverse and inventive ways in which these children cope with the intrusions of both stigma and sympathy in their everyday lives.’ (Sircar and Dutta 2011:341)

Empowerment is sought out by means of collective action, which focuses on the three R’s of resilience, reworking and resistance. Resilience means reflecting upon one’s own abilities to confront the stigma of being a sex worker’s child, the reworking and remaking are about their own collective identity and finally resistance to the imagery that poses them as victims solely concerned with their own suffering seeks to empower them and achieve societal change (Sircar and Dutta 2011:342,346). In this view disadvantage is not ignored or explained away under the guise of cultural relativism, but the one-dimensional representations of children of sex workers as suffering victims are challenged. The victimhood imagery is not only critiqued for failing to acknowledge the various ways in which children of sex workers are social actors, but also for being unable to truly establish and protect the rights of children (Sircar and Dutta 2011: 336).

Without this realization it becomes very difficult to see reality as something that is amenable to change. It is not the societal structure in itself but instead it is the perception of the obstacles that exist, which causes fatalism and thereby creates a situation of hopelessness. Freire (2000: 99) refers to these obstacles as limit-situations, which can be overcome if people are conscious of the causes of their marginalization and accept that they have the ability to challenge the status quo. These perceptions, as well as the awareness that they are in a dialectical relation with the oppressor, are necessary but not sufficient conditions for liberation to take place (Freire 2000:49). It is this consciousness that becomes the driving force behind transformative action.

Creating critical awareness through invoking the notion of rights by means of education and discussion has been an important facet in the Sonagachi project. Seeing oneself as a bearer of rights, who is denied these rights can function as a means of mobilization (Cornish 2006:466). According to Ghose et al (2008:311) the formation and mobilization of collective identity is facilitated firstly by the building of boundaries, which establishes who is the in-group and who is the out-group. Constructing boundaries is done by building in-group affiliation, as well as opposition to institutions and societal processes that have harmed or victimized them (Ghose et al 2008: 313). Consciousness is raised by challenging dominant discourse and presenting sex work as legitimate labour. A narrative is established of social justice and demands are made to not only recognize the societal role of sex workers but also that to discriminate against them is unjust (Ghose et al 2008:314, 315). Moreover, by making comparisons with other labourers the idea is put forward that sex work is also manual labour which is done in order to support themselves and their families. Comparisons made with other stigmatized groups who have
had political successes are used to counter fatalism. By exposing the vulnerabilities of the societal system that excludes them the opportunities for undertaking action also become visible (Freire 2000: 64). The example of trade unions is especially salient in the context of Kolkata, where it has often been used by others in the informal sector to achieve better working conditions by means of collective action (Cornish 2006:467; Ghose et al 2008:315). Uncovering those processes and elements that are the causes of oppression and positioning them as targets for change challenges stigma and identifies a solution, namely establishing sex work as work (Ghose et al 2008:315). The final means of collective mobilization is that of negotiating identity with the out-group, meaning that the identity becomes politicized. This process is twofold whereby on the one hand bridging activities are undertaken to establish links with outsiders and on the other hand oppositional action is used to counter negative attitudes and hostility of outsiders (Ghose et al 2008:313).

Critical reflection on the existing situation, which happens at the symbolic level, is however often not enough. As Freire (2000) argues reflection should always go hand in hand with action and action cannot be meaningful without reflection. Creating new possibilities results in positive examples of sex workers agency as well as in material gains in terms of capabilities and new institutions by which to counter problems (Cornish 2006:469). It is the combination of symbolic change and material change, that is needed to achieve societal change (Cornish 2006: 470; Freire 2000: 65).

There are many ways in which action and reflection can take place. Jasper (2004:2) states that ‘if agency is to mean anything it would seem to involve choices’. Individuals and groups either take one course of action or another and what choice is made depends among other things on the preferences, the repertoire of action, the arena in which it is to take place, the reasons for which action is undertaken and the goals it is proposed to serve’ (Jasper 2004:3).

From the previous sections it becomes clear that many questions remain with regards to when and why children engage in community participation. Furthermore, it seems that the emphasis on participation in community development projects has been to the detriment of recognition of other types of coping. What are the various coping strategies children engage with in their daily lives? How do these strategies relate to one another? What is more, before we can begin to think about any of these questions knowledge is needed on the lived realities of children of sex workers.

2.4 Risks and Stressors in the Lives of Children of Sex Workers
People's response to stress varies, but stress also present itself in a number of ways, in other words not every stressful event is the same. One can differentiate between three types of stress or stressors; environmental stress, individual stress and stress that is the result from a transaction between the individual and the environment (Aldwin 2011:16). In the current discussion on stress and coping it is this last form, also known as the transactional model that is dominant.

What is central to this model is the individual's appraisal of the stressor, or in other words how the stressor is perceived, and in turn it is this appraisal that will determine how one will cope with the stressor (Aldwin 2011:17). Children's perception of themselves and the way in which they frame the context in which they find themselves are thus an important part of the coping process.

The process of appraisal is twofold whereby the primary appraisal concerns a personal judgement of the situation or event as for instance being irrelevant, benign-positive or stressful (Lazarus and Folkman 1984: 32,33). In the first scenario the event is seen as having no value, it is neither positive nor negative and in the second the event is seen as potentially enhancing well-being. It is in the third scenario that the event is seen as threatening and challenging and that it could result in, or perhaps already has done so, harm and loss. The secondary appraisal is concerned with 'what can be done about it'. A person has to evaluate various strategies, their own resources and the likelihood of being able to effectively engage in a particular strategy. It may seem that this is a very rational process, but stress appraisals on both levels can be either conscious or unconscious and voluntary or involuntary (Aldwin 2011:21,22). Furthermore, although the terms primary and secondary are used, Lazarus and Folkman argue (1984: 31) that one does not necessarily come before the other and it is the interplay between the appraisal of what is at stake with the appraisal of what can be done that matters.

What is of further importance are the duration and the severity of stress (Aldwin 2011: 17, 18). One can distinguish between traumas, daily hassles and chronic stress. A trauma is a severe stressor that arises suddenly, daily hassles are often short lived, but recurring events and chronic stress refer to a long-term and on-going problem resulting from the societal structure. Although you can make a theoretical distinction between these types in reality they are often intermingled and influence one another. For instance, some children of sex workers experience going to school as a daily hassle, seeing that they have to travel long and far because there is no school in the red light district. What is more this daily hassle is related to stigmatization and social exclusion of sex workers and their children, which is a chronic stressor. All of these types of stress can be deemed relevant in the case of children of sex workers.
So what is already known about the risks and stressors in the lives of children of sex workers? Risk is defined as being susceptible to or to have a high statistical probability to undergo specific negative outcomes (Boyden and Cooper 2007:2). That which increases the susceptibility to risks are referred to as risk-factors, where as those that mitigate them are protective factors (Boyden and Cooper 2007:3). Not much research has been done on what risks are especially pressing for children of sex workers. Beard, Biemba, Brooks, Costello, Ommerborn, Bresnahan, Flynn and Simon (2010) argue that children of sex workers face risks that are unique to their family situation. Children of sex workers are considered to be vulnerable in terms of sexual abuse, early sexual debut and being introduced to sex work themselves as adolescents (Beard et al 2010:2-4).

For Ling (2001:4) being onlookers of the work of their mothers not only causes girls brought up in the brothel to develop an ‘unorthodox morality’, they almost invariably follow their mothers example and end up in sex work themselves, most having their first sexual experience by the age of eight or nine. Other issues of importance are for instance low school enrolment, social marginalization and separation from parents. Furthermore, the research mentions that children feel ashamed about their mother’s work and encounter stress and problems because they do not know their father (Beard et al 2010:4). The issues of low school enrolment and social marginalization are intertwined; schools will often refuse to admit children of sex workers (Saha et al 2008: 5; Jayasree 2004:60; Website Durbar). Not having their father’s last name is also sometimes used as grounds for refusal, and when solved by taking on the name of a maternal uncle or Babu (fixed client) other problems may occur:

‘But he extracted several benefits from lending me his name. He would come home often and take money from my mother.’

(Kalappa Subhadra Shivasan SANGRAM 2008)

When in school children are forced to live in two realities, they often try and hide what their mothers do and where they live, causing them considerable stress. In addition, when teachers or peers do find out, the child is often teased and shunned.

Lastly, separation from parents, which occurs in different ways, forms a serious risk. When looking at accounts of sex workers and children of sex workers, it is mentioned how in some cases the child will be raised by extended family (SANGRAM 2008). The choice to have the child grow up away from his or her mother is sometimes made by the mother, or by the extended family, or by the child itself. The effects of separation differ and generalization is therefore difficult in terms of its effects on the child. Children are also separated from their mothers in so-called raid and rescue operations. The sex workers are forced to undergo rehabilitation, whilst their children are being separated from them. Where separation from the mother occurs through these operations the child is, as well as his or her mother, stripped from any possibility to assert him or herself. Their expressed needs or wants are not taken into account.

What is the perception of children of sex workers of these risks? Are the before mentioned risks relevant? Or are there other factors that are of bigger concern to them? And how do children of sex workers deal with these risks and what are the risks and protective factors that are involved? Protective factors are related to positive adaptation, this means that through coping one does not only deal with an immediate risk but is also capable of improving the situation for the future. What is considered to be positive adaptation of course depends on what is considered to be ‘good’ or in other words accepted behaviour (Boyden and Cooper 2007:7).

2.5 Learning to Cope

Every person and every child deals with stresses throughout their life, but for children of sex workers these stresses are often compounded. What is it that makes some overcome these issues whilst others succumb to them? The differences in dealing with stress result from the process of mitigating the harmful effects of stress known as coping (Folkman 2011). Coping thus refers to the regulatory processes that are enacted in response to stress, whereby individuals organize a variety of strategies around a specific set of goals and motivations (Compas 2009: 89,95). Coping is a lifelong process influenced by an individual’s actions, biological factors and the social context (Aldwin 2011:16). I argue that coping plays an important part in the agency of children of sex workers, but that coping does not necessarily equate empowerment. In order to further understand this, this section will firstly discuss how coping develops in childhood. Secondly, attention will be given to various coping strategies.

As we can see from this brief discussion on stress and the taxonomies of stress this is a very dynamic and complex concept. The variety of coping strategies and levels on which it takes place only add to this. Table I shows a hierarchical model whereby a distinction has been made into twelve different families of coping which serve different purposes and a few of the strategies that one can take in order to achieve this goal.
Coping strategies always take place within a social context. It is not only the individuals appraisal that matters, but also for instance the presence or lack of support from, family and friends, as well as what is seen as an acceptable strategy (Skinner and Zimmer–Gembeck 2009:7; Aldwin 2011:23). The nature and type of stress changes with ages whereby the number of life events increases when children grow up and their social world expands, causing the likelihood of enduring trauma to increase as well (Aldwin 2011:19). As said before coping is a lifelong process that already starts at infancy, but it is only from the age of two that children begin to cope through voluntary direct action (Aldwin 2011:23). During the preschool ages of two till five children gain in motor and language skills, opening up new possibilities for coping. However young children only have rudimentary problem solving skills and their emotional regulation is still largely dependent on their parents. Cognitive strategies emerge during middle childhood, which is from the age of six to nine and it is during this time that children will start with seeking support from others outside of their immediate caretakers (Aldwin 2011:23). It is the beginning of problem-focused coping wherein a major shift takes place between the ages of 5 and 7 according to Skinner and Zimmer–Gembeck (2011:43). This increase in cognitive abilities opens up the possibility for positive adaptation, but on the other hand it can also result in the development of negative coping strategies such as rumination, helplessness and social withdrawal.

In adolescence children will further develop sophisticated forms of problem focused coping, but they may also develop maladaptive coping strategies such as social withdrawal or turn to substance abuse to regulate their emotions (Aldwin 2011:24). They begin to recognize that some strategies work better than others because they are able to imagine the future consequences of using one strategy over another and they are capable of coordinating multiple alternatives (Skinner and Zimmerman–Gembeck 2011:44).

When discussing her research on child prostitutes in Thailand Montgomery, (2010:178) mentions that children would see it as their duty to support their parents. The importance of filial duty and being able to take care of one’s family was also stressed in research done by Orchard, (2007:2388) on young Devadies in Karnataka. Furthermore both Orchard (2007:2387,2388) as well as Montgomery (2010:185,186) argue against the idea that being involved in or connected to prostitution leads to a loss of innocence and thereby a loss of childhood (Orchard, 2007:2387,2388). Montgomery (2010:185,186) emphasizes that the children that were part of her research would probably not consider being a child prostitute an important part, if any, of their identity, but that it is considered the most important part by those who

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Family of coping</th>
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<th>Ways of coping</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Instrumental action</td>
<td>1. Find additional contingencies</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Information seeking</td>
<td>Find limits of actions</td>
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<th>Family of coping</th>
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<th>Ways of coping</th>
<th>Adaptive process 2: Coordinate reliance and social resources available</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. Self-reliance</td>
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<td>Emotion regulation</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Support seeking</td>
<td>Use available social resources</td>
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<td>7. Delegation</td>
<td>Contact seeking</td>
<td>Emotional expression</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Social isolation</td>
<td>Instrumental aid</td>
<td>Emotion approach</td>
<td>8. Whining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Submission</td>
<td>Find new options</td>
<td>Distraction</td>
<td>10. Other-blame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Opposition</td>
<td>Rigid perseveration</td>
<td>Minimization</td>
<td>12. Intrusive thoughts</td>
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<th>Family of coping</th>
<th>Family function in adaptive process</th>
<th>Ways of coping</th>
<th>Adaptive process 3: Coordinate preferences and available options</th>
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<tr>
<td>15. Opposition</td>
<td>Bargaining</td>
<td>Cognitive restructuring</td>
<td>15. Other-blame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Opposition</td>
<td>Rigid perseveration</td>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td>17. Aggression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Opposition</td>
<td>Intrusive thoughts</td>
<td>Denial</td>
<td>18. Deliance</td>
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Table 1: A Hierarchical Model of Adaptive Processes and Families of Coping

(Skinner and Zimmerman–Gembeck 2009:7)
observe them. For Montgomery the use of euphemisms and constructing the dealings with their clients as reciprocal friendship are a small way of having agency:

‘With so few opportunities to change their lives, and with the alternatives to prostitution so limited, it was not surprising that children claimed to choose it above other options. It is a controversial point to make but prostitution was not the worst, or most feared, option open to these children.’
(Montgomery 2010:180)

Choosing to try and fulfill their filial duty, seeing prostitution as a way, and perhaps not the worst, of doing this and constructing these relations as reciprocal friendships are considered as acts of coping. Although this might be a way in which children cope with certain adversities, it certainly does not reduce risk, or represent a form of resistance that could give impetus to societal change. The children being rather fatalistic about for instance sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy, and accepting their marginal position are referred to as the expression of agency (Montgomery, 2010:178,184). Probably this type of coping is not what policymakers think of when speaking about children’s participation and empowerment. According to Freire (2000) attitudes of fatalism are a result of oppression:

‘As long as the oppressed remain unaware of the causes of their condition, they fatalistically “accept” their exploitation.’
(Freire 2000:64)

It is only through critical reflection upon their oppression that the marginalized can come to see reality as susceptible to transformation and thereby engage in emancipatory action (Freire 2000:85).

Taking this into account it becomes clear that not all acts of agency are empowering. Working as a manual labourer, domestic help or prostitute could perhaps be considered acts of agency simply because a child acts, but these may also be examples of coping with the situation without attempting to change it. Moreover recognition of agency and the existence of a multiplicity of childhoods should not be pursued to the point of endorsing cultural relativism and implicitly or explicitly condoning exploitation (Balagopalan 2011:292):

“This would mean that contentious issues such as child labour cannot be willed away under the guise of ‘culture’ nor berated within the politics of ‘saving’ lives”.
(Balagopalan 2011: 294)

Again it becomes clear that there is a need to distinguish between various coping strategies. Certain types of coping will bring with it other stressors and problems, even though they provide short-term relief. The aim of policies that focus on children’s participation in most cases is for them to become empowered and break the cycle of poverty. The aim is therefore not to stimulate agency in general, but to stimulate children to use specific coping strategies. To be empowered is far more than just the absence of a stress reaction. It goes beyond the fulfilment of the need to protect or defended oneself from harm in that it is motivated by a need to move forward and to learn and grow (Zautra and Reich 2011:176). Children’s ability to cope in such a manner is dependent on many factors such as having a healthy attachment to their parents, having strong peer relations, biological factors and the social environment (Zautra and Reich 2011:177). To gain insight into which strategies children of sex workers use and to differentiate between them a typology of agency as proposed by Redmond (2008) will be used. The last section of this chapter will clarify what this typology entails.

2.6 The Various Guises of Coping

According to Redmond (2008:7, 8) children’s agency should be understood within the context of dependence and submission to the authority of adults whereby certain acts are encouraged whilst others are deemed to be rebellious. Redmond bases his analysis on the work of Lister (2004, as cited in Redmond, 2008:7-9), who distinguishes between four types of agency, namely getting by, getting back at, getting out and getting organized, which can be placed along two axes: everyday-strategic and personal-political/citizenship. This typology of agency is helpful in thinking about the difference between coping strategies aimed at long-term or short-term benefits.

Figure 1: Typology of Agency
(Source: Redmond, 2008:8 taken from Lister, 2004)
The everyday-strategic axe differentiates between those acts that are meant as short-term fixes for everyday problems, whereas strategic refers to strategies that one might undertake in order to improve one’s situation on the long term (Redmond, 2008:7). The personal-political/citizenship axe differentiates between acts that are meant to improve one’s individual situation versus acts that aim at a more substantial change.

The first type of agency is that of ‘getting by’, which can be placed in the everyday-personal quadrant. Coping with daily stresses and for instance choosing to not bother parents with problems at school are examples of this type of coping. These are thus not empowering acts, or acts aimed at a wider societal change.

Secondly, there is ‘getting back at’, which is placed in the everyday-political/citizenship quadrant. Examples of this type of agency are for instance committing petty theft, breaking certain societal rules or other confrontational behaviour (Redmond, 2008:8). It is a means by which anger and frustration can be vented, but they are singular acts, which will most likely not result in wider societal change. In terms of empowerment one can question of this occurs and if so if it is sustainable. To act in such a manner does not necessarily entail reflection upon one’s situation and the gaining of a deeper understanding. A person is reacting to or against something, but not necessarily towards some greater goal. This does not mean that these acts of rebellion can be discarded as unimportant, for they could be a first step towards emancipatory action. To quote Freire:

‘Little by little, however, they [the oppressed] tend to try out forms of rebellious action. In working towards liberation, one must neither lose sight of this passivity nor overlook the moment of awakening.’

(Freire, 2000:64)

Thirdly, ‘Getting out’ can be placed in the personal-strategic quadrant. According to Redmond (2008: 8,9) this type of coping is influenced greatly by structural factors in terms of feasibility. It could be empowering for the individual, through an increase in capabilities, but is not aimed at changing or questioning the societal constraint that caused marginalization in the first place. Pursuing an education can for instance be seen as an example of this. Education can however also be a tool of oppression, whereby the student is considered as an empty vessel into which knowledge can be poured and where not creativity or critical thinking, but adaptability to current societal norms is what is being stimulated (Freire, 2000:72,73).

Finally, there is ‘Getting organized’ which can be placed in the strategic-political-citizenship quadrant. The before mentioned types of agency can also be undertaken by either groups or individuals, but what differentiates getting organized from these types of agency is that it is aimed at challenging societal constraints and countering social marginalization. According to Redmond (2008:9), this is especially difficult for the marginalized because they first have to overcome their own internalized stigma, thus it could be concluded that one should first address the internalized identity of the undeserving poor before collective action can take place.

There is thus a multitude of individual as well as collective coping strategies, but what does this mean specifically for children of sex workers? Which strategies are most common among them? Why do they choose one strategy over another? As said before the voices of children of sex workers have been absent in academic research and policies geared towards them and this research hopes to fill this void. The typology of Redmond (2008) will be used to answer these questions.

2.7 Conclusion

In conclusion it can be said that a paradigm shift has occurred whereby a growing number of researchers now consider children as social agents, who are bearers of rights, interests and needs and have the agency to act upon them. This agency is however restricted in various ways and although there has been increasing attention to the participation of children there remains much unclear about what participation should and could be. Moreover it has become clear that not all acts can be considered as being empowering and can therefore not be seen as acts that can constitute societal change whereby marginalization of specific groups such as the children of sex workers is being addressed. In order to stimulate empowerment among children of sex workers and other marginalized groups we must first broaden our understanding of the multitude of ways in which agency can be expressed. The concept of coping can be helpful in this regard. By combining the concept of coping with the typology of agency of Redmond (2008) I hope to gain further insight into the lives of children of sex workers, their position within their community and their ability to express their agentic capacity. The following chapter will discuss the context in which this research took place.
Chapter 3: Context

On Friday the 9th of November 2012 hundreds of sex workers and their children, representing all of the red light districts of Kolkata had gathered in support of their sisters. This mass of people dressed in fiery red, blazing pink, midnight blue, gold and silver set of chanting as one, blocking the already congested traffic of Kolkata even more, holding their banners and asking for an end to violence, not only against sex workers but against all women. Children as young as six were walking along on their mothers’ hand whilst holding a placard in the other. The teenagers of Amra Padatik were in the middle of this dazzling chaos shouting through a megaphone and handing out flyers to whomever they saw.

The procession set forth through the streets weaving its way to the heart of the red light district of Bow Bazar calling out not only to the gangsters to stop their abuses, but also to the police to do their duty and protect every man, woman and child who needed them instead of leaving them to fend for themselves. After speeches given by Dr. Jana, the founder of the Sonagachi Project, and several sex workers the rally went on. The end point was the police station, where everyone gathered and chanted relentlessly. Again members of Amra Padatik were in the forefront of the protest. The police who at first had been chaperoning the rally was now standing on the other side. A few dozen men looking grim faced holding on to their lathis1, but at a loss as to what to do. A man said to me to get away quickly because the women police would be arriving any minute and they would not be afraid to use their lattis on other women, this however never happened. After some time the rally was finished and everyone packed their belongings and returned to all the different red light districts of Kolkata. The battle for an end to violence and recognition of the rights of sex workers and their children however continues. Who are these children and why and how did they organize themselves in the collective known as Amra Padatik? And what was it about Kolkata that this happened here and not somewhere else? I will now give a brief sketch of the context of this research. I will first discuss the history of Kolkata and its political climate. Second, I will outline the legal framework surrounding sex work in India and how this led to the inception of Amra Padatik.

3.1 India, Kolkata and the Labour Movement

Being the seventh largest country in the world, India is often referred to as a subcontinent. It is located in South Asia and bordered by China, Nepal, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Pakistan. India’s economy has been growing steadily, but it still only ranks 136 on the Human Development Index (Times of India 15 March 2013). It currently houses the second largest population in the world of 1.2 billion people (CIA 2013). It has the third highest ranking of people living with HIV/AIDS, totalling 2.4 million people.

India came under colonial rule from the 16th century onwards. Although eventually the British became dominant parts of India have also been under colonial rule from the Portuguese, the French and the Dutch. India has been a democracy ever since it became an independent nation on the 14th of august 1947. India’s independence coincided with its partition from Pakistan, which consisted of West and East Pakistan. The state of Bengal was divided along religious lines into West- and East-Bengal. East-Bengal was then known as East Pakistan and is now Bangladesh. West-Bengal remained to be a part of India.

Kolkata is the capital of the state of West-Bengal and located on the Indian eastern coast. Due to its strategic position the port of Kolkata became the capital of British India in 1757 until 1905. Although there are quite a few theories about the origin of the city’s name, it is widely thought that it is derived from the Hindu goddess Kali. It was only as recent as 2001 that the city of Calcutta was renamed Kolkata. The city is split in two by the sacred river Hoogly, a distributary of the holy river Ganges one side of the river you find Howrah and on the other Kolkata. The city of Kolkata has a population of 4,486,679 and is part of the Kolkata Metropolitan region, which is counted as a mega city that has a current population of 14,112,536 (Website Population Census India 2011).

Kolkata’s colonial past is present everywhere you look in the facades of the crumbling palaces of the Raj, the Christmas celebration by the Anglo-Indians of Park Street and the still vibrant culture of gentleman's clubs. When most people think of Kolkata, what comes to mind is the imagery of the book and later movie *City of Joy* and that of Mother Teresa and the Homes of the Dying. It is an imagery of destitution, poverty and suffering that in many ways is contradictory to the reality of the vibrant and culturally rich Bengali capital. After the Indian independence of 1947 and the partition whereby East Bengal became East Pakistan, Kolkata entered into a long period of political upheaval. Nowadays the state of West-Bengal is still one of the poorest of India (BBC News, 13 July 2010). Various militant labour groups, regular political rallies and long on-going general strikes dominated the 1960s to 1970s (Gooptu 2007:1924). In 1975 then Prime Minister Indira Ghandi declared India to be in a state of emergency, which would last up until 1977 and demarcated a time of severe repression of labour movements and protest.
in India. However, the Communist Party of India (CPM), which had a large voter base in Kolkata, continued to criticize and resist the government (Ray 1998: 25).

It was in 1977 at the end of the Indian Emergency that the CPM was elected to power in Kolkata and they would remain there undefeated up until as recent as 2011. Chief Minister Ms. Mamata Bannerjee and the All India Trinamool Congress (TMC) now govern Kolkata, but the culture of political protest, unionization and strong labour movements remains. According to Gooptu (2007: 1924) it was precisely the intensity of the political conflict that shaped the attitudes of Kolkata's working class towards labour and the state. The discourse was and is one of workers' rights to which they are entitled and where these are not given they have to be achieved by strong political mobilisation. Every single group of workers in Kolkata from taxi drivers to street hawkers and from rickshaw wallahs to sex workers is unionized in some way or another. On any given day when walking down the street in Kolkata it is highly likely that you will run into a political protest. During my fieldwork there were also a few days upon which there were large general strikes whereby every single shop was closed, there were no buses, taxis or rickshaws on the street and trains could not enter into Kolkata because people had blocked of the railroads. The idea that when you are wronged you go and protest seems to be engrained into the minds and hearts of Kolkata's residents.

3.2 The Sex Industry of Kolkata
Kolkata's sex industry as it is now emerged in the 19th century under the control of the English East India Company. They sought on the one hand to abolish the then existing Devadesi system, whilst on the other to make sure that soldiers were protected from venereal diseases by creating strictly controlled ghettos in which all the women had to undergo compulsory registration and medical check-ups (Sinha and Das Dasgupta 2009:12, 13; Baksi 2005:14,15). The Devadesi system started somewhere around the 9th or 10th century A.D. (Costanza Torri 2009:35; O'Neil, Orchard, Swarankar, Blanchard, Gurav and Moses 2004:853). The Devadesi were dedicated to the gods and goddesses by marriage and played an important role in religious ceremonies, festivals and the worshipping of the gods through dance, arts and the deliverance of prayers (O'Neil et al 2004:853). Another one of their duties was to provide sexual services to the priests and patrons of the temple. During this time Devadesi were often more highly educated then other women and because of their knowledge and religious standing they were held in high social esteem (Misra, Mahal and Shah 2000: 99; O'Neil et al 2004:853). Around the year 1910 the colonial government started issuing legislation that was to abolish the practice of the dedication of women to the temples, but that also eroded their social standing. The Raj was simultaneously issuing laws to regulate prostitution by means of the Cantonment Act and the Contagious Diseases Act binding sex workers to specific neighbourhoods and forcing them to undergo medical testing (Sinha and Das Dasgupta 2009:13).

It is very difficult to obtain exact numbers on the scale of the sex industry of India, or anywhere else for that matter. It is estimated that there are now between one and four million sex workers in India, of whom 20,000 to 30,000 permanently reside in Kolkata. I say permanently because sex work happens in many different ways. There are some women who will do this for a period of time and then return to their village, there are others that are locally called flying sex workers that do sex work in Kolkata but live elsewhere and then there are those who at times will engage in sex work even though they are also working another job in for instance construction or domestic work. This research focuses on the red light districts of Sonagachi, Kalighat and Khidderpur. There are however many others such as Bow Bazar, Ulta Danga, Baghbazar, Ram Bhagan, Tollygunge and Chetla. Already in 1830 Sonagachi, located in the north of the city, was the most important sex work site of Kolkata frequented mostly by the British soldiers and administrators. It now houses approximately 10,000 sex workers, making it not only of the oldest but also the largest red light district of Kolkata (Sinha and Das Dasgupta 2009:9).

Kalighat in south Kolkata, the area surrounding the famous Kali temple, is also one of the oldest red light districts and has been operational for over 200 years (Sinha and Das Dasgupta 2009:14, 15). According to the DMSC there are in Kalighat approximately 1262 sex workers are active. The temple attracts widows who come to beg and sometimes from there on enter into the sex trade as well as young girls who are married in the temple and are then placed in the red light district. Khidderpur is a dock area and an industrial site and in the centre of the city. Here there are many truckers and day labourers who come to visit the sex workers. In Khidderpur approximately 1256 sex workers are active.

2 The British rule in India was referred to as the Raj, which means ‘reign’ in Hindi.
Map I field of Sonagachi consisting of Palatak and Abinash
Map II fields of Khidderpur and Kalighat
3.3 Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee and Amra Padatik

In 1992 the Sonagachi HIV Prevention Project was started (Cornish 2006:464). This was different from others in that it was based on the principles of respect for sex workers and their profession; recognition of their profession and their rights; and reliance on their understanding and capability. Today the Sonagachi Project has transformed into the Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee (DMSC), a collective of 65,000 sex workers in West-Bengal India. Some of the aims of the DMSC are to help sex workers become economically independent, combat stigma and increase their physical safety (Ghose, Swenderman, George and Chowdhury 2008:315). I was able to do this research through the help of the DMSC help and their trusted position in the community. The sex workers themselves run the organization from the level of peer educator to the board of directors. They are now present in almost all of the red light districts of Kolkata. Similar to other collectivized groups of workers, the DMSC fights for labour rights that they feel they are entitled to and the recognition of their labour.

In 2005 the children of these sex workers decided to start their own collective along the same principles (Sircar and Dutta 2011: 333). This was done in a direct response to the amendments made on the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act (ITPA) from 1956. The ITPA is the main source of legislation regulating sex work in India, besides the ITPA there are also various provincial Devadesi acts that prohibited the before mentioned practice of dedicating women to the temple. The ITPA does not explicitly classify sex work as an illegal act, but anything and everything that has to do with it is illegal (Misra et al 2000: 101; Saha, Bala and Saha 2008: 3). It is for instance illegal to run a brothel or to procure a person for the act of prostitution with or without their consent. The ITPA is supposed to be a means by which pimps and traffickers can be prosecuted. Even though being a sex worker is not illegal, it is only the sex workers that are usually arrested and harassed under the guise of this law. The law also provides for the forcible rescue of sex workers and frames the sex worker not only as being immoral but also as being a victim. The ITPA is widely criticizing but it was article 4. 2A that would lead to the start of Amra Padatik.

4. Punishment for living on the earnings of prostitution. — (1) Any person over the age of eighteen years who knowingly lives, wholly or in part, on the earnings of the prostitution of any other person shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine which may extend to one thousand rupees, or with both, and where such earnings relate to the prostitution of a child, shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term of not less than seven years and not more than ten years.

(2) Where any person over the age of eighteen years is proved,—
(a) to be living with, or to be habitually in the company of, a prostitute; or
(b) to have exercised control, direction or influence over the movements of a prostitute in such a manner as to show that such person is aiding abetting or compelling her prostitution; or
(c) to be acting as a tout or pimp on behalf of a prostitute, it shall be presumed, until the contrary is proved, that such person is knowingly living on the earnings of prostitution of another person within the meaning of sub-section (1).

(ITPA)

The rational of the law is to protect sex workers from abuse and extortion, but it also makes it an illegal act for a child of a sex worker who is older than 18 to live with his or her mother, or for that mother to pay for food, education or anything else. Tired of being depicted as victims, wanting to counter discriminatory laws and practices and fighting to overcome the disadvantage and risks in their daily lives, the children of sex workers organized themselves in an organization now known as Amra Padatik (Sircar and Dutta, 2011:342). Action is based on the three counter R’s of resilience to stigma, reworking of social facts and collective identities and resistance to the existing narratives of victimhood (Sircar and Dutta, 2011:341,346). Their overall goal is as follows;

‘Establishing the rights and dignity of the marginalized people and their children in the world through social and political change. Amra Padatik has firmly resolved to develop the social status and standard of living of all the sex worker communities of the world and their children by being a part of this world wide movement.’

(Website Durbar Associates)

Their goals are formulated in terms of the rights and position of their mothers. The existing culture of labour organization and political protest made for a fertile ground for start of the DMSC as well as Amra Padatik. The organization is an unique example of expression of agency by the children of sex workers and it was mainly for this reason that I chose to do my research in Kolkata.
Chapter 4: Methodology

This research was carried out in Kolkata from September 2012 up until January 2013. Various qualitative research methods were used to gather data, namely; unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews, group discussions, participatory sessions, participant observation, and a fieldwork diary was kept throughout the research period. In this chapter, first the research sample will be described, followed by a discussion of various research techniques, the process of analysis, limitations of the study, and ethical considerations.

4.1 Sample

In total 105 people participated in this research. The sample includes sex workers who are mothers, social workers and community activists and children of sex workers. In total 75 children of sex workers participated in this research. Participants were selected by means of snowball sampling. Initial contacts were made through trusted members of the community who acted as gatekeepers. For details on the demographics of the participants see Table II.

4.2 Research Techniques

A number of qualitative methods were used for this research including semi-structured interviews, unstructured interviews, group discussions, participatory sessions and participant observation. During the research a fieldwork diary was kept with reflections and insights gained during the research. In addition, informal conversations took place throughout the research with community members, social workers, teachers and others. In the first two weeks of the fieldwork I visited multiple sites throughout Kolkata and spoke with leaders of several organizations that fall under the DMSC, among them were members and staff of the Self-Regulatory Boards against trafficking, Mamata Care and Treatment Centre for HIV positive women, Amra Padatik, USHA Multipurpose Cooperative, board members of the DMSC, outreach workers, peer educators and health workers. The following sections will further explain the used research techniques.

4.2.1 Unstructured Interviews

A total of 14 unstructured interviews were held with social workers and community activists. Some of the interviewees were spoken with several times throughout the research, but the majority of unstructured interviews took place in the beginning of the research. The aim of these interviews was twofold: first to get a further understanding of the field and second to gain access to the field by building trust with key community members. These interviews gave me the opportunity to divulge my intentions to key members of the community who could later on act as gatekeepers. On the basis of these interviews and the contacts that had been made, three main research sites were chosen, namely the red light districts of Khidderpur, Kalighat and Sonagachi.

4.2.2 Semi Structured Interviews

A total of 50 semi-structured interviews were held with sex workers who are mothers, children of sex workers, community activists and social workers. The aim of the interviews with mothers and children was to gain insight into their daily lives, everyday practices, challenges and perceptions. The aim of the interviews with social workers and community activists was to get a better understanding of the context of Kolkata’s red light districts, to provide background information and develop a general notion of the vulnerabilities and challenges that are relevant to the children of sex workers.

After my first two weeks of introduction into the field I started out with semi structured interviews with sex workers on their role as mothers and their experiences in raising children in the context of the red light district. I started out with this group for two reasons. Firstly, the information I gained from these interviewees helped me to further develop my interview guides for the children. Secondly getting to know the mothers helped in building trust so that it became easier to come into contact with children from Khidderpur, Kalighat and Sonagachi.

In total 13 interviews with mothers were conducted, seven in Sonagachi, four in Khidderpur and two in Kalighat. The interviews in Sonagachi and Kalighat took place in the local health clinic and the interviews in Khidderpur took place in the homes of the women. Generally speaking it was difficult to find a suitable location because privacy and silence are both scarce in the red light districts. People would often wander in whilst I was conducting interviews, which might have affected the openness of the interviewee. During one interview the woman’s Babu (fixed partner of a sex worker) was present, when he eventually left she came back to some of the things she said before and added other information. She for instance said that the burden of providing for the family came solely to her and that she could not say these things whilst he was present. However, this was an exception and in most cases it was other women that would join into the interview, which would lead to discussions between them and at times this provided valuable insights that would have otherwise not come up.

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3 The following codes are used throughout the thesis CSW= Child of a sex workers; CSWB= Child of a sex worker living in a residential school; PCSW= Child of a sex worker who is an adult and working in the community; AP; member Amra Padatik; CKG, CKP, and CSG= children who participated in the participatory sessions from Kalighat, Khidderpur and Sonagachi respectively; PW; professionals such as doctors/social workers; M = Mother.
Table II: Demographics of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Technique</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Living in</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Semi structured interviews</td>
<td>Children of sex workers</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Female: 10</td>
<td>12-18</td>
<td>Khidderpur: 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male: 11</td>
<td></td>
<td>Kalighat: 8</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sonagachi: 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children of sex workers living in</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>All Female</td>
<td>15-17</td>
<td>Kishra Barasat Subashgram</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>residential home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children of sex workers working in the</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Female: 4</td>
<td>18-28</td>
<td>Kalighat: 1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>community</td>
<td></td>
<td>Male: 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sonagachi: 4</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ram Bhagan: 1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Members of Amra Padatik</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>All Female</td>
<td>14-18</td>
<td>Sheoraphuli: 2</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Santipur: 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participatory sessions</td>
<td>Children of sex workers</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Female: 13</td>
<td>6-16</td>
<td>Khidderpur: 10</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Sonagachi: 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group sessions</td>
<td>Members football team</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>All Male</td>
<td>14-18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members Cultural Dance Group</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Female: 3</td>
<td>15-17</td>
<td>Sonagachi: 6</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male: 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>75</td>
<td>Female: 36</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male: 39</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research technique</td>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Number of children</td>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1-3</td>
<td>32-55</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(Between the ages of 8-26)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Kalighat: 2</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sonagachi: 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Technique</td>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Sex</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi structured interviews</td>
<td>Community activists and social</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Female: 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>workers</td>
<td></td>
<td>Male: 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unstructured interviews</td>
<td>Community activists and social</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Female: 8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>workers</td>
<td></td>
<td>Male: 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Female: 22</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sum Total</td>
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<td>Female: 59</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male: 46</td>
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</tr>
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</table>
After having concluded the interviews with mothers I continued with interviews with children of sex workers. In total 34 semi structured interviews were conducted with children of sex workers. Four different groups were selected, namely children from sex workers growing up in Khidderpur, Kalighat and Sonagachi, children of sex workers growing up in a residential home, members of Amra Padatik from the Paraganas, the rural outskirts of Kolkata, and children of sex workers who in adult life had become active within their own community.

For the first three groups children were selected between the ages of 12 and 18. Age influences children's ability in taking on the perspective of other persons and thereby critically reflect on their own situation and it is for this reason that the cut-off point of twelve years has been chosen (Hart 1992:32). Younger children's voices are included in the research, but this has been done by other means than interviews. In this research a child is considered any person up until the age of 18. Seeing that most of the participants were not sure about their age children aged 18 have also been included. Children of sex workers who are now adults but working as social workers or community activists have also been included because they are in an unique position to not only reflect on their own youth, but also on those of children who are now growing up in the red light districts and the differences between them.

Privacy and finding a suitable place for the interviews with the children were challenging as well. Another issue was the time when the interviews could take place, seeing that it was festival season during a large part of the fieldwork. This meant schools were often close, and people were busy visiting relatives and joining in the festivities. Lastly, although not reflected in the sample, it was more difficult to gain access to girls because girls are more restricted in their comings and goings and are sooner placed outside of the red light district in residential schools or with family in the native village.

### 4.2.5 Participatory Sessions

As said before, age matters in terms of one's ability to self-reflect, it is between the ages of five and nine that children's ability to take on another person's perspective starts to improve and that they come to realize that everyone has their own views on the world around them. The ability to self-reflect as well as understanding that people can have mixed feelings towards a single incident starts developing between the ages of seven and twelve (Hart 1992:32). The ability to take on a mutual perspective, which is needed to organize and actively engage in collective action, arises between the ages of ten and fifteen years of age. Finally, the ability to form a more generalized societal, legal, or moral perspective in which all individuals can share can emerge at any time from the age of twelve on (Hart 1992: 33). Because of this I decided to use participatory methods as a way of including the voice of younger children.

A second difficulty is the question of how to engage children in research, whereby one has to take into account the differences in power between adults and children. The framing of social constructs by particular actors is an explicit part of this research and the children themselves are considered the primary actors. Participatory methods are considered to not only break down power imbalances by giving children greater control it is also an effective way of bringing to light conceptions of vulnerabilities and needs (Thomas and O'Kane, 1998:343).

Three participatory sessions were held at the end of the fieldwork. The first was held in Khidderpur and included 10 children in the ages of 7-16. The second was held in Kalighat and included nine children in the ages of six to twelve. The last participatory session was held in Sonagachi and included 10 children in the ages of seven to twelve. The organisation of these sessions proved to be difficult. It was hard to find a suitable place within the red light district that was safe and provided a certain amount of privacy and comfort. Getting a group of children together in one spot at one time was also challenging. To make all of this possible I needed the help of gatekeepers and therefore planned these sessions at the end of my fieldwork. This enabled me to build a wide network within the community, which made these sessions possible. Another reason for this was that the data derived from these sessions is in part used to triangulate previous findings gained from other research methods.

The participatory sessions were held in community centres in the respective neighbourhoods. Besides myself and the translator a social worker well known to the children was present and one of the mothers. They both acted as facilitators and helped in answering. Before the start of the sessions, I would brief the facilitators about the aims of the
session, but also that children could not get these assignment right or wrong and the importance of giving praise and encouragement.

First, an intake was done with every child whereby basic information about age, sex and schooling was gathered. Afterwards, I commenced with explaining the first assignment. The assignments were also written down in Bengali on big posters that were hung in the room and could be seen by the children the whole time. For the first assignment, the children were asked to make a drawing of their neighbourhood, which included their house, their street, places that were important to them and places and things that they did not like about their neighbourhood. The children were given about an hour to finish the first drawing, after which these were discussed one by one. The drawings were used as a tool to invite children to speak and reflect on their daily lives.

This process was repeated with the second assignment where the children were asked to make a drawing of themselves in 20 years time. Here they were asked to think about where they would be living, with whom and what they were doing. They were also asked to reflect on what they thought would happen with their neighbourhood and if it would change or stay the same. In total the sessions would last for about 3.5–4 hours. Sticking to this schedule was at times quite difficult because the children wanted to continue with their drawings. Initially I planned for a maximum of 10 participants per session and them to be in the ages of seven till 14. There were however two outliers namely one girl of six and one girl of 16 that wanted to participate.

4.2.6 Participant Observation
Participant observation has been consistently applied throughout the research period. Children were observed during visits to the field, the brothels and the homes of sex workers. Although it is too numerous to account for all my activities I also attended protest rallies organized by the DMSC and Amra Padatik, workshops on sexual and reproductive health, participatory youth voice workshops held by UNICEF, dance rehearsals by Komol Gundhar, the celebration of teachers day at the Sanlaap community centre in Sonagachi, a youth meeting on the creation of a Sonagachi football team and a vocational training project. Because many sex workers opt to place their children outside of the red light district, I visited two residential schools for children of sex workers. In addition I also visited another school in Sealdah, Kolkata that was part of the Rainbow project, which aims to give children of high-risk communities access to formal schooling.

Furthermore, after having done several interviews some of the children asked me to join them in pandal hopping in Khidderpur during Durga Puja. Durga Puja celebrates the Hindu goddess Durga and is one of the major religious celebrations in Kolkata and West-Bengal. Family and friends get together to visit the different pandals, which is referred to as pandal hopping. After this evening I noticed a big shift in the way I was treated. Before I was met as an outsider, but now more as a friend. This experience illustrates the importance of not only observing but of practically engaging in activities, which not only leads to new insights but also to trust.

4.2.7 Fieldwork diary
Throughout the research a fieldwork diary was maintained to reflect upon observations and experiences gained during the research. This diary helped in further developing the research techniques, but also in illuminating on-going processes and the development of research themes.

4.3 Analysis
The various research techniques resulted in a number of data sources, namely transcripts of interviews; notes taken during interviews; group discussions and participatory sessions; the fieldwork diary; drawings; notes on drawings and videos and photos taken during research activities. During research activities that were not recorded I would take literal notes as much as possible and transcribe these notes the same day. Data has been analysed per group per question after which the resulting themes were compared in order to tease out important concepts, mechanisms, similarities and contrasts. I chose to do the analysis by hand. Initially codes were developed for every sub-research question, after which the results were analysed again to further tease out important themes and mechanisms. Mention of fear, worries, risks, dangers, problems and annoyances were used to identify risks and stressors. Coping strategies were analysed first by using the codes of getting, by what the children wanted to continue with their drawings. Initially I planned for a maximum of 10 participants per session and them to be in the ages of seven till 14. There were however two outliers namely one girl of six and one girl of 16 that wanted to participate.

4.4 Limitations
The red light districts of Kolkata are not an area where one can just wander into and connect to people. These areas are marked by high incidences of crime and violence and it would be unsafe, especially for a young female researcher, to enter without having the backup of trusted members of the community. It was for this reason that I chose to reach out to the DMSC a community organization of sex workers who have been active for over 20 years and have gained a good reputation and trust within the community. Without their help and support it would have not been possible for me to undertake this research.
From the first day of arrival into the field I spent a considerable amount of time in brokering contacts and creating a network of gatekeepers. With every visit to the field and every research activity, I was introduced by these well-respected members of the community that not only helped me in gaining access to participants, but were also a source of information in their own right. The use of gatekeepers however influences whom you get to speak to and who not. The mothers for instance that participated in this research are all connected to the DMSC in some form, but this connection varies from having a bank account with USHA to being a board member of one of the wings of DMSC.

The research was conducted with the help of a male translator that was already doing some other work for the DMSC. Having a translator that was connected to the DMSC might have had the drawback of influencing certain ideas that were brought up whilst others were left out during research. However, this eventually did not measure up to the benefit of working with someone that was comfortable with and respected by the community. The biggest limitation was my own inability to speak and understand Bengali because many things are lost in translation. I tried to counter this by keeping an on-going dialogue with my translator about the research and also by repeating answers back to him to gage if I had understood correctly.

Secondly, I also have to consider my own position as being a young Caucasian woman, making me a clear outsider. On the one hand, it might have affected some of the interviewees to talk more freely, whilst others might have thought that I could not understand their reality and may have held back. There is no way of knowing this and there is also no way of making me less of an outsider. However, I did try to adhere to social customs and be as open and transparent about my objectives as possible.

A third limitation is that the context of the red light districts is not very conducive to research. The districts are overcrowded and noisy at all times of the day, making it hard to concentrate for the participants as well as the researcher. To give an example, one time I was trying to conduct an interview whilst outside someone was shouting through a megaphone and at the same time some people were giving a trapeze act with monkeys and loud music. Although extreme, it does illustrate a bit of the mayhem going on daily in the red light districts of Kolkata.

Finally, my sample of a 105 participants has a slight gender bias with 59 female participants and 46 male participants. In terms of the children involved in the research this bias is not there seeing that it includes 36 girls and 39 boys. Reflecting back on my sample I would have liked to have interviewed some fathers or male caretakers of children of sex workers, which would have also countered the gender bias. The following two sections, and last of this chapter, will further delve into the difficulties into gaining access to this particular field and the ethical considerations involved.

4.5 Ethical Considerations
Before every interview, I would explain to the participant what my objective was and that the information given to me would be treated confidentially. I would ask if I could record the interview or that they preferred me to just take notes by hand. Remaining anonymous is of vital importance to many of the women working in the red light district and for that reason many did not feel comfortable being recorded. Children would sometimes respond by saying that I should do whatever was best for me, I would then emphasize that it was about them and that for me it did not matter at all and that their comfort was the most important thing. After this they would often say that they felt more comfortable with just taking notes. If I would have said that I preferred to record the interview, many of the children would probably have said yes in order to please me.

Privacy and the importance of anonymity also prevented me from taking pictures or video during my visits to the field. The fact that I never engaged in taking pictures or any other type of voyeuristic behaviour helped me to gain a level of trust in the community that would have otherwise not been possible. However during protest rallies I was told specifically to take pictures and video.

The USHA Multipurpose Cooperative is run for and by sex workers and functions among other things as a bank and credit institute. It also falls under the DMSC umbrella.
Chapter 5: Which Risks and Stressors are relevant to the Lives of Children of Sex Workers?

The lives of children of sex workers are still very much a mystery to academics and policy makers, so before anything can be said about their agency we must first look at their lived realities. The findings presented in this chapter are by in large the result of analysis of children’s own perception of their lives and the risks and stressors they face. Children’s perceptions are important for a number of reasons. First of all, the process of coping starts out with the appraisal of a situation or event as being stressful or not. Secondly, children’s perception of their own capabilities and the possibilities for change affect the strategies that they choose. Four key themes emerged from the analysis namely issues of space, behaviour and practice; stigma; education; and risks related to health and sexuality.

5.1 Issues of Space, Behaviour, and Practice in the Red Light Districts

One could wander into a red light district of Kolkata in the daytime and initially not even be aware that you have entered a place that is in fact quite different from an average impoverished urban neighbourhood in a big Indian city. However, quickly the differences become apparent. An unusually high number of women are present in the streets, loitering, sitting around, playing cards and talking to one another. The women wear heavy make-up, tight fitting skirts and tops revealing their body and their long black hair which is not tied back or braided but instead flows freely down their backs. Some are dressed more traditionally in bright coloured shalwar kameez or a sari, but instead of covering themselves with shawls and wraps they look provocatively at the passing men and call out to them. In the early afternoon it will be fairly quiet, a time at which the women take their rest and have time to cook, but at night it can get so busy that one can hardly put one foot in front of another. Although some elements are present in all Kolkata’s red light districts, there are distinct differences. In the following section, I will first discuss some of the behaviours and practices of those who make up these communities, the sex workers and their children, madams, goondas and clients. Secondly, the red light district as a restricted space will be analysed, again focusing on the effects this has on the lives of the children who grow up here.

5.1.1 Second-generation prostitution, substance abuse and violence: Harmful behaviours in Kolkata’s Red Light Districts.

Sex workers refer to their profession as being on the line; this is a literal description of what you see when you walk around Sonagachi. Women are queued up in lines instead of standing on their own or in groups waiting for customers. In Kalighat and Khiliderpur one also encounters these lines, but sometimes women are also sitting on benches in rooms next to one another. The men walk around looking for someone to their liking. It is of course busier in the evening than it is in the daytime, but there is never a moment that this imagery is not there to be seen, in other words, it is never hidden. The children that grow up here pass by this on a daily basis walking to school or playing in the streets surrounding the brothels. The sex work itself takes place in the brothels and rooms that are also the homes of the sex workers and their children.

According to some authors (Sinha and Das Dasgupta 2009:114-118; Ling 2001: 4; Beard et al 2010: 4) this exposure to the reality of sex work results in children to become sexualized at a young age. It is argued that boys will start visiting sex workers themselves in their early teens and that many girls become pregnant very young and have abortions. The basis for these statements remains unclear, as well as what is meant by being sexualized. Ling (2001:3,4) even goes a step further than this and claims that almost all girl children will follow in their mothers’ footsteps and the boys will mooch of their mothers and sisters earnings. Girls who are pretty will be fed better according to her because they can be valuable in the future. Sircar and Dutta (2011) argue against this in their critique of the movie ‘Born into Brothels’, which also presents this hopeless imagery. According to them statements like these are based on assumptions that the sex workers and their children have no self-control and are powerless to their own actions. Basu and Dutta (2011) in their study of sex workers in Kalighat also found that most sex workers identified themselves as mothers first and that sex work was seen as a way of providing a better future for their children.

My own findings also do not support these claims, mothers as well as social workers expressed that second generation prostitution was no longer a real issue in Kolkata thanks to awareness campaigns and increased possibilities for sex workers to save and loan money from the USHA cooperative as well as an increased provision of educational opportunities for children. In addition to this many of the mothers expressed that their wish for their children was to get away from the red light district and to become a ‘Bhato bhave manush’, which literally means in Bengali to be a person who is successful by good means and for whom everything is in order. Sex work is thus not hereditary and mothers’ wishes for their children are to do anything but sex work. Nevertheless, girls do run a higher risk of taking up sex work, due to the practice of early marriage and the
stigma of being the child of a sex worker. This will be discussed further later on. That being said to see their mothers practice sex work is causing children feelings of despair and shame.

‘I felt a little bit sad. In my mind I tried to say to her “do not go back to this work”, but I have never said this to her to not hurt her feelings.’
(17, M, CSW6, 17/10/2012, Kolkata)

‘I feel sad about my auntie. People discriminate against us and they do not accept us.’
(13, M, CSW9, 1/11/2012, Kolkata)

‘Staying with my mother when I came out of the room for instance to go to the market and the sex workers were standing in line, the customers would comment, they would make me feel embarrassed. Their outlook and behaviour was to me embarrassing.’
(23, F, PCSW3, 16/10/2012, Kolkata)

The customers and other men that are present in the neighbourhood are a daily nuisance to the children. Many have substance abuse issues, get into fights and are a general disturbance. A majority of the children reported to not being able to do their homework or get a good night’s sleep because there were always drunk people shouting and fighting in the streets.

‘From morning till night I have to listen to abusive language. Near my house there is a liquor shop and there are drunkards that will shout all night. I cannot sleep.’
(18, M, CSW5, 17/10/2012, Kolkata)

Addiction to drugs and alcohol is also an issue with the sex workers themselves and not only their partners. Some children have also grown up outside of their mothers’ house to protect them from this

‘I have lived with my grandmother from a very early age. My mother tries to stay away from responsibility and she does not give a lot of support. My father died and it’s my grandmother that supports me.’
(17, F, CSW2 12/10/2012, Kolkata)

One boy noted that he would like to become a police officer when he grew up so he could do something about it, seeing that currently the police did not do anything. Moreover, the customers are a threat to the girls who grow up in these neighbourhoods. Many of the girls who participated in this research commented that the customers do not know who is a sex worker and who is not and that they often get propositioned in the street. It was noted by several twelve-year-old girls that their parents had told them that, when they got older, they would take them away to the village to keep them safe. This behaviour by men causes some girls to barely leave their home, whilst in other cases it is the mothers who, trying to protect them from sexual abuse, do not allow them to leave the house. According to Sanlaap (2010: 26, 27) children of families who are directly engaged in sex work are more vulnerable to neglect, physical abuse and sexual abuse then others who are growing up in the same neighbourhood.

Although boys are also negatively affected by the behaviours of the customers, the mothers perceived them to be in less danger of sexual abuse. Mothers in terms of their sons mentioned the availability of alcohol, drugs and cigarettes as a concern. They would reflect that many other teenage boys in the neighbourhood had gone bad, using bad language, smoking and drinking, not working and not taking care of their mothers.

“They become aggressive living in a difficult situation and very few accept the challenge and get educated and established.’
(32, M10, 2/10/2012, Kolkata)

Furthermore, they are more likely to get involved in the local gangs, also called goondas (Sinha and Das Dasgupta 2009:128). Some of these gangs are affiliated with political parties. They threaten the sex workers and try to extort money from them.

Moreover, mothers mentioned that some boys would force their mothers to give them money sometimes by violent means other times by shaming her about her profession, a story echoed by Sinha and Das Dasgupta (2009:115).

5.1.2 The Effects of Space and Place
All red light districts in Kolkata are the same in terms of a general lack of space being available for children. As said before the streets are occupied with the sex workers and their clients, the children are playing in the midst of this often to their mothers dismay who are as best as they can trying to keep them away. I noticed that you see a lot of boys playing cricket or flying kites, but there are hardly any girls to be seen. As described before there are more restrictions on the movements of girls, which not only means that they cannot move around freely in the red light district, but they can also not go outside it unchaperoned. Boys will set of in a group to fields and playgrounds outside of the neighbourhood but for the girls this is not an option.
‘We are girls, we cannot do all the things that they can; there are restrictions for us. I think this is ok.’
(12, F, CSW16, 28/11/2012, Kolkata)

In addition, there have been issues with children being chased off by people living in neighbouring communities when playing on the outskirts of the red light district. Sonagachi differs from the other red light districts in that the brothels are all situated in multi-story buildings. One of the brothels that I visited was a five-story building painted in bright colours, the hallways lined with about a dozen rooms in which women were entertaining their clients, or having a cigarette break. A toddler was crawling around the floors playing with a toy car and a baby was being breastfed. In these brothels the women will have one room for themselves in which they live with their children and conduct their business. The rooftop of the brothel functioned as a common area where the women and their babus could do their cooking and their washing. Compared to Khidderpur and Kalighat the Sonagachi brothels are a bit more spacious. Many of the women had their own television or refrigerator.

In Kalighat as well as Khidderpur all the buildings are lines of single story cement cells, often no bigger than three square meters. Some enter out unto a shared courtyard, which functions as a common space. Most of the rooms consist of nothing else but a wooden plank with a matrass underneath which the women have stashed all their worldly possessions, next to the bed there might be about forty centimetres of space for a small stove and some food.

When the women have to work, children cannot be in the house. Those that have two rooms are considered lucky and the children can go there. Sometimes older sex workers will rent out their room as a sort of makeshift crèche where the children can sleep at night. The lack of space means children have no place to study. Moreover, their mothers’ working hours cause them to have to go to bed very late, which also affects their ability to perform well in school. Most of the children when asked where they go when their mother has to work said they would go out in the street or go to the coaching centre in the evening. The coaching centre in Khidderpur provides a safe place for children to be in in the evening, but again it is too small for the overwhelming number of children that need shelter. The centre is about eight square meters and on an average night I counted more than forty children in this space in addition to the three grown-ups that were there to watch them. Their teacher was trying to provide them with some schooling, but there was not even enough space to put down a notebook. The centre is on the main street of the Khidderpur red light district and the only thing to keep the constant noise out is a thin curtain.

Both in the interviews as well as in the participatory sessions children expressed the wish to have better housing. However, the participatory sessions showed a big difference in what children envisioned for the places they would want to live in when they are older. In Khidderpur and Kalighat many children drew pictures of high-rise buildings with gardens and sometimes a doorman to keep them safe. This can be seen in the first drawing, made by a 14-year-old boy from Khidderpur. He also emphasized having plenty of space, and the neighbourhood being well lit, green and safe. A high-rise was considered as a quality building in which you would not get cold and have enough space to live together. The children of Sonagachi, who are growing up in multiple story buildings, would draw pictures of their parents’ native village. The second drawing for instance, made by a twelve year old boy from Sonagachi, shows him with his father in the village. Their whole family could live there he said, have plenty of space and fields and animals to provide for them. To them it seemed better to be in a rural environment where you had land and space to play.
5.2 Relation to Parents

All the mothers were asked if they were raising their children alone or with the father or another partner. In addition to this, 33 of the children who participate in the research were also asked about their fathers’ role in their lives. In 22 of the 46 cases the father was playing no role in the upbringing of the children. The reasons for this varied between the father being deceased, having left the family, being a migrant worker or truck driver, being bed ridden, battling addiction or that the mothers had left because of violence perpetrated on them and/or their children by the father. In the 24 cases where there was a constant male presence in the lives of the children it was often not their biological father, but their mothers’ babu. Some of these adopt the children and really do become a father figure, but others do not contribute in any way to the children’s lives. These men can however at times be a source of emotional support to the sex workers. Not having their fathers in their lives seemed to be of no real importance to some children, whilst others professed great sadness over being abandoned.

“There is no more contact between my father and mother. It is better that he is there, because he is living with another woman.’
(16, F, CSW3, 12/10/2012, Kolkata)

’I am living with my mother; my father is not there. He left us six years ago. My father is never coming back.’
(12, F, CSW16, 28/11/2012, Kolkata)

It was mentioned by mothers that boys do not have good male role models. This seems to relate to the normative ideal of the nuclear family. Having a father or being able to say that their parents are married helps children adhere to social standards and can improve their standing with peers and teachers. For some children it did not seem to matter, but for many others fitting this ideal was of great importance. Dr. Smarajit Jana stated that alienation from parents also causes vulnerabilities for these children. According to him, there is a communication gap between parents and their children, which is strengthened by regular separation. For many of these children their mother is their whole world and all the family they have. It is therefore that much more painful when she is branded as a bad person by the rest of society. Even though many of the sex workers are doing everything they can to provide, it also means they are often not available for their children. It was mentioned by the mothers that they felt they could not give proper guidance to their children and that without their supervision there was a risk of them going down the wrong path. The interaction of clients with their mothers is also a cause for distress and even envy for some children.

‘When I speak to the customers my children will say “why do speak to them, you should only be speaking to us”. They do not like when I have to deal with the customers, when there is no customers they never disturb me. I feel sad when I do not have the time to speak with them because I have a customer.’
(50, M8, 2/10/2012, Kolkata)

5.3 Stigma

Children of sex workers figure out at a very early age that the place that they are from is not considered respectable by others, even before they become aware of the nature of their mothers work. Many of the children expressed feelings of sadness when they found out what their mothers were doing. When they are at school they often have to keep this a secret, causing them to feel disconnected from others.

’I felt bad and sad. I could not share it with my friends. This is just her situation, which is just that she has to look after the family. I have requested my parents to find a better occupation. So I asked my mother and she said “your father is not supporting us with enough money, so I am doing this’”.
(18, M, CSW5, 17/10/2012, Kolkata)

Children as well as mothers referred to the world outside of the red light district as the ‘mainstream’ society, expressing that their own neighbourhood was abnormal and outside of it. Mothers also stated that they wanted their children to be able to function in what they refer to as the ‘mainstream’ society. One of the wishes that recurred in most of the interviews with children was that they wanted to be able to play with children ‘from the mainstream society’, but that these children were often not allowed to do so. The children of sex workers suffer directly from the stigma on their mothers’ work, they are seen as bad children, a sentiment that is often expressed to them when teachers or peers in school find out where they are from.

‘The children that live outside of the red light district; their parents tell them to not mix with us because we are bad children. We miss that we cannot mix with others and become friends with the kids from the mainstream society.’
(17, M, CSW15, 26/11/2012, Kolkata)

Stigma also influences their self-esteem. Some children expressed worry that in the future, if they wanted to find a job people would not let them because of the place that they are from. Where some were sad about being rejected, others felt anger and hopelessness about changing people’s minds.
Eventually this could lead to children becoming depressed and even suicidal.

5.4 Education

The before mentioned risks and stressors such as the lack of the space, violence and substance abuse, influence the ability of children to study in general. For the great majority of the sex workers that participated in this research giving their children a proper education was their number one goal. The hope is not only that their children will be able to physically move out of the red light district, but also that they get away from being socially marginalized and become respectable members of what is referred to as the ‘mainstream’ society. The findings of this research are completely counter to what Ling (2001: 5) claims, speaking about sex workers and their children in Bangladesh, that these mothers give little importance to education. That being said, these dreams will often not come true, poignantly put by Sinha and Das Dasgupta (2009: 140).

‘Despite the mothers’ ardent hopes, the educational profile of their children was dismal.’

Mr. Santoosh of the USHA Cooperative expressed to me that over 60 % of the loans taken out by sex workers are for the education of their children. This wish was hampered by financial constraints but also because of problems with school admission. Enrolment required the child to be registered under his or her father’s name that was often unknown, which subsequently led to schools refusing to admit the children of sex workers (Saha et al 2008: 5; Jayasree 2004: 60; Website Durbar). Both Dr. Smarajit Jana, the chief advisor of the DMSC, and Ms. Indrani Sinha, the executive director at Sanlaap, as well as several mothers expressed to me that in the city of Kolkata admission was no longer a real problem. It seems that these findings contradict the reality of the rest of the country, The Times of India reported on the 25th of December 2011 that Uttar Pradesh would be following the example of West Bengal whereby children of sex workers are included under the vulnerable populations under the Right to Education Act (RTE) and are therefore entitled to free education, books, uniforms and school meals. The state of Maharashtra made a similar move on the 4th of June 2013, including children of sex workers in the mandatory 25% reservation under the RTE for the poor and backward classes (Times of India). Even though the policy in West Bengal is to not register children under their fathers’ name, schools still ask for it (Sinha and Das Dasgupta 2009: 148).

The issue of financial constraints has not been lifted, and for many of the mothers their greatest worry is that they will no longer be able to finance their child’s education. However, this is not the only issue that affects education outcomes. A study done by Sanlaap (2010: 19) showed that the number of children from Kolkata’s red light district that have never attended school is negligible, but many children drop out. Moreover, many children that are enrolled in school have fallen behind. Finally, there are very few children of those that have at least finished 10th grade that continue onwards to higher education. The following section will discuss these issues in more detail.

5.4.1 Dropping out of school

Data on the school trajectory of 85 children was acquired through interviews with mothers, children of sex workers and the participatory sessions. Out of these 85 children 16.5 % had either never attended school or dropped out before the 9th grade. Some had had some informal schooling or vocational training after having dropped out, but others never returned to school. Several girls mentioned that they had dropped out because of care duties towards a parent or other family member. One girl had to leave school after her parents’ divorce to take care of her mother who had fallen ill. When asked if she ever thought of returning she said the following:

‘No, I have not thought of returning. When I had a dream of studying I could not do it and this willingness has disappeared. I was under mental pressure and taking care of my mother took this willingness away.’

(18, F, AP3, 15/10/2012, Kolkata)

Divorce and the subsequent move to the red light district were mentioned by several children as a reason for dropping out. Mothers as well as children also mentioned financial constraints as a common reason for leaving school, but the reasons behind the constraints often differed. In one case it was the fathers heroin addiction that resulted in the sons being taken out of school to be set to work. In another case of a now 17 year old girl, it was the fact that her family had three daughters and thus three dowries to pay in combination with the believe that it was not proper for girls to be out of the house that led to her and her sisters dropping out. In three cases, all girls, early marriage was the reason for dropping out, whereby two had an arranged marriage whilst another eloped at sixteen. Another issue that was brought up by many of the mothers, which was not mentioned by the children or the social workers was the issue of children doing odd jobs. It was said that there is a lot of easy money in the red light districts and children will start running errands and doing odd jobs for the customers but also the sex workers. This money takes them away from school and into bad company.

There is thus a myriad of reasons why these children drop out, but what was mentioned most often as a reason for
leaving school was discriminatory and sometimes violent treatment at school by teachers and peers. This was not only mentioned by those who had dropped out, but also by other children, sex workers and social workers. One girl talking about her reasons for leaving school at the age of 12 told me the following:

‘A boy grabbed me on my way to school and used abusive language about my mother and saying that he wanted to have sex with me. I reported this to my mother and she went to the school, but the boy was the son of the panchayat head, so I was forced to leave the school.’

(17, F, CSW1, 12/10/2012, Kolkata)

This incidence had happened shortly after the girl had found out her mother was a sex worker. When in school, children are forced to live in two realities, they often try and hide what their mothers do and where they live, causing them considerable stress. In addition, when teachers or peers do find out, the child is often teased and shunned. In this case the girl hardly came out of the house anymore because she felt it was not safe to do so. Children will feel humiliated by teachers and peers. According to Dr. Smarajit Jana, it is this stigma that takes away the motivation of these children to go to school. Sinha and Das Dasgupta (2009:147) argue there is a significant increase in drop-out around the age of 12, which according to them indicates that when these children become aware of the reality of their mothers work it causes them so much stress and tension that they can no longer function at school. I also found that it is around the age of 12 that most children begin to understand what their mothers profession entails, however children younger then 12 expressed awareness and knowledge of their neighbourhood being different than others and the fact that other people viewed it as a bad place.

5.4.2 Grade Attainment

Out of the same sample of 85 children, 64 are currently still in school, of those 64 children 62.5% was not in the appropriate grade in terms of age. The number of years that they were behind varied between one and six, with an average of 2.3 years. Sinha and Das Dasgupta (2009:144) found similar results in their study of children of Kolkata’s sex workers. One can often not pinpoint a singular reason why children have fallen behind.

Many children mentioned that they had moved a lot and changed school many times. Often there were gaps in between admittance to a new school or a child was admitted in a lower grade than he or she had attended before. In addition to this, children will not always start school at the mandatory age; some will perhaps attend informal schooling and later on start with formal schooling. Several mothers also mentioned medical issues as a reason for their children lagging behind in school. Finally, very low and irregular attendance caused children to be held back.

These issues are not uncommon for India’s poor, but in this case they are compounded by the fact that these children are growing up in the red light district, which means that more often than not they come from an unstable single parent home. Moreover, many of the mothers mentioned that they preferred their children to be raised outside of the red light districts so children are often send to residential schools. For boys the reason for this was to provide them with a better education, for girls this was also mentioned, but another more compelling reason was that the red light district was considered an unsafe place to raise girls. Not having someone to watch their daughters and trying to protect their children from the reality of their mothers’ work were also mentioned as reasons for sending them away. In addition, it was also difficult for mothers to do their profession with their children present. When asked why there were more girls in the Baruipur Residential School, the home superintendent answered that:

‘Whenever the girl is growing up it is difficult to do their profession when the girls are in the house. To keep them safe they do not want to keep them alone in the house.’

(23, F, PW3, 22/11/2012, Baruipur)

In general, it was mentioned by mothers, social workers and some children that within the red light district the mothers are very willing but not capable of giving the proper guidance. One youth noted that:

‘The children of sex workers do not get the proper care that they need. I do believe a single mother is equal to a hundred teachers, but yet they cannot give this care of a better environment with better facilities.’

(28, M, PSW6, 3/11/2012, Kolkata)

Residential schools are considered by mothers as places that provide structure and an environment that is conducive to studying, but paradoxically in some cases being sent to a residential school was a reason for children lagging behind. Several children mentioned to having experienced maltreatment by teachers, support staff and peers at these schools and had run away from them.

5.4.3 Higher Education

The Indian schooling system is similar to the British wherein secondary school consists of grades 9 till 12. In
grade 10 children will have to do a public exam, which after completion awards them the secondary school certificate. The results of this exam influence which subjects they can take in grade 11 and 12 after which there is another public exam that enables them to attend an university. The great majority of children of sex workers do not sit the 10th grade exam and the number of children continuing with grade 11 and 12 is even smaller.

The data on school trajectories shows that only five children had finished the 11th grade or higher, one child was currently enrolled in the 11th grade and another in the 12th grade. It was noted by the children of sex workers who are now grown up that when they were younger there were even fewer facilities and opportunities for studying, but that the current generation is dropping out of school sooner. According to them, the number of children participating in primary school has risen but they do not continue their education. One eighteen-year-old boy and current college student said:

"When I was growing up the mothers motivated us to get the highest education. Now the children do not go for the higher education and instead look for ways to earn money."

(18, M, PCSW4, 31/10/2012, Kolkata)

Another young man who had already finished college said:

Children will sometimes complete their studies until the 10th grade but after that they drop out; others already drop out in the 5th grade to start a job.

(28, M, PCSW6, 3/11/2012/ Kolkata)

5.5 Health and Sexuality

Sex and sexuality are of great influence on the lives of children of sex workers. It is how their mother’s provide for them and it is what they are associated with outside their own community. Three key themes emerged from the research, namely the importance of reproductive and prenatal care for sex workers, the risks of infection with syphilis, HIV/AIDS and other STD’s and the damaging effects of the practice of early marriage. It was found that second generation prostitution is no longer happening as a hereditary practice, but that early marriage and children having to keep their identity of being the child of a sex worker does lead to children of sex workers taking up sex work later in life.

5.5.1 Reproductive Care and HIV/AIDS

Seeing that this research focussed on children from the age of six onwards, not much attention was given to prenatal care. This topic is rightfully discussed by Sinha and Das Dasgupta (2009: 96-104). Prenatal care or the lack thereof can influence children’s health and ability to cope the rest of their lives. In their study of 272 sex workers from Kolkata 92.3 % had received some form of prenatal care during pregnancy, but care was irregular at best and giving birth often took place under unhygienic circumstance without any support of any kind and postnatal care was found to be absent in almost all cases. During pregnancy the women themselves are often lacking in nutrition. Moreover, they often have to return to sex work shortly after giving birth and the nature of their work prevents to regularly breastfeed their child. All of this results in children being malnourished from a very early age, which in turn leads to other health issues as well as disturbances in growth.

There is also a high risk of children being infected with syphilis or HIV/AIDS due to a lack of reproductive care for their mothers. In later life this remains to be an issue due to high prevalence of these illnesses in the red light districts. According to estimations from 2007 there are currently close to 3.6 million people living with HIV/AIDS in India (Basu and Dutta 2011:108,109). Commercial sex workers in India are a high-risk group for being infected. In cities like Bombay, Chennai and Delhi it is estimated that 50 to 90% of all sex workers are infected with HIV/AIDS (Ghose et al, 2008: 311), but in Kolkata this is somewhere between five and 11 % thanks to successful work of the DMSC. Still, as was expressed by doctors of the local health clinics, it is of the utmost importance to inform children of sex workers about HIV/AIDS and other STDs such as syphilis because they remain to constitute a high-risk group. A lot of work is going on to create awareness among sex workers and their children and many of the children participating in this research showed to have knowledge of prevention, treatment and detection of HIV/AIDS and STDs.

5.5.2 Early Marriage

As mentioned before mothers will try to protect their children by taking them out of the red light district. One of the ways of doing this is by marrying them of young. One girl from Khidderpur told me her story of how her mother had tried to protect her by marrying her of at the age of 12 to a 25-year old man who was living in their native village.

‘My mother thought that I should be away from sex work, but I was not mature enough and I could not adjust to family life.’

(25, F, PCSW2, 11/10/2012, Kolkata)

Eventually after three or four years of being married, she could not take it anymore and ran away back to her mother. Here she was not welcomed with open arms. Her mother was angry with her for coming back and members of the community also reproached her for leaving her husband.
Outsiders would make a lot of comments to me after coming back, that my mother had suffered a lot for me and that she had paid a lot. They would ask me what I would do now and that I would suffer in life.

(25, F, PCSW2, 11/10/2012, Kolkata)

Early marriage is not only an issue present in the red light districts; it is a common practice in West-Bengal and India in general. The underlying idea is often that by marrying a girl at a young age she cannot become ‘spoiled’, parents are trying to control their daughters’ sexuality that is seen as a threat to the families’ honour. Being ‘spoiled’, in other words becoming sexual active before marriage, is considered even more of a risk by mothers in the red light district not only in terms of their daughter own actions but also what customers or local boys may do to them.

On the other hand, another big fear, which was mentioned by many of the mothers, was that their daughters would elope. One mother told me that her daughter had run away and married a boy at the age of 16, whilst her mother had wanted to give her an education. For a few years they did not have any contact because the mother was so angry and disappointed in her daughter.

Finding a suitable husband is a cause for great concern in general. One woman said that it was especially difficult because there were not a lot of good men in the red light district, but that a marriage to a village boy would not work out because her daughters were city girls. It was noted several times by mothers as well as by children that many of the arranged marriages between girls from the red light districts and boys from outside of the community did not work out. Girls are treated badly by their in-laws and seen as “bad” because they are children of sex workers. These marriages often fall apart and the girls end up back with their mother most of the time with a child of their own. Some of these girls will eventually choose to join the line, especially if their mother can no longer take care of them (Sinha and Das Dasgupta 2009: 122).

5.6 Conclusion

Numerous risks and stressors influence the lives of children of sex workers on a daily basis. The behaviours and practices within the red light district are a risk in their own right, but outside this context it is stigma that is most harmful to children of sex workers. Problems regarding education are directly related to stigma, causing peers as well as teachers to discriminate and at times become violent. The need to keep children, especially girls, safe influences parents to opt for early marriage. This practice also occurs outside of the sex workers communities, but the secret of being a child of a sex worker and the effects of the related stigma when this is known causes many of these marriages to fail. It is at this time that girls are very vulnerable of ending up in sex work themselves. How do children cope with these risks and stressors? How can children for instance protect themselves from sexual abuse, or get away from violence and disturbances in their neighbourhood? Now we know more about the relevant risks and stressors, the next chapter will turn to the coping strategies employed by children of sex workers in their daily lives.
Chapter 6: What are the Individual and Collective Coping Strategies that Children of Sex Workers draw on?

What are the strategies children of sex workers use and why do they choose one over the other? In this chapter coping strategies are analysed using the model of ‘getting by’, ‘getting back at’, ‘getting out’ and ‘getting organized’ (Redmond 2008). This model is helpful as it can be used to differentiate between strategies aimed at short-term fixes and long-term goals.

6.1 Getting By

‘Getting by’ refers to coping strategies on a personal level geared towards dealing with daily stressors (Redmond 2008). The coping strategies that I will discuss under this heading are accommodation, escape and resignation.

6.1.1 Accommodation

Accommodation refers to coping strategies whereby a person flexibly adjust one’s goals and wishes in order to deal with daily stresses and persistent problems (Seltzer, Greenberg, Floyd and Hong 2004: 187; Schwarzer and Knoll 2003). The objective is thus not to change the environment or take away the stressor but to adjust and align expectations and preferences with the available options and thereby accepting the status quo. In the following section, I will discuss how accommodation is linked to the high drop-out rates among children of sex workers and the ways in which girls use accommodation strategies as a means to accept their limited options and restricted freedom within the red light district.

6.1.1.2 Leaving school and finding jobs

A very small minority of parents will not see the benefit of their child attending school, but in most cases this does not apply and the number one goal of most sex workers is getting their child educated. However, children are often very much aware of the financial burden this puts on the family. When asked about their ideas about the future and what might stand in the way of these dreams many of the children answered that financial issues could mean the end of their education.

‘Those who leave school often see that how their mothers are struggling and they feel they should do something and earn money.’
(25, F, PCSW1, 9/10/2012, Kolkata)

Children might on the one hand be very motivated and willing to pursue an education but on the other hand feel obliged to support their family and will eventually choose to drop out, often to great dismay of their mothers.

Another rational that was put forward by mothers, children and social workers is that children will start doing odd jobs for sex workers and their clients at a very early age.

‘From a very early age when children are playing in the street sex workers will ask them to do small jobs, like getting some groceries. Children will sometimes use this money for themselves and others give it to their mothers.’
(23, F, PCSW3, 16/10/2012, Kolkata)

‘They are all working in the tea factory to support their family; there are no fathers to support the family.’
(16, M, CSW7, 18/10/2012, Kolkata)

Children are aware of the difficulties their mothers face to provide them with an education. They also experience uncertainty about their ability to finish their education, and if that education will even provide them with new options. Combined with the other options that are available in the red light district to earn money, this results in them letting go of the wish to be educated and instead start earning for the family.

6.1.1.3 Girls internalizing the rational for their Restricted Position

During the participatory sessions I would ask the children to describe to me where they would go to play, to meet friends, how they went to school, in other words how they moved about the red light districts. It became clear during these sessions that whereas boys are allowed to take the bus or walk for 30 minutes to a playing field, girls will stay in the house and will only be allowed to venture out in their own street or go to a supervised coaching centre. These restrictions on girls were especially present in Sonagachi. All the girls that talked about these restrictions during the participatory sessions as well as the interviews thought of them as being logical and acceptable consequences of them being girls.

‘We are girls so we cannot do all the things they can; there are restrictions for us. I think this is ok.’
(12, F, CSW16, 28/11/2012, Kolkata)

‘No, when I grow up they will restrict my movement more. They think that a girl child might be kidnapped.’
(12, F, CSW17, 28/11/2012, Kolkata)
When asked about their ideas of their future and where they would be it was often mentioned that their family would take them away when they got older.

‘No, I will go somewhere else. When I grow up my mum will take me away. I am comfortable here but my mother has said that she will take me away.’
(12, F, CSW16, 28/11/2012, Kolkata)

‘I am moving to the village, my father does not want that I live here when I grow up. My father says that this is a bad idea and when I will be around 15, 16 he said I will go to the village.’
(10, F, CSG4, 7/12/2012, Kolkata)

Even though the girls themselves did not feel an urge to leave, they did not question that their parents had already decided this for them as being the best option available.

‘I had the aspiration to educate myself, but I could not continue. When I was asked to do the final exam my mother-in-law selected me and my mother said I should get married, that it was a good man and also for the social security.’
(25, F, PCSW1, 9/10/2012, Kolkata)

Marriage is seen as a surer way than education of obtaining financial security. This interviewee had been a few months away of finishing her high school education, she had always done well in school and had been motivated to continue, but when the marriage proposal came in it was all set aside. She expressed to me that she would have liked to finish her education, but the marriage was too good an opportunity.

Girls use accommodation as a coping strategy to accept their unequal position in society, and thereby instead of trying to change it, they adjust their preferences to what is available for them.

6.1.2 Escape
Another strategy in dealing with daily hassles and persistent stressors is to escape. Children of sex workers use escape in many different ways. It can refer to removing oneself physically, or to being withdrawn and choosing social isolation.

6.1.2.1 Leaving during working hours
In order to give their mothers the space to work, but also to protect themselves from being confronted with clients children will often stay away from the house for a few hours in the evening. Teenagers will go and meet friends, but for younger children this is no real option. In Kolkata’s red light district there are now quite a few coaching centres where children can go in the evening and try and work on their homework, but seeing as these are often overcrowded it is mostly about staying somewhere safe.

‘From 19:00 till 22:00 I will remain outside of the house and chat with my friends so my mother can work.’
(17, M, CSW15, 26/11/2012, Kolkata)

6.1.2.2 Running away from Boarding Schools
Sending their children to a hostel is seen by mothers as a way of providing them with a good education, an environment which is conducive to studying, and keeping them away from the dangers and bad influences of the red light district.

Being sent to a hostel can indeed help facilitate children’s education, it however depends greatly on the quality of the hostel. Reports of abuse in these homes are not uncommon and in some cases the children’s experiences are so bad that they will run away.

‘The education was not good there and we were beaten in the hostel. I was 6 years old when I went to the hostel and I was 8 when I started to live with my family in Kalighat.’
(12, F, CSW21, 12/12/2012, Kolkata)

Children will decide to do this even if they are aware of the troubles their mother went through to get them into the hostel. Several of the children who had done this expressed to me that although the red light district was not perfect they preferred being there with their family and being treated well over being in a hostel. Some children described being beaten and locked up, but for others the reasons were more benign and involved getting away from a strict teacher or simply missing their mother and friends. Even though their mothers would be very angry with them, they accepted the decision of the child to return home.

6.1.2.3 Eloping
In the previous chapter I spoke of the risk of early marriage, children will however also decide to get married themselves at a very young age. Mother expressed being very fearful of their daughters falling in love and being cheated. Many used the expression ‘getting mixed up in an illicit love’.

One mother told me that she had not had contact with her daughter for two years when she eloped at 16.

Getting married is of immense importance in India, and once you are married the community sees you as being an adult. For girls it also means leaving their parents’ home.
and moving in with their husband and in-laws. In a way marriage is thus a means of escape. That this is not condoned was not only expressed by the mothers, several of the teenagers whom I interviewed observed that children will elope because they see it as their only option or because they are not able to take advantage of the opportunities that are there for them.

"Those who are not getting involved and not have opportunities they are getting involved in love and become pregnant, but there are opportunities."
(17, M, CSW13, 5/11/2012, Kolkata)

Mothers thus saw it as an act of rebellion or mischief, whereas youths themselves saw it as a choice out of desperation. Both groups however agreed that especially for girls this usually ended badly.

6.1.2.4 Social Isolation
Mothers, children and social workers identified social isolation as a strategy albeit in different ways. Mothers saw bad treatment at school by teachers and peers as a reason for children to become withdrawn and eventually leave school. Social workers recognized the same issue, but also mentioned children isolating themselves from and avoiding contact with people and children from the mainstream society. Finally, children themselves brought up all these issues but some also spoke of isolating themselves from everyone within the red light district.

"I do not have any friends in the locality. I remain with my auntie and my mother's sister and only go outside for school and coaching class."
(13, F, CSW19, 12/12/2012, Kolkata)

Reasons for this were being afraid of harassment by clients but general statements were also made that all the people in the neighbourhood were bad. By withdrawing from unsupportive context and freezing out everyone who could potentially be harmful, children seek to protect themselves.

6.1.2.5 Concealment
The last type of escape I would like to discuss is concealment and being secretive. Children will choose to not tell their friends at school where they are from and try and prevent them from finding out so as to avoid being ridiculed and shunned.

"Outside they are not free to speak or they do not feel comfortable to speak out."
(Age 30, M7, 2/1/2012, Kolkata)

Concealment thus functions as a strategy to cope with and escape from the stigma that is present within society.

6.1.3 Resignation
‘Getting by’ (Redmond 2008) is not about changing the environment, but instead these strategies focus on surviving within the present context. The previous sections discussed coping strategies whereby children adjusted their preferences to fit the options they perceived as being available to them and coping strategies whereby they could temporarily escape or avoid risks and stressors. This last group of coping strategies focuses on ways in which children of sex workers come to perceive their situation as something that they cannot change and can only accept for what it is.

6.1.3.1 Acceptance of Sex Work as a Necessary Evil
In the previous chapter it was discussed that many children experience feelings of sadness and shame when they become aware of what their mother is doing. Although these feelings might not go away, many children expressed that their initial emotions faded over time when they came to realize that their mother had to do this in order to take care of the family. Some still hoped that a better option for earning a livelihood would present itself, but they had come to see sex work as the best option at present.

"The sex workers, those who are earning in this way, they have taken this option to support their families; they are not doing it for pleasure but for supporting the family. Sex workers have to struggle a lot to earn money and maintain the family and it is not easy or comfortable."
(17, M, CSW6, 17/10/2012, Kolkata)

Seeing sex work as a necessity enables them to at least in some extent let go of the societal view of sex workers as bad people and instead see them as women who are working hard for their families.

6.1.3.2 Helplessness
In the participatory sessions children were asked if they thought their neighbourhood would be different in twenty years’ time. Many hoped that it would change, but most thought chances of this were slim at best and the majority hoped to be living elsewhere.

"Yes, it would not be possible to change the area itself, because everyone here lives on sex work so this will not change."
(12, F, CSW20, 12/12/2012, Kolkata)
Perceiving the red light districts as impervious to change or seeing themselves as powerless to do anything about it leaves children turning to passivity as a coping strategy. Although this might lessen stress in the short-term it also diminishes their self-esteem and confidence that they can achieve their goals. One 18-year-old boy, who was now in his final year of high school, told me that he thought it was not really possible to change anything especially not the way in which people from the mainstream viewed them. He also stated the following:

’What the children are missing is some good opportunities for jobs, when they stop studying. When their family is not supporting them they cannot study anymore and those who do are not getting better jobs.’
(18, M, CSW5, 17/10/2012, Kolkata)

6.1.3.3 Depression and Suicide
When children start to perceive their situation as unchangeable and themselves as powerless and unable this can lead to intense feelings of despair. Mothers and children both did not speak to me about these issues, however it was mentioned in informal conversation as well as unstructured interviews that depression is quite common among children of sex workers. Some children eventually get so depressed and withdrawn that they commit suicide.

’The fact that some young people do not see a way out, or by the effects of their surroundings, strained relations or other reasons become very depressed and this has led to suicides.’
(Indrani Sinha, PW2, 26/9/2012, Kolkata)

Perhaps committing suicide is not an act that can be considered under this section, however I chose to mention it here to underline the importance of coping strategies that move beyond ‘getting by’, and also to emphasize the idea that coping strategies are not always positive. This last section on resignation might seem contra intuitive to the idea of agency, but to resign oneself to a situation and to accept the status quo are acts that enable children to cope with persistent stress and daily hassles.

6.2 Getting back at
Redmond (2008:8) describes ‘getting back at’ as confrontational behaviour by which children can channel their anger and despair. By coping in this manner children try and resist and oppose their circumstances and social norms. The presence of drugs, gangs and violence in the red light district is on the one hand a stressor for children, whilst on the other hand they might join in these behaviours as a way of coping. In this way themselves become the risk to other children.

6.2.1 Aggression/ Defiance
None of the children or mothers that participated in this research identified their own or their children’s behaviour as being defiant or aggressive, however during the interviews they would bring it up to describe other children within the community. Examples that were given varied from smoking and drinking in front of their mother to demanding money and telling their mother that she could not refuse it because she earned it with sex work. It is difficult to determine how often this type of behaviour occurs. The participants in my study unanimously disapproved of it, but it was brought up often.

6.2.2 Substance abuse
Again I did not speak to any children that were involved in substance abuse or at least none admitted to do so to me. Some mentioned that other children would drink alcohol or smoke marijuana. The general contention among mothers and children was that alcohol was a bigger problem than drugs.

’Children who are living here many get addicted to alcohol;’
(Age 34, M10, 4/10/2012, Kolkata)

’There are teenagers who are getting addicted to Ganja [Marijuana] and sex. They have no aim in life. They only focus on enjoyment and do not take life seriously. These opposite ideas are standing in the way of their motivation and them becoming involved.’
(17, M, CSW13, 5/11/2012, Kolkata)

Children identified having no clear goals and lacking determination to overcome difficulties as reasons why some children choose to use alcohol and drugs.

’The use of betel, tobacco and glue sniffing are an issue, especially in red light districts near to rail lines. These are often very lonely places where no one objects when children are doing this. They also get started under peer pressure.’
(28, M, PCSW6, 3/11/2012, Kolkata)

Abusing alcohol and drugs can be seen on the one hand as an act of defiance, whilst on the other it serves as a coping strategy of mental withdrawal.

6.2.3 Joining local gangs
During informal conversation it was often mentioned that local youths would come and threaten sex workers to pay protection money. These gangs are affiliated to political parties, local clubs and gangsters. What the extent of the involvement of children of sex workers is in these gangs is
hard to say. Most mentioned it as something that happens but that it is not common.

'Sometimes gangs from outside the community will come and some children do become involved in these gangs.'
(28, M, PCSW6, 3/11/2012, Kolkata)

These gangs have great influence within the red light districts and joining them might be seen as a way of obtaining power that is otherwise unavailable.

### 6.3 Getting out

'Getting out' (Redmond 2008) goes beyond coping with daily hassles and persistent stressors and refers to strategies whereby children actively try to change and improve their situation. Where coping strategies of ‘getting by’ often mean giving up preferences or temporarily escaping stressors but not solving them, ‘getting out’ entails coping strategies whereby children actively engage with and search for resources, means and alternatives routes to achieve their goals. ‘Getting out’ does not mean to physically moving out of the red light district, instead it means to try and overcome structural constraints.

#### 6.3.1 Problem solving

During my research I was often confronted with children who had encountered abuse, neglect, discrimination, abandonment and loss. For some, these experiences had left them resigned and passive, but for many that I spoke to it only meant that they would try that much harder. The latter group displayed problem solving as a coping mechanism.

In other words they flexibly adjust their plans to be effective in reaching their goals. Where accommodation refers to the changing of preferences to fit the circumstances, here preferences and priorities remain the same but as issues arise actions and plans are changed. For example, one girl who was married before she could finish high school, held on to her dream of being a teacher and when a position opened up in a NGO coaching centre she managed to negotiate with her husband so that she could take the job. Another girl who had to leave school because of sexual harassment eventually chose to move away on her own from the red light district to Sonagachi to pursue a career as a dancer.

'I moved to Sonagachi at the age of 11. I joined Amra Padatik and Komol Gundhar at the same time and it was difficult to come here. I am therefore now staying at the Durbar Office.'
(17, F, CSW1, 12/10/2012, Kolkata)

In both cases an alternative route was sought and found. Similar examples are those of children who enter themselves into informal schooling or look for vocational training when financial constraints or care duties prevent them from staying in school. These alternative routes can at times also be more effective. As one girl put it:

'Dance and theatre will make me develop more.'
(16, F, CSW3, 12/10/2012, Kolkata)

#### 6.3.2 Mobilizing Social Support

Mobilizing social support is also used as a coping strategy for ‘getting out’. By broadening their network children of sex workers create new possibilities for themselves. Having a wide range of people who will support them also makes it more feasible that they will achieve their goals. Contact seeking with the ‘mainstream society’ as well as connecting and forging bonds within their own community are examples of this.

Mothers, social workers and children saw mixing with the mainstream as an important way of gaining skills important to functioning outside of the red light district. According to the mothers children could learn proper manners and language, whereas social workers and children emphasized the gaining of self-esteem and being comfortable to engage with others from outside their own community.

Mothers also mentioned that by mixing with the mainstream children were less likely to fall in with the wrong crowd.

Mobilizing social support within the own community serves a different purpose. One the one hand it can be a means of addressing structural constraint whilst on the other it helps children in building a wide network of support. Children mostly mentioned contact seeking with peers through involvement in sports and arts activities, but also by being a source of support to their younger peers by for instance giving dance classes or tutoring.

'I also take the little children to the coaching class. I started doing this in 2007. When I became a member of Anra Padatik and thought I am now a grown lad, I should try and get involved in a better way in the community. If a child cannot prepare his lessons and do their homework I help them. When I was a child there was no one to do this for me.'
(16, M, CSW7, 18/10/2012, Kolkata)
These kinds of activities of course will also bring them into contact with others such as the parents of their peers and teachers and coaches.

6.3.3 Positive understanding of Mothers’ Work as a Motivator

Children's perception of sex work can on the one hand cause feelings of sadness and shame, but on the other it can also be a source of strength and act as a motivator.

‘When I came to know what my mom was doing I understood that my mother was working hard for my betterment, so it motivated me to continue to study.’
(18, M, PCSW4, 31/10/2012, Kolkata)

Children who perceived their mother's work in a positive manner would emphasize that their mother was earning money by honest means, that hard work should be respected, that they did not really understand how it was any different from other services such as domestic work.

‘If I say I want right nobody will give them I have got to have my own power. People of the mainstream society will speak against sex workers, when people do this I protest. My mother is providing a service, she is entertaining and earning some money and it should be honoured.’
(17, F, CSW1, 12/10/2012, Kolkata)

‘I do not think that this work is different from any other. My mother is not cheating anyone, she is bearing all the hardships to take care of us and I hope to take care of her when I grow up.’
(16, F, CSWB1, 22/11/2012, Kolkata)

By framing sex work as honest hard work these children directly oppose the idea of sex workers as criminals or fallen women. This goes beyond merely accepting it as a necessity; instead their mother’s ability to take care of them is a source of pride. Where children who see it as a necessity expressed hoping to remain in school and get their mothers out of their predicament, children who had a positive perception of sex work saw school as a place where they could counter stigma and proof that they were worthy and deserving of respect. Having a positive perception of sex work is thus a coping strategy of ‘getting out’, but also a mechanism which underlies other coping strategies of ‘getting out’ and of ‘getting organized’.

6.4 Getting Organized

Children of sex workers also engage in collective coping strategies of ‘getting organized’ and this is especially the case in Kolkata. Redmond (2008:9) classifies getting organized as collective strategies aimed at challenging societal constraints and countering social marginalization. Simply acting in a group can thus not be seen as ‘getting organized’. For this reason the formation of gangs has not been included in this chapter. In those cases children will perhaps agitate against their marginalization and because of it choose to act out by engaging in criminal behaviour, but they are not aiming to change or challenge it. The same can be said for other group activities where there is no conscious attempt of challenging and changing societal constraints and marginalization.

Some of the individual coping strategies that have been discussed in the previous sections culminate in collective strategies of ‘getting organized’, but the common thread is thus that ‘getting organized’ is always aimed at changing society and improving the general standing of the group instead of just the individual. The research distinguishes four types of ‘getting organized’ coping strategies in which children of sex workers engage, namely collectivization; bridging to other groups; protesting; and intergenerational collaboration. These different strategies will be discussed below.

6.4.1 Collectivization

The children's collective Amra Padatik is unique in the world. In this organisation, children of sex workers seek to help and support their mothers’ plight of challenging the stigma and discrimination they suffer from. At present Amra Padatik has about 900 members. Children and youth in the ages of 13 to 24 can become members. The age limit is part of the constitution of Amra Padatik where it states that a child under the age of 13 does not yet have the power to make decisions. The secretary of Amra Padatik stated that up to a certain age children cannot understand the movement. Nevertheless, there are several programs that are being run for younger children, but they cannot yet become members.

Amra Padatik has a central committee and at the moment there are 13 branch committees, among them Kalighat and Khidderpur. The committee in Sonagachi was dissolved because the members stopped in between, but will again be formed in 2013 after the elections. The hope is to increase the number of branch committees to 24. Amra Padatik is also represented within the DMSC steering committee by its president and secretary.

Elections are being held in every field, after which branch committees are formed. Those elected can then also apply for a position at the central committee of Amra Padatik. Amra Padatik tries to motivate other children to get
involved; when no one comes forward the central committee will approach children individually to ask them to take up a seat on the branch committee. The election process is overseen by the election committee from outside the field and the central committee.

Activities organized by Amra Padatik range from sports competitions to protest rallies and from workshops on sexual health to the set-up of educational facilities. In collaboration with the Indira Ghandi National Open University they are now for instance offering a three month certificate course in community development programs. However, because of the large number of children dropping out of school, they have not had many admissions for this program. More successful are the two residential schools for children of sex workers, and there are plans to start a third. In reaction to the safety issues for girls staying in the red light district Amra Padatik hopes to open a night centre for girls in Khidderpur. Finally, there are plans to build a sport complex for children of sex workers. Right now there are already several teams of boys and girls receiving football training.

It is clear that Amra Padatik organizes many different activities, but a large part of their work is focussed on improving children's self-esteem and to overcome internalized stigma. The organization of workshops and competitions are also part of this approach, whereby children are provided with a platform to develop their skills and confidence. Children are also stimulated to engage with the mainstream society. Moreover, by organizing awareness campaigns on topics such as child labour, early marriage and sexual health they hope to convey a message that they are entitled to certain rights.

When we go into the field we try and explain that sex work is work. We say that our mothers are doing a service and that it is a very old profession and that we should respect it. The money that the work brings in is what we are being raised and what pays for our education. We try to let them see that they should not accept the views from outside of the community.

(28, M, PCSW6, 3/11/2012)

It is still early day and the collective is still very much developing, however they made some impressive strides and its existence bears testimony to the agency and potential these children have.

6.4.2 Bridging to other groups

It has already been said that children of sex workers will use the mobilization of social support as a means of improving their self-esteem and learning to adapt and function outside of their own community, but when engaged in a collective manner it serves another purpose. By building bridges to the 'mainstream society' children of sex workers try to create awareness about sex work, challenging prejudices, but most of all try and prove themselves worthy and deserving of equal treatment. This is done by participating in sports competitions, dance recitals and theatre performances, whereby it is made explicit that the participating children are children of sex workers. Mothers expressed the hope that if their children gained prestige and recognition for their performance, it would make others understand why they chose to do sex work and that it was their hard work that enabled their children to be successful.

When my son or the children of sex workers become a pillar of society they can show that I have only reached this through my mother's hardships and that in the future they will respect me and my profession.

(Age 47, M9, 2/10/2012, Kolkata)

Children also expressed this hope, but they spoke more of proving themselves. The emphasis for them was on countering ideas held in society that children of sex workers have no talents and that they are not able to do better so no attention, time or effort should be given to them. Furthermore, they considered it not only important that they showed they were talented, but also that they were better at certain things than those who come from the mainstream society.

The thing is we must do something exceptional that the mainstream cannot do, so that we can show them that we are in this position. We should change their mind-sets.

(18, M, PCSW4, 31/10/2012, Kolkata)

6.4.3 Protesting

During my time in Kolkata I participated in several protest rallies organized by the sex workers collective DMSC as well as by Amra Padatik. On the 10th of December 2012 Amra Padatik held a big protest rally demanding attention for human rights in general and those of sex workers and their children in particular. The protest started off in Sonagachi, where hundreds of people including journalists and police had gathered, with speeches made by members of Amra Padatik. The crowd then set off in a slow procession through the red light districts of Sonagachi and Bow Bazar towards College Street. The members of Amra Padatik used megaphones to lead the chanting, handed out flyers to onlookers and tried to keep the moving mass organized so that every passer-by had no other option then to wait and listen before they could get on with their day. Rallies are regularly organized in protest against specific acts of violence and abuse that occur in the red light districts, such as
money extortion by local gangs, incidences of police brutality, or women and children being evicted from their homes. At other times, as was the case here, the rally will have a more general character such as child marriage or women’s rights. The reason for this, as was pointed out to me on more than one occasion, is that many of the issues faced by sex workers are not peculiar to their community.

‘We are organizing protest rallies related to child labour and the dowry system, but for this the entire society is the audience because they are common problems.’
(28, M, PCSW6, 3/11/2012, Kolkata)

Protest rallies are used by children of sex workers as a way of creating their own platform in which they set the agenda and control the output. When they engage in bridging as well as in protest they explicitly take on the identity of being a child of a sex worker, but it is used in different ways. With bridging the socially constructed concept of what it means to be a child of sex worker is challenged by using cooperation and providing an alternative construction of this identity as one of children who are talented, deserving and part of society instead of being excluded from it. Protest uses this identity, as a means of setting them apart from the mainstream society, instead of cooperation it is confrontation that is leading.

‘When somebody used to say you are a sex worker’s daughter, we would get angry inside, but now we are challenging this. Until we get these rights of sex workers we are a collective and we will spread our message.’
(17, F, CSW2, 12/10/2012, Kolkata)

Where bridging often is used as an indirect means, protest directly opposes the actions and ideas of those who they consider outsiders.

6.4.4 Intergenerational collaboration

The fourth and last strategy discussed here is that of intergenerational collaboration, which takes places in many different forms. Often when talking about children’s position in any society the question is put forward what adults can do for them. However this research shows that one should also ask what children can do for adults. When asked about what they could do for their community and how they could participate in it children not only identified ways in which they as a collective could address children’s issues, but that they could also provide information to and create awareness among adults. Instead of only seeing possibilities for targeting children or adults as separate groups, several examples were given that underlined the importance of approaching children and parents together. This thus moves beyond ideas of peer-to-peer networks or workshops and other activities that are restricted according to age. Instead it places children and parents next to one another as members of one community who need each other’s collaboration and understanding to move forward.

One of the recurring examples was that of providing information about HIV/AIDS and how to safely use condoms and contraceptives.

‘There are still many women who do not know about how to use a condom properly. I can teach them. I also told my mother and said that otherwise HIV/AIDS can happen.’
(16, F, CSWB1, 22/11/2012, Kolkata)

‘There is a project going on now on how to better develop this communication. For the children of sex workers they only have a love bond with their mothers and children will hide their sex issues from them. When the communication between the mothers and children improves awareness will increase. For example we had this peer group and there was a daughter of a sex worker and her mother is an expert on issues of sexuality and safe sex but the girl was not aware of any of this.’
(28, M, PCSW6, 3/11/2012, Kolkata)

The second quote shows that the transference of knowledge cannot be assumed to happen automatically. Moreover children’s parents and guardians are of fundamental importance in creating an environment in which children can exercise their rights. The point here is not to say that activities and programs geared exclusively to children are not important, because they are very important, but instead it is argued that if you see children as active participating members of their community then they should not only be approached in an exclusionary way. What is more, if we question the position and social construction of what it means to be a child, we must also question what it means to be an adult (Mannion 2007).

Intergenerational collaboration does not only refer to parents and children working together and children brokering issues with adults, but also to children acting as mentors for their younger peers.

‘Those who are now senior members of Amra Padatik they should spend more time with the younger ones so that they can inspire them. They are now also giving them time, but if this would happen more it would be better.’
(18, F, PCSW5, 31/10/2012, Kolkata)
Several children who participated in this research were for instance teaching others at community centres. However intergenerational collaboration as a coping strategy of ‘getting organized’ is not common place and still very much in its’ infancy.

6.5 Conclusion
Children of sex workers engage in many different types of coping, but the research shows that ‘getting by’ is the most dominant. This is not a surprising outcome seeing that strategies of ‘getting by’ are used to deal with and find relief for daily stressors. I want to highlight two points here. First, coping is not always beneficial in that certain strategies might have negative consequences in the long run. Certain acts of coping such as ‘getting by’ through accommodation, escape and resignation will help children manage their day to day lives, but most likely will not increase their chances of moving forward. Moreover it can lead to loss of self-esteem and having no confidence in the possibility of a better future, which can have dire consequences. In trying to oppose negative treatment and discriminatory practices children can engage in acts of defiance that might result in criminal behaviour or substance abuse issues. Secondly, coping is not a zero-sum game. No one ever only uses one coping strategy and coping is a lifelong process, so it is very well possible that acting out through ‘getting back at’ strategies will eventually lead to children trying to address issues in a more strategic manner. Feeling the consequences of ‘getting by’ can make children that much more determined to overcome their issues later on by using problem solving and contact seeking strategies.

Furthermore gaining information, awareness and self-esteem can lead children to collectively question and challenge societal views and structural constraints and thereby start using strategies of ‘getting out’ and ‘getting organized’. The coping strategies of ‘getting organized’ presented here are quite unique. Although children’s collectives have been formed around the world, Amra Padatik is the only collective for children of sex workers. However this type of collective coping is still very much developing, but there is enormous potential. Intergenerational collaboration can be an exciting new avenue whereby this growth can take place. Current thinking on children’s agency often poses it diametrically against that of adults. This is not without reason, generally speaking adults have more power in a community, parents do at times decide for children what they can and cannot do and more often than not children are in certain situations because of their parents choices than the other way around. It is however precisely for this reason that adults should be informed about and participate in childrens’ initiatives.
Chapter 7: How and by what is Coping among Children of Sex Workers Challenged and Supported?

There exists a reciprocal relation between stressors and risks on the one hand and coping on the other. The more a child is exposed to stressors the more coping will be affected. Many of the previously mentioned risks and stressors can be considered as structural constraints on coping. Financial constraints can for instance motivate children to let go of the will of being educated and instead spur them to search for a job. However, the previous chapter also shows that children use different coping strategies with different aims, so the question arises why and how children chose these strategies? Or in other words, what are the factors that challenge or support different coping strategies? The findings show that the institutional context, the social network, and identity and personal beliefs held by the child have great influence on coping.

7.1 Institutional Context
Throughout the research mothers and children emphasized that in recent years there has been an increase in facilities for children. The provision of shelter, educational facilities, spaces for children to discuss their experiences and engage in collective action support coping strategies of 'getting out' and 'getting organized'. The following sections will discuss this in more detail.

7.1.1 Provision of shelter
The majority of children mentioned coaching centres and crèches, mostly run by NGOs, as important places for them to go to when their mother is working. Mothers perceive the coaching centres as safe and trusted places that not only protected their children from the dangers on the street, but also prevent them from taking on bad habits such as smoking and drinking and falling into the wrong crowd. Besides the coaching centres mothers also try and arrange for a separate room either in or outside of the red light district or they will keep customers away for certain hours so that children can rest and study. Furthermore, some older sex workers provide a crèche service and watch over children during the night-time.

7.1.2 Provision of diverse educational opportunities
Problem solving is enabled by the provision of a variety of educational opportunities. For children who are in formal schooling the coaching centres provide support. There are also several programs that focus on preparing children who have dropped out or have never attended school to be enrolled. Children mentioned informal schooling as well as vocational training as important options for teenagers to gain some education. Children did not necessarily see formal schooling in primary education as preferable over vocational programs.

'It depends on the will of the child, if they want to do vocational training or regular education.'
(17, F, CSW1, 12/10/2012, Kolkata)

Children saw sports and dance classes also as vocational training and several children thought that these classes would be more likely to lead to jobs then formal education.

7.1.3 Spaces for expression, discussion and collective action
Being active or participating in workshops, dance and theatre, and sports enables children to strengthen their self-esteem, which will make them more confident to pursue their dreams.

'Apart from learning sports as a player there are other skills being build, for instance the skill to build up a good rapport with others. The good players also go elsewhere and they meet and interact with others so they develop a networking skill.'
(Sports coach, PW1, 7/11/2012, Kolkata)

Workshops and other activities also provide children with an opportunity to discuss problems and insecurities. At the same time children can gain information and awareness. Several children mentioned having participated in workshops on HIV/AIDS. Having knowledge about this and about safe sex in general was often expressed as a source of pride. Children pointed out that this was something in which they were more knowledgeable than the ‘mainstream society’.

The groundwork for enabling children to participate in bridging or protest strategies takes place for instance in workshops on children’s rights, where they are stimulated to learn about their rights, but also to identify and name issues in their neighbourhood as well as reflect on their own societal position. The provision of dance classes or team sports can function in a similar way. However this depends on the approach taken with these classes. Having a variety of opportunities for children to participate will also draw out a wider range of voices. Identifying what the important issues are for children is something that is currently not taking place in a systematic manner. Although some children have very clear ideas on what these issues are, others, even those actively involved in Amra Padatik, have difficulty expressing and identifying them.
7.2 Social Network
Mobilizing social support is an important strategy of ‘getting out’ and also plays a role in ‘getting organized’. Children who do not have extended family or for instance children who engage in ‘getting by’ strategies of social isolation will have difficulty doing this. The research indicates that when a network of family and peers is already available, it facilitates the making of new connections and thus the mobilizing of social support. The social network in which a child finds itself will in turn influence their coping strategies. Seeing that the first link of children of sex workers to a social network is their mother, their role will be discussed first. Following this the effects of having extended family, peer support, the role of babus and violent actors within the community will be discussed.

7.2.1. The Supremacy of Mothers
Most children identified their mother as the most important person in their lives. To the majority it was very clear that it was their mother who was providing everything for them. This however also means that children’s position in society and their ability to cope is directly related to that of their mothers. To prevent children from dropping out of school support is needed at home. Mothers, children and social workers all identified the inability of mothers to give proper guidance as an important reason for children not finishing their education. They often lack the time and resources to check their children’s homework, make sure they are actually going to school and cannot provide the routine that is needed for them to arrive well rested and prepared at school.

‘Any good guidance at home is needed; mainstream people leave someone at their home for preparation for school and other things. This guidance the sex workers cannot give because they are busy with the customers.’
(Age 37, M13, 6/11/2012, Kolkata)

7.2.2 It’s all in the Family
The support network that a sex worker has herself is of great importance to her ability to provide for her child and in turn promote positive coping strategies in the child. Women in Indian society are often only seen in relation to males. They are someone’s daughter, wife, daughter-in-law or mother. Many of the mothers mentioned that they did not have any support of their family.

‘I have got no support from a husband, partner or family so I have to do it all on my own. This is the biggest challenge.’
(Age 34, M5, 27/9/2012, Kolkata)

Having support of family enables women to for instance send their children to their native village or elsewhere outside of the red light district. In other cases where a mother is not capable of taking care of her children the family will take on the care duties.

‘I lived with my grandmother from a very early age. My mother tries to stay away from responsibility and she does not give a lot of support. My father died and it is my grandmother that supports me. I have two sisters and one brother, my sisters are 23 and 16 and my brother is 15. One of my sisters is living with an auntie, the other is with my other grandmother and my brother is given support by another sex worker.’
(17, F, CSW2, 12/10/2012, Kolkata)

Having contact with their extended family is thus also a safety net for children of sex workers. Children also mentioned having a supportive sibling as the reason for them being able to go to school, because they either convinced their mother of the importance of education or because of financial support given by older siblings.

7.2.3 Community Members and Peers
One 50-year-old sex worker and mother of two told me that that the women are all like sisters to one another, although they are not tied by blood. For many their peers have taken on the role of family. They watch over each other’s children, provide a shoulder to cry on and keep each other safe. Children also mentioned other sex workers intervening on their behalf with their parents pleading for them to go to school, but also in cases where the mother had passed away they would help resolve issues with landlords, prevent evictions and check in regularly.

Children mentioned peer pressure both in a negative and a positive sense. For some, seeing all their friends leave school was a reason to give up themselves, whilst others mentioned returning to school because friends convinced them of the importance of it. Children who viewed their mother’s profession in a positive manner identified talking to friends as the main reason for coming to this perception.

7.2.4 Babu
The findings regarding the role of babus in children’s lives are mixed. Some mothers stated that their babu provided them with mental support, enabling them to take better care of their children. Reference was made of babus taking
on the role and full responsibilities of being a father to children that were not their own. Children did not make any statements about this, but it is likely that in many of these cases they are not aware that the babu is not their biological parent. However, it was also observed that some babus merely took away resources that otherwise could have been spend on the children. A small group of babus has also formed their own collective whereby they try and contribute to sex workers rights and inform their peers on sexual health. Again this is quite a unique development and as of yet it seems that only a very small minority has joined this initiative.

Several children identified babus as being a negative presence within the community, because of substance abuse and violent behaviour towards them and the sex workers. Moreover, it was stated by children that they provided a bad example and that boys were likely to copy their behaviour and they often harassed girls. The relation of babu and sex worker is not there to facilitate motherhood according to Sinha and Das Dasgupta (2009: 171). Instead it is used to create a semblance of the ideal of heterosexual monogamy. I therefore tentatively argue that babus in the majority of cases do not contribute to coping in terms of getting out or getting organized, but that they could encourage children to take up ‘getting back at’ strategies such as substance abuse.

7.2.5 Falling in with the Wrong Crowd
One of the greatest worries for sex workers is that their children fall in with the wrong crowd. Seeing police not act against violent behaviour has left many children mistrusting authorities and going elsewhere for support or protection. Children will choose strategies of ‘getting back at’ by joining these gangs or are enabled by them and by some of the babus to access drugs and alcohol resulting in mental withdrawal.

‘I would like to change the behaviour of the other people, the babus and those who are residing here. They beat the children, if I could change their behaviour I would. Children will imitate this, the use of alcohol and the beatings. It is the babus and the members of the local clubs that are doing this’
(16, M, CSW14, 26/11/2012, Kolkata)

The presence of gangs in the red light district does not only expose children to violence it also influences children to choose social isolation as a coping strategy.

7.3 Identity and Personal Beliefs
The perception of children and construction of their own identity and the context in which they find themselves, plays a large role in their appraisal of risk and stressors and thus their coping strategies. Having low self-esteem for instances influences their ability to mobilize social support. Identity and personal beliefs can either limit or open up possibilities for coping. For children to engage in ‘getting organized’ and start to demand their rights, they must first see themselves as deserving of those rights. Again it is of importance here that children’s perceptions are not formed in a vacuum, but that this takes place within a certain context and is influenced by the views held within the community and wider society. The next section will discuss these findings in more detail.

7.3.1 Limited Perception of Participation of Children
The majority of mothers and many of the children expressed a very limited perception of the possibilities for children to participate. Many mothers believed that children are not able to understand certain issues, and conceived doing well in school as children’s only way of contributing to their community.

‘Now he is only 14, he is not an adult he is not mature enough’
(Age 47, M9, 2/10/2012, Kolkata)

‘I consider it better if they become active when they are older’
(Age 33, M11, 4/10/2012, Kolkata)

Some mothers thought that Amra Padatik was a very good initiative, but when asked what they thought their role could be the answer was invariably that they could show the ‘mainstream society’ that they were talented and had done well because of their mothers instead of despite of their mothers. This is of course an important role, but other avenues were not mentioned or explored, and therefore also not supported or stimulated.

Children themselves have a broader understanding of their options, but many considered children who had not yet reached their teenage years as unable to seriously engage with broader societal issues. Some children also said that childhood was simply a time for play and school. The perceptions expressed by mothers and children on children’s participation in coping strategies of ‘getting organized’ seem to be in contradiction with my experiences at protest rallies. Before the rally began placards were made with slogans demanding rights and calling for a stop to abuses and given to children as young as six to hold up. On the one hand you can question if these children indeed understood what they were doing and chanting, but on the other the exposure to protest and the ideas expressed in them can help create awareness and broaden their perspective on what coping strategies are available for them.
Lastly, contrary to the children who participated in this research not a single mother or professional mentioned possibilities for intergenerational collaboration whereby children would be the ones addressing their parents and other adult community members.

7.3.2 Negative Perception of own Community
Children who engaged in helplessness as a coping strategy of ‘getting by’ also had a very narrow understanding of what they could achieve by ‘getting organized.’ This was not only because they saw their surroundings and the views held in the mainstream society as impervious to change, but because of a negative perception of members of their own community.

‘Here children are self-centred and they are only interested in their own development. If I try they will not listen to me to organize them.’
(17, M, CSW6, 17/10/2012, Kolkata)

One boy who stated that many young people were only interested in their own enjoyment expressed a similar sentiment.

7.3.3 Sense of Belonging
The creation of and adherence to a common identity of being children of sex workers facilitates their participation in collective coping strategies such as bridging and protesting.

Children for instance stated that they felt that they were one big family, that they did not have to explain themselves to one another or as one boy put it: ‘They were like me.’

“We have a big platform and when we go outside we give our identity, in other clubs they are not very much empowered. They will not go outside of the society. These children are missing empowerment.”
(17, F, CSW2, 12/10/2012, Kolkata)

’Society is not giving us our rights, so until we get this we have to challenge them. If the rights were already there we would not need this identity.’
(17, F, CSW2, 12/10/2012, Kolkata)

A common identity of being children of sex workers also cuts through boundaries of religion, caste and ethnicity. Ghose et al (2008: 313) argue that bridging and protest are part of a twofold process of negotiating of identity, which they see as an essential part of collective mobilization.

7.3.4 Viewing Collective Action as an Effective Tool
Children of sex workers in Kolkata have grown up with the successful example of the DMSC, which shows them that a lot can be achieved when you stand together, but their perception of collective strategies also says something about how they perceive the individual’s power. Although children identified their own determination as an important factor in being able to engage in individual coping strategies of ‘getting out’, in terms of ‘getting organized’ this was not deemed enough. Children who engaged in strategies of ‘getting organized’ viewed the individual as someone who can be ignored and who is weak, but the collective as one strong powerful voice that cannot be ignored.

‘When you are alone you are weak, but as a collective you stand strong and you cannot be broken as a group.’
(28, M, PCSW6, 3/11/2012, Kolkata)

‘When a person as an individual is not heard, the importance is even less, but when people do this jointly people will listen to this.’
(24, M, PCSW7, 21/11/2012, Kolkata)

The individual is thus seen as capable of changing their own life, but not as capable of addressing or changing larger societal issues. Another important reason that was given by several children for why collective strategies were preferable to individual strategies was the conviction that they can only raise themselves out of marginalization, and that outsiders can maybe support them but no more than that.

7.4 Conclusion
The importance of the institutional context, availability of a social network and the perception of self and personal beliefs are all in various ways and degrees influencing coping. This is not meant to be an exhaustive account, seeing that coping strategies are supported and challenged by an infinite number of factors and it would be impossible to name them all. Nevertheless, these three themes emerged from the research as being pivotal to coping of children of sex workers. What I want to emphasize here is the importance of perceptions. The findings show that the limited perceptions within the sex workers community of children’s participation hamper its further development. Children who expressed having a negative view of their own community were very unlikely to engage in ‘getting organized’. The opposite is true for children who feel a sense of belonging. What is of further importance for ‘getting organized’ is for children to view collective action as an effective tool.

Finally, we again see that coping is a social process. Children’s views and perceptions are influenced and related to those of adults. What strategies they deem appropriate or necessary relates back to their views of their community and the construction they have made of what it means to be a child in that community.
Chapter 8: Conclusion

This concluding chapter will firstly summarize the findings, starting with the risks and stressors, moving on to the various coping strategies and finally the challenging and supporting factors. Secondly, a conclusion will be drawn about how this research could perhaps inform policy making. Lastly, I will share some thoughts on how the topics pursued in this thesis can be developed further in research.

8.1. Findings: Relevant Risks and Stressors in the Lives of Children of Sex Workers

Children of sex workers, their mothers and social workers identified stigma, physical, sexual and mental abuse, exposure to and risk of involvement in substance abuse and violence, alienation from parents, failure to obtain education, infection with STDs, and early marriage as the most pressing concerns for children of sex workers. Some of these issues are also relevant for other children growing up in urban poverty, but in these cases the context of living in a red light district and being a child of a sex worker has a compounding effect.

Stigma acts as a double-edged sword on the agency of children of sex workers. It is a catalyst for many of the risks and stressors to which they are exposed and it further impedes on their ability to cope when the stigma is internalized. Similar to earlier research, the findings show that stigma makes them subject to maltreatment in school by peers and teachers (Shohel 2013: 10; Sircar and Dutta 2011; SANGRAM 2008: 34,35; Sinha and Das Dasgupta 2009: 146). Children expressed feelings of shame and fear of being found out.

Within the confines of their own community, sexual abuse by clients was widely acknowledged by participants as one of the major risks affecting children of sex workers. This affects both boys and girls, but for girls the risk is more acute. Mothers as well as children reported that clients do not differentiate between the sex workers and their daughters. Girls are harassed in the street and solicited for sex. Furthermore, children run the risk of becoming addicted to drugs and alcohol. Again the risk is there for both sexes, but boys seem to be more susceptible to this, which is confirmed by other studies (Alam and Hussain 2013:132; Beard et al 2010:4; Sinha and Das Dasgupta 2009: 89). Not only the wide prevalence of substance abuse, but also the high incidence of violence within the red light district puts children's safety at jeopardy. All three sites of research are characterized by a distinct lack of space; therefore children cannot escape these abusive behaviours. Moreover children reported that shouting, fighting and other disturbances were such a constant factor that they could not rest properly or study (Shohel 2013: 9; Sinha and Das Dasgupta 2009: 151)

The research shows that childrens’ relation to their mothers are often conflicted. On the one hand children stated that their mother is the most important person in their lives. Often she is the only stable parent they have and at times the only family they know. Their view of their mother conflicts with the view that society has of her and it is this view of their mothers as a ‘bad person doing bad things’ that children are confronted with as soon as they set foot out of their home (SANGRAM 2008: 1). As stated by Sircar and Dutta (2011: 344) the relationship between sex workers and their children is far more complex then popular representations have us believe.

For many sex workers their children are the most important reason why they have joined the profession, they are not uncaring women as Ling (2001) portrays them to be. Nevertheless, both children and mothers professed that sex workers are often not capable of giving their children the guidance they need. If the relation to their mother is complex, the relation to their father is often non-existent. The reasons for this range from the father being deceased, being unknown to him having abandoned the family or the mother having left because of abuse. Some authors claim that the absence of a father figure results in children not being disciplined and cared for properly, and that for those children who do have a relation with their father it is a source of psychological contentment (Ling 2001: 3; Adhikari 2012: 97). It can be argued that this puts forward a normative notion of the ideal of the nuclear family. Children expressed diverse views on the topic. For some their father simply did not matter, he had not taken care of them and they did not feel that they were missing out. For others being abandoned had great emotional consequences. Some children emphasized that even though their parents had been living apart for years they were still married. This would indicate fitting the societal ideal of the nuclear family does hold sway over them.

One of the consequences of children not having their father in their life is that schools insist on the father’s name and a proof of address for children to be admitted. According to mothers as well as children admission to education is no longer a problem in Kolkata because mothers can now be the sole guardian of a child. This is contradicted by other sources, which argue that even though the laws have changed the practice has not (Times of India 25 December 2011; Times of India 4 June 2013; Sinha and Das Dasgupta 2009: 148)

When children do get enrolled the problems are far from over. The research indicates that even though most children
of sex workers have been enrolled in school at one point in their lives, many will drop out before graduation. Children also often move between their maternal home, those of extended family and residential schools, causing disruptions to their education. For children to be in their age appropriate grade is an exception. Children of sex workers who are now adults reflected that previously there were less facilities and opportunities for receiving education, but that now children seemed to be less motivated to continue their studies even though they have more chances to do so. Mothers stated that their greatest worry was if they could continue to finance their children's education. Children will perhaps finish primary school and attend some years of secondary school, but they do not continue on to higher education (Shohel 2013: 8; Sinha and Das Dasgupta 2009: 144, 145; Alam and Hussain 2013: 135).

Mothers and children perceived dropping out of school as one of the most pressing concerns for children of sex workers. Maltreatment and abuse by teachers and peers due to stigma was identified as the main cause of this. Dropping out to earn money is prevalent among boys as well as girls. Girls however also dropped out because of care duties and early marriage.

Mothers indicated that it was very difficult to keep a girl child in the red light district. Besides the risk of sexual abuse, mothers also fear that their daughters will get involved with local boys and become ‘spoiled.’ Being sexually active was never mentioned as a worry for boys. By marrying girls of at a young age their sexuality can be controlled and their honour and that of the family protected. My own findings and those of other researchers show that children of sex workers are at high risk of becoming victims of sexual abuse. Children also reported that their peers would sometimes elope with one another and that in most cases it did not end well. Moreover other authors claim that children of sex workers become ‘sexualized’ at an early age, but it remains unclear what is meant by this or what the basis is for these claims (Adhikari 201: 97; Ling 2001: 3,4; Beard et al 2010: 4; Sinha and Das Dasgupta 2009: 118). In any case the findings of this research in no way confirmed them. Framing children of sex workers as being sexualized and promiscuous seems to relate to preconceived notions of sex workers and their children as not being in control of their sexuality (Sircar and Dutta 2011: 338).

Both mothers and children shared concerns that early marriage, whether it is an arranged or a love marriage, often does not work out. Again stigma is at play here in that girls will be treated badly by their new husbands and their in-laws because their mother is a sex worker (Alam and Hussain 2013: 135). In Indian society, when a woman is left by her husband she becomes extremely vulnerable, this in combination with early marriage which puts daughters of sex workers at risk of ending up in sex work themselves (Sinha and Das Dasgupta 2009: 69-71, 122). Contrary to accounts that suggest sex workers groom their daughters for sex work (Shohel 2013:8,9; Ling 2001), mothers expressed that their hope for their children, especially their daughters, was to be proud of their mothers and of their background, but to not follow in their footsteps.

Finally, there is the risk of infection with tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, syphilis and other STDs. Children of sex workers should be considered a high risk group for contracting these diseases through mother to child transmission or getting infected later in live due to the high prevalence of these diseases in the red light district. In many cases children's health is compromised already before they are born, because reproductive health care for sex workers is severely lacking. Moreover, children and sex workers often suffer from malnutrition throughout their lives.

8.2 Findings: The Individual and Collective Coping Strategies of Children of Sex Workers

The research shows that strategies of ‘getting by’, which fall into the everyday personal domain, are dominant. This is not surprising seeing that these strategies are aimed at everyday occurrences of risks and stressors. Strategies of ‘getting by’ can be beneficial on the short term, but can cause problems further down the line. In the next section the findings on coping strategies of children of sex workers will be discussed. What is important to keep in mind is that children will use a variety of coping strategies simultaneously and that coping is not a static process.

8.2.1 Getting by

Children engage in ‘getting by’ by using strategies of accommodation, escape and resignation. Accommodation takes place when children do not challenge the status quo, but instead adjust their preferences and actions to fit in with their perceived limitations. Leaving school to engage in income generating activities and internalization by girls of their repressed position both fall into this category.

As mentioned before, dropping out is a pressing concern for children of sex workers. In certain cases the parents will decide that they can no longer finance their child's education, but it is very common for children to decide for themselves to leave school and start a job. Wanting to support their mother so that she no longer has to work was given as an important reason for doing this. In addition some children perceived school to be of little benefit to them and that it would not necessarily lead to more opportunities. Various girls mentioned that they had fewer freedoms than
boys, but that they considered this acceptable because they were girls. Rowlands (1995: 102) refers to this process of internalized oppression as a survival mechanism, whereby in this case girls internalize the dominant views and social constructions that suppress them as their own and no longer question why they have less freedoms then boys.

Many different strategies of escape were reported ranging from physical to mental escape. Children reported leaving their homes in the evening in order not to be confronted with their mother practising sex work. They will go to improvised créches run by retired sex workers, a separate room rented by their mother or coaching centres. Mothers and children pointed out that children of sex workers will also elope with one another to get away from the red light district. Mothers worried mostly about their daughters doing this, but several children remarked that it is unwise to get married at such a young age no matter what your sex is. The findings also show that some children will isolate themselves from the rest of the community. Girls use this strategy more than boys, girls explained that being harassed by boys and men on the street and perceiving other community members as bad people caused this. Mothers also mentioned children using social isolation as a strategy, but they identified abuse in school by peers and teachers as the reason for this. Social workers added that discomfort with people from the mainstream society could result in social isolation (Alam and Hussain 2013:135). Whereas children point to behaviours of their own community members, both mothers and social workers thus identify stigma of being a sex workers' child as a direct or indirect cause. Wanting to hide who they are and the use of secrecy and concealment has also been identified as a strategy of escape. Although secrecy and hiding their identity might give children some respite from the effects of stigma, it also causes constant tension and stress due to fear of being found out, which is also highlighted by Sinha and Das Dasgupta (2009: 146).

The final group of strategies under getting by is that of resignation. The findings indicate that children for instance relieve their feelings of shame about sex work by rationalizing it as a necessary evil. By framing it in this way children can construct their mother as someone who is a good provider using bad means. Several children perceived themselves as being incapable of changing their neighbourhood. If change is not possible, they do not have to feel stressed about or responsible for their community. However this strategy of helplessness can eventually undermine one's self-esteem and lead to depression and even suicide.

8.2.2 Getting Back at
Three main strategies of ‘getting back at’ were identified, namely engaging in aggression or defiance, substance abuse, and joining local gangs. None of the participants in this research expressed the use these strategies, but a majority remarked that other children are using them. Sex workers mentioned children forcing their mothers to give them money, and especially boys shaming their mothers if they did not. The findings as well as other authors indicate that boys are also more susceptible to become involved in substance abuse as well as local gangs (Alam and Hussain 2013: 132, 135; Sinha and Das Dasgupta 2009: 90, 128,129). Children stated that those who have no aim in their life will turn to drugs. Self-destructiveness lies at the root of these behaviours according to SANGRAM (2008:1). Sinha and Das Dasgupta (2009) go as far as to state that sons will turn against their own mothers and community, when they join local gangs and start extorting money of the sex workers. It is hard to draw any conclusions about the scale of these types of behaviour, other than that it is happening.

8.2.3 Getting out
The research points to three strategies of getting out; problem solving, the mobilization of social support and a positive framing of their own identity as a child of a sex worker instead of it being a negative attribute. The findings show that having a positive understanding of sex work enables children to engage in other strategies of ‘getting out’. Children stated that their mother was providing a service and emphasized that she was doing a honest job instead of cheating and stealing. It is the stigma and attitude of the mainstream society and the social construction of sex work that is challenged and problematized by these children.

In marginalized communities, identity is then a reflection of, and a resistance to one’s condition of marginality.
(Basu and Dutta 2011:108)

By using this identity as a source of pride instead of shame, children felt motivated by their mothers’ hard work to make something of themselves and felt more comfortable dealing with the mainstream society (Sircar and Dutta 2011: 343).

Children and mothers identified feeling comfortable in both worlds, the sex workers community and the mainstream society, as a major asset. Skovdall, O’Gutu, Aoro, and Campbell (2009: 11) also identify in their research on children who are caring for ailing or aging parents the mobilization of social support as an important coping mechanism. By mobilizing social support and creating a network within their own community as well as in the mainstream society children open up new possibilities for themselves. This in turn stimulates problem solving strategies, whereby children, supported by their network and the information resources within it, identify and use alternatives routes to achieve their goals.
8.2.4 Getting organized

Children who engage in strategies of ‘getting out’ are more likely to get involved in strategies of ‘getting organized.’ It has been observed that children start engaging in this type of activity around twelve, thirteen years of age. The strategies which fall under ‘getting organized’ are similar to those of ‘getting out’, but the aim is different. In addition, collectivization, bridging to other groups, protest, and intergenerational collaboration are used as strategies of ‘getting organized.’ The positive framing of sex work and the problematizing of the societal construction of sex work for instance lie at the basis of Amra Padatik, it is then not only a source of pride and self-esteem but also the basis for demanding their rights.

What was being built was a children's movement where they were not merely passive recipients of welfare measures as victims, but active agents who are participating in demanding their rights. They were advocates in their own right.

(Sircar and Dutta 2011: 342)

Using a rights’ based approach challenges notions of fatalism such as mentioned under ‘getting by’ that change is not possible and proposes an alternative that shows that stigma and discrimination should not be accepted as inevitable (Cornish 2006: 466). Before the inception of Amra Padatik various NGOs were already addressing issues concerning children of sex workers, but children were more often than not considered as beneficiaries and not as stakeholders. The construction of the collective identity of children of sex workers as a marginalized group mobilized the collectivization resulting in Amra Padatik.

Amra Padatik uses bridging to other groups as a means of changing societal beliefs. This is done by creating awareness among peers in schools and the organization of activities such as sports and dance. Children of sex workers and children from the mainstream society can work together on these occasions. Dance is further used to convey their message to a broader adult audience. This also creates a platform for children to present themselves as talented. Children remarked that the mainstream society perceives children of sex workers as incapable of achieving success and that in order to break this perception they must prove them wrong.

Where bridging is characterized by cooperation, protest is characterized by confrontation. Amra Padatik not only uses protest as means of creating awareness among the mainstream society, but also as a means to call attention to behaviours, practices and activities within their own community that are harmful to sex workers and their children. The themes vary from putting an end to child marriage to addressing police misconduct and criminal activities of local clubs.

Getting organized is not limited to the creation of platforms for expression, development of self-esteem and opening up opportunities for agenda setting. Amra Padatik also uses protest as well as intergenerational collaboration in cases where a single child finds him- or herself in trouble. Preventing eviction of the children of sex workers after the dead of their mother was mentioned as an example of this. Furthermore, Amra Padatik has opened higher education centres in collaboration with the Indira Gandhi National Open University, offering bachelor courses to children of sex workers. However it was found that they have great difficulty finding children to enroll in this program. Lack of motivation and children leaving the educational system at a young age were given as reasons for this.

Lastly the findings show intergenerational collaboration as a promising avenue for ‘getting organized.’ Older children act as mentors to their younger peers, helping them with homework and improving their safety and access to coaching centers by chaperoning younger children to and from these places in the evening. Moreover, children stated that HIV/AIDS prevention is bound to be more successful when children and adults are targeted together. Children as well as adults who had separately received training and education on this topic expressed worry that their mothers and children respectively were lacking in knowledge. Transference of knowledge is thus not automatically taking place. Furthermore, children’s ability to transform knowledge into emancipatory action becomes severely limited when adults within the community are not aware or supportive of this (Jeanes 2013: 402). Awareness and critical consciousness can only go so far when there is no support or understanding within the family and the community, intergenerational collaboration can address these issues. Questioning the agency of a child and what it means to be a child should also make us question what it means to be an adult and how the two relate to one another (Mannion 2007:408, 409). Finally, this is not only to the benefit of the child but also to adults, seeing that improved relations between youth and adults are beneficial to both.

8.3 Findings: Challenging and supportive factors

As we have seen children of sex workers cope in numerous ways with risks and stressors. Strategies of ‘getting by’ are the most common, but the research also shows that coping strategies build on one another. The following section overviews the findings of this research regarding the question by what factors coping is challenged and/or supported.
Three dimensions have been identified as important in this regard, namely: institutional support, social network, and identity and personal beliefs.

### 8.3.1 Institutional Support
Participating in activities such as dance, sports or kids clubs support children's development of self-esteem and the construction of positive notions of their futures. Both coping strategies of ‘getting out’ as well as ‘getting organized’ are stimulated by the provision of these services.

The increase in shelter facilities run mostly by NGOs provides safe harbour to children in the evening hours. These shelters are specifically important for sex workers who are not able to provide their children with a second room to stay in or who do not have support of nearby living relatives. Furthermore, it enables sex workers to work in the evening hours and provide for their family.

Mothers as well as children of sex workers who are now adults noticed that educational facilities have also increased. Children stated that it is important that there are diverse opportunities for education such as vocational training and programs catering to children who have dropped out or enrolled at a later age. Even so the increase of facilities seems to have coincided with a decrease of interest for education.

### 8.3.2 Social Network
As mentioned previously mobilizing social support is an important coping strategy under ‘getting out’. In some cases children establish new links and networks but initially they rely on networks that are already there and try and tap into these resources. Their first source of support is their mother. Most sex workers are single parents and even if they do have a stable partner more often than not they are the main breadwinner of the family. As pointed out before the majority of children participating in this research identified their mother as the most important person in their lives. Mothers are therefore of great influence on children's coping. The findings show that on the one hand a mothers perception of the value of education contributes to children being enrolled in school, but on the other hand mothers as well as children reported that sex workers are often not capable of giving proper guidance leading to children dropping out or failing to be successful in school. Having support of extended family can sometimes resolve this.

Having a babu can be a source of emotional and sometimes practical and financial support for sex workers. Having support strengthens the mothers overall wellbeing, enabling them to be there for their children. However the relation with the babu is not always beneficial to children. Some will take on the role of father figure, but many have addiction issues, will be abusive, or drain away resources from the household that could have gone to the child. In many cases babus will negatively influence the child's ability to take on coping strategies of ‘getting out’ or ‘getting organized, but that they could encourage children to take up ‘getting back at’ strategies such as substance abuse.

Peer networks facilitate the transference of knowledge and the development of positive notions of sex work and thereby their own self-image. Jeanes (2013: 399) describes identity shaping and the gaining of knowledge as an initial stage in the process of development of critical consciousness and gaining of ‘power within’. To transform this into action or ‘power to’ community support is needed (Janes 2013:398). Skovdale et al (2009:18) also argue that the ability of children's coping is largely determined by the extent to which they are capable of participating in and negotiating support of their community. Moreover their relation to their community influence the construction of their identity, being valued as a ‘good child’ by the community can in turn strengthen hopeful feelings about the future in children.

That children's coping cannot be understood without taking into account the dynamics of powerful adults within their community becomes clear when looking at the position of police, politicians and gangsters within the red light districts. The findings indicate that children have little trust in the police and politicians to protect them. Police were seen as ineffective to address issues of violence within the red light districts. Although mothers stated that raids on brothels had lessened, they still feared that police would take their children away. Police, local clubs, often related to party cadres will abuse their power by extorting money and sex from the sex workers leading to great unrest and violent outbursts within the red light districts (Sinha and Das Dasgupta 2009: 119, 148). Seeing those with power act in such a way does not only jeopardize children's safety it also distils in them a mistrust of authority and chips away at their belief that their situation can change resulting in ‘getting by’ strategies of resignation.

### 8.3.3 Identity and Personal Beliefs
There are two recurring themes throughout this research, namely the importance of community support and inter-generational collaboration and the effects of identity forming on the coping of children of sex workers. Sex workers fairly consistently stated that all children have to do is perform well in school and that when they have become adults they can become active within their community. Before this time children are considered to lack in maturity. Bridging activities such as participating in sports or dance were seen as appropriate avenues for children's participation. Sex
workers emphasized that they could then show the world that their achievements were possible because of what their mother had done instead of despite what she had done. Children, even some of those who were engaging in ‘getting organized’, also had difficulty identifying possibilities for participation. Generally speaking, mothers and children considered the inception of Amra Padatik as a positive development, but both groups stated that children under the age of 13 were not capable of really grasping the issues at play for them to truly participate. Still in this case observed behaviour conflicted with reported behaviour, seeing that children as young as five or six were participating in protest rallies. These constricted notions of what children can and should do limit their possibilities to act.

Children's coping is further impacted by their perception of their community. Children who had a negative view of their community often expressed feelings of being powerless. Distrust of their fellow community members combined with disapproval of their actions, such as substance abuse and harassment, led children to engage in coping strategies of ‘getting by’ such as social isolation. Children who have a positive view of their community and feel a sense of belonging to it are more likely to engage in ‘getting out’ and eventually ‘getting organized’.

So we see that children's perceptions of their place within and relation to their community and the presence or absence of a sense of belonging are of vital importance to coping. Finally, there is the construction of their own identity as being a child of a sex worker that is of importance. Identity results from the negotiation of cultural meanings, values, structures, and practices and influences people's use of coping strategies (Basu and Dutta 2011:108). This identity causes children to be stigmatized and discriminated within society, and especially when this stigma becomes internalized coping is negatively affected. Children are more likely to engage in resignation, have feelings of helplessness and can eventually become depressed and even suicidal. Yet when children have a positive notion of sex work and feel pride instead of shame for their mother's work they are more likely to use strategies of ‘getting out’ such as mobilizing social support. The combination of a positive self-image, identification as being a child of a sex worker and feeling a sense of belonging to the community can be the first step towards ‘getting organized’ (Sircar and Dutta 2011: 343). A last supporting factor which is specific to this case is that many children see collective action as an effective tool to regain their rights and make themselves heard. Kolkata has known a long history of an active labour movement. This background gave way to the establishment of the DMSC and their success in turn has led to Amra Padatik becoming feasible (Cornish 2006: 467).

8.4 Policy Recommendations

The research shows that the provision of services such as shelter and educational facilities are much needed in the red light district. With regard to education it is of importance that not only attendance to primary school is supported, but that there are also facilities for vocational training and coaching centres for those whose education has been disrupted. Access to school is an issue that needs to be addressed. Although in West Bengal there has been an improvement in the admissions of children of sex workers, this seems not to be representative for other cases. Attendance to and success in school can be further improved by the provision of supervised transportation to and from school. This can be especially important to girls, seeing that parents often do not feel comfortable letting them travel alone, but also not have the resources to accompany them.

The creation of spaces for children where they can get mental and emotional support through kids clubs and other activities/platforms can have a positive effect on children's coping. Being able to express oneself gives release to feelings of anger and shame and counters the development of internalized stigma. Additionally, these safe spaces can foster debate and discussions among youth on health behaviours, preventing HIV/AIDS and finding solutions for collective problems (Jeanes 2013: 391).

Furthermore there is a great need of services catering to boys. More than girls, boys are at risk of becoming involved in substance abuse and criminal activity, current policy and practice does not address these issues. Recent discourse on development policy has acknowledged the fact that gender mainstreaming is not just about girls and women, but it seems that practice has not caught up yet to these insights. Currently there is a sports program in Kolkata run by the DMSC and Amra Padatik that is appealing to a lot of teenage boys, which could provide a platform for discussion and the transference of knowledge.

Lastly, the policy makers need to address issues of SRHR, such as early marriage and second-generation prostitution through intergenerational means. Youth is not an island and the ability of children to resist oppression and have decision-making power regarding sexual reproductive health rights is greatly influenced by the support or lack thereof from their families and community. Peer education can certainly be a vital tool in this, but there is also a need for multilevel strategies, which incorporate peer- and adult led interventions and bring sex workers and their children together (Jeanes 2013: 402, 403). It is perhaps clear when thinking of prenatal care, but the health of sex workers and their children are linked (Basu and Dutta 2011: 116,117).
8.5 Suggestions for Future Research

There has been very little attention for children of sex workers within academic circles. This research can hopefully be a first step highlighting not only the risks and stressors relevant to these children but also their ability to use and engage with a multitude of coping strategies. Nonetheless, the research also shows that coping knows many guises and that this needs to be taken into account when discussing the empowerment of children.

A second issue in this regard is that when we question what empowerment means for children, we must question what power is and more specifically how the power of children relates to that of adults. For a long time the discussion has revolved around the tension between the rights of children to be protected and have their needs met on the one hand and their rights to participate and the recognition of children as competent social actors on the other (Mannion 2007:407). This tension had not been resolved, but we must broaden our view.

‘If childhoods and adulthoods are interdependent features of social processes - we cannot understand one without understanding the other - then we cannot understand either without widening the lens to take account of how they are assembled or networked.’

(Mannion 2007:415)

We need to reconsider the children’s participation research and move beyond Hart’s ladder of participation (1992). The research indicates that intergenerational collaboration can potentially have a great effect on children’s ability to not only be aware of their rights, but actually execute them.
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Appendix A: Interview Guides

These interview guides were used during the semi-structured interviews. Not all questions were asked, and also questions were added depending on the information that came to light during the interview. The interview guide for children was further adapted with regards to children who are now adults and children who are growing up within a residential school.

Interview Guide Children

Name:
Age (year):
Female/Male

Everyday Life
1. Where do you live?
2. With whom do you live?
3. Do you have any brothers or sisters, how old are they?
4. Where you born and brought up here or did you come to Kidderpur/Sonagachi later on during your childhood?
5. Did you remain with your mother or did you also spend time elsewhere such as a boarding school or with relatives? (and brothers/sisters)
6. Can you describe to me what an average day looks like for you from morning till evening?
7. How do you experience growing up in this Red Light district?
8. What do you find difficult about growing up here?
9. How do you deal with that?
10. When you realised what the work was that your mother did how did that make you feel and how did this later on develop?
11. When your mother is entertaining a customer, what do you do?
12. Does your mother raise you alone or is your father or a Babu also there?
13. Are there any other family members that you spend a lot of time with?
14. Do you go to school? How many years of schooling have you had?
15. Where do you go to school?
16. What do you and don’t you like about going to school?
17. Do you engage in any sports or arts? If so, how does this make you feel, and if not why not?

Vulnerabilities and Resilience
18. What can you tell me about the presence of drugs and alcohol in your neighbourhood? What do you think about that
19. What can you tell me about the presence of violence in this area and it’s effect on children?
20. What can you tell me about the issues with space, what spaces are theirs for children, what do children do to create their own space?
21. What is missing from your neighbourhood that children need?/ also asked as ‘If you had the power to change anything you wanted, what would you want to be different in your neighbourhood?’
22. If you run into trouble who do you go to?
23. What resources are children in your community most in need of?
24. How do you think you can acquire them?
25. What issues affecting your community do you think need to be addressed?
26. Who or what groups should be made aware of these issues, so that change can happen?
27. Do you think that you as an individual or as a collective can play a role in this, if so how and if not why not?

Future
28. What do you hope to be doing in the future?
29. How do you plan to achieve this? What do you need to achieve this and who can help you with this?
30. What are your greatest worries for your future?
31. What do you do to prevent these worries from becoming true?
32. Who is an example for you and why?

Endnote
33. Are you associated with Durbar/Amra Padatik? And if so why and how?
34. Is there any topic you wish to discuss that we haven’t talked about, or that you think I should know about?

Interview Guide Mothers

Name:
Age:

Everyday Life
1. How many children do you have? Boys/Girls, how old are they?
2. Where do you live?
3. Who is living with you?
4. Do you go to school? How many years of schooling have you had?
5. Where do you go to school?
6. What do you and don’t you like about going to school?
7. Do you engage in any sports or arts? If so, how does this make you feel, and if not why not?

Vulnerabilities and Resilience
18. What can you tell me about the presence of drugs and alcohol in your neighbourhood? What do you think about that
19. What can you tell me about the presence of violence in this area and it’s effect on children?
9. Do you have any other relatives living here?
10. Are you getting any support from your relatives?

Future
11. What are your hopes and dreams for your children’s future?
12. How do you plan to achieve this? What do you need to achieve this and who can help you with this?
13. What do you think children can gain from participating in sports or arts?
14. What are your greatest worries for your children?
15. What do you do to prevent these worries from becoming true?
16. What should the child do, what are his/her responsibilities regarding his/her future?

Vulnerabilities and Resilience
17. What or who causes problems/troubles in your daily life for you and/or your children?
18. What do you do about these things?
19. What or who helps you to address these issues?
20. How do your children deal with these issues?
21. What resources are mothers in your community most in need of? – Has been rephrased during interviews à What has for you as a mother been the biggest challenge in raising your kids in this environment (neighbourhood)?
22. What resources are children in your community most in need of?
23. Why do you think you lack them? What is the cause of this or the reason behind it?
24. How do you think you can acquire them?
25. What problems affecting children in your community do you think need to be addressed?
26. Who or what groups should be made aware of these issues, so that change can happen?
27. Do you think that you as an individual or as a collective can play a role in this, if so how and if not why not?
28. Do you think your children, or children in general, can play a role in improving the quality of life in the community? Why do you think this and if yes what could that role be?
29. Are you associated with Durbar/Amra Padatik? And if so why and how?
30. Have you ever used their service? If so why? If not, is this because you had no need or because their services do not meet your needs?

Endnote
31. Is there any topic you wish to discuss that we haven’t talked about, or that you think I should know about?
32. Is there any topic that we did discuss that you found to be irrelevant or otherwise not appropriate?

Interview Guide Social Workers/Associated Professionals
Name:
Age:
Male/Female
Profession:

1. Are you associated with Durbar/Amra Padatik? And if so why and how?

Family and community life
2. What educational opportunities are available for children? Are there any issues associated with this, of so what are these?
3. Is there access to health services for children? Are there any issues associated with this, of so what are these?
4. What responsibilities do children have in the household?
5. What are the biggest challenges for FSW who are also mothers in balancing these roles?

Vulnerabilities and Resilience
6. What issues affecting children in the community do you think need to be addressed and should be given the highest priority? Can you differentiate between risks and vulnerabilities that are present in their daily life’s and future risks?
7. Which future risks should be given specific attention?
8. How do you react to statements such as ‘All children of FSW become sex workers themselves’? What myths exist about these children and their mothers?
9. What resources are mothers in the community most in need of?
10. What resources are children in the community most in need of?
11. How do you think they can acquire them?
12. Who or what groups should be made aware of these issues, so that change can happen?
13. Do you think children can play a role in improving the quality of live in the community? Why do you think this and if yes what could that role be?
14. What do you think can children gain from engaging in community activism/participation?
15. What can children of FSW gain from engaging in sports and/or theatre (arts)?

Future
16. What are your greatest worries for these children’s future? Do these differ for boys and girls?
17. What can be done to prevent this from becoming true?
Endnote
18. Is there any topic you wish to discuss that we haven’t talked about, or that you think I should know about?
19. Is there any topic that we did discuss that you found to be irrelevant or otherwise not appropriate?
Appendix B: Schedule Participatory Sessions

I. REGISTRY OF ALL PARTICIPANTS: (TIME 10 MINUTES)
II. INTRODUCTION: (TIME 5 MINUTES)
III. DRAWING A: (TIME 40 MINUTES)

Making a drawing of your neighbourhood, include the following things in your drawing:
1. Your house
2. The people you are living with
3. Your street
4. Places where you go to often
5. Places where you go to play
6. Places where you spend time during the evening and night
7. The things and places that you do NOT like about your home, street and neighbourhood including the places that you rather NOT go to
8. Anything, any place or anyone else that is important to you

Break (TIME 30 MINUTES)

DISCUSSION DRAWING A: (TIME 60 MINUTES)
DRAWING B: (TIME 30 MINUTES)

Make a drawing of yourself and your neighbourhood in 20 years time, think about the following things:
1. What are you doing in 20 years?
2. Where are you living and with who?
3. What has changed in your neighbourhood?
4. What has stayed the same?

IV. DISCUSSION DRAWING A: (TIME 60 MINUTES)
V. CLOSING: (TIME 5 MINUTES)

Make a drawing of yourself and your neighbourhood in 20 years time, think about the following things:
1. What are you doing in 20 years?
2. Where are you living and with who?
3. What has changed in your neighbourhood?
4. What has stayed the same?

VI. DISCUSSION DRAWING A: (TIME 60 MINUTES)
VII. CLOSING: (TIME 5 MINUTES)
Appendix C: Map of West-Bengal
Appendix D: Organogram of Amra Padatik