

“IT’S JUST LIKE ANY OTHER WORK, HONEY”:  
SEX, RISK, AND CONTROL IN  
SERVICE WORK

by

EMILY VICTORIA KRUSE

(Under the Direction of Linda Grant)

ABSTRACT

Using interviews with twenty-one current and former erotic laborers, this paper examines how workers control customers. Peepshow dancing, phone sex, club dancing, lingerie modeling, erotic massage, bachelor party stripping, escorting, and domination are presented within their organizational contexts. This evidence shows that erotic labor is not inherently alienating but rather depends on the organizational context. Workers whose organizations offer support, as well as workers whose occupations are structured around strong subcultural norms, tend to experience their work as empowering. Workers whose organizations offer little support or are anomic tend to construct their work as alienating. This paper also explores feminist theories on sexuality, concluding that, because they do not consider organizational contexts, they are inadequate tools for assessing the variation in workers’ experiences.

INDEX WORDS: Service work, Sex work, Erotic labor, Organizational control, Workplace norms, Worker control, Feminist theory, Peepshows, Phone sex, Strip clubs, Exotic dancers, Lingerie models, Erotic massage, Bachelor party strippers, Escorts, Professional dominatrix, BDSM

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Research on interactive service work, or work that entails direct interaction and communication with customers (Leidner 1993: 1), has revealed the challenges workers face in controlling their clientele (McCammon and Griffin 2000). However, not all service workers are presumed to have equal access to control over their customers. Workers whose occupations have a sexual or erotic bend, for example, are assumed to experience their work as alienating and beyond their control (Chapkis 1997: 70-82). In this analysis, I look at a kind of service work Chapkis (1997) calls “erotic labor” and workers’ techniques for establishing and maintaining control over customers.

Although Chapkis (1997) does not specifically define erotic labor, she equates it with the equally nebulous term “sex work.” I argue against MacKinnon’s (1989) claim that sex work, or erotic labor, by its nature, degrades women. I propose instead that erotic labor is not inherently alienating and that erotic laborers are not, by the sexual or erotic nature of their work, without control over their jobs. Rather, I find workers’ levels of control depend on their organizational contexts. This research shows that the risks associated with erotic labor and the amount of control organizations grant their workers vary greatly. Organizations, thus, determine the degree of control workers exercise and the precautionary measures they take.

This research and investigation of the literature show that sex work, although it has not always been considered work, is very similar to other kinds of service work. In



reviewing the literature, it is clear that many women service workers do sexual work as a part of their jobs. Various studies have called attention to the sexualization of women secretaries (Hearn and Parkin 1995; Sokoloff 1980), flight attendants (Cobble 1999; Hochschild 1983), and waitresses (Hall 1993; LaPointe 1992; Loe 1996; Mars and Nicod 1984: 61-62; Spradley and Mann 1975), token women in corporations (Kanter 1977), and women in the gambling (Enarson 1993; Filby 1992), retail (Hughes and Tadic 1998), and tourism industries (Adkins 1995; Enloe 2000).

To describe the category “sex workers” is problematic, as many women in this study liken the job of a waitress to their more blatantly sexual jobs. When I interviewed Vanessa, a former strip club dancer, she remarked that dancing is “mostly just hostessing” and “just like waitressing, but waitressing is so much harder.” Minax, a respondent who works as a professional dominatrix (abbreviated as pro domme), defined sex work as “any work that has sexual overtones or undertones (that is) paid for.” Katrina, also a pro domme, defined sex work as any work that relies on one’s physical appearance and/or depends on men’s achievement of orgasm. Waitresses, dependent on tips, certainly rely on their physical appearances, charm, attentiveness, and other traits constructed as feminine or womanly. Waitresses, secretaries, paralegals (Pierce 1995), and other women service workers also rely on satisfying men, not necessarily sexually, but making sure that customers, clients, and superiors are content, fulfilled, and secure. The line between sex work and other kinds of sexual service work, such as waitressing, is, thus, difficult to draw.

Sex work is a problematic term for still another reason. There is considerable disagreement between pro dommes, concerning whether their work is or is not sex work.

Since *pro dommes* do not have sex with their clients or take off their clothes for them, many do not consider domination to be sex work. Despite disagreement over what constitutes sex work, workers in this study generally agreed that the work they do takes place in an erotic context and is an erotic experience for the client. I wish to respect the varied definitions of sex work as provided by my respondents and therefore define the work in this analysis as erotic labor, rather than as sex work. However, because sex work is the dominant term in the literature, I also refer to sex work when quoting some workers or other researchers.

It is important to note that societies have constructed workers we now consider erotic laborers or sex workers in various ways – as “sacred, healing” in ancient Greece (Bell 1994: 2), as “profane, diseased” in nineteenth century Europe (Bell 1994: 2; Walkowitz 1980: 124), as “sisters, albeit fallen ones” (Walkowitz 1980: 125), as “the other within the categorical other, ‘woman’” (Bell 1994: 2), as “‘an object of inquiry,’” a “distinct female body” (Bell 1994: 41), as white slaves (Walkowitz 1980: 126), and as a right and necessity for tourists and military men (Enloe 2000). Rarely, however, are erotic laborers or sex workers constructed as legitimate workers.

The categories “erotic laborers” and “sex workers” are very modern and have not always existed. Carol Leigh (1997), a prostitute and sex workers’ rights activist, has written that she invented sex work. She suggested the term “sex work industry” in a workshop at a Women Against Violence in Pornography and Media conference (229). For Leigh, “sex work” describes the service women provide. “The term ‘sex worker’ is a feminist contribution to the language. The concept of sex work unites women in the industry – prostitutes, porn actresses, and dancers – who are enjoined by both legal and

social needs to disavow common ground with women in other facets of the business . . . This usage of the term ‘sex work’ marks the beginning of a movement. It acknowledges the work we do rather than defines us by our status” (230). Thus, erotic laborers and sex workers have only become workers through late twentieth century efforts in self-advocacy and activism. Workers use the term “sex work” to call attention to the similarities between their work and that of other workers and to aid them in their fight for improved working conditions.

Although theorizing a category called “sex workers” or “erotic laborers” is problematic, I append my research to studies on sexualized service work in an effort to create a more holistic understanding of work and sexuality. With the understanding that the boundaries between erotic labor and other service work are, in many ways, blurred, I propose an imperfect definition of the category “erotic laborers.” I use the term erotic labor to refer to any of the following kinds of work: bachelor/bachelorette party stripping, club dancing, erotic massage, escorting, fetish modeling, Internet modeling, lingerie modeling, live sex show performance, peepshow dancing, phone fantasy acting, porn acting, porn magazine modeling, private dancing, professional domination, or prostitution. It is important to mention, as well, that many erotic laborers work in several of these occupations sequentially or simultaneously.

For the purposes of this analysis I include only jobs that entail face-to-face or voice-to-voice contact with customers. I exclude occupations such as live sex show performance, pornography acting, and magazine modeling, as they do not involve direct

interactions with customers and therefore do not necessitate techniques for maintaining personal control in the way that, for example, stripping or escorting would.<sup>1</sup>

As well, I exclude prostitution and consider only legal (or marginally legal) businesses. To be sure, acts of prostitution invariably take place in any number of legal venues. Some of the activities workers in this study engaged in, such as allowing clients to touch their breasts, masturbating in front of clients, or using dildos to have anal sex with clients, fall under the umbrella of prostitution law. However, addressing the differential experiences of doing legal versus illegal work is outside the scope of this paper.

Throughout this paper I use workers' voices and accounts to analyze heterosexual erotic labor. I find that, instead of projecting a personal agenda onto the analysis, listening to workers' stories yields a wealth of information that previous theories and research have overlooked. I address variation within and between the interactions, risks, and resources specific to eight particular erotic occupations – peepshow dancing, phone fantasy acting, club dancing, lingerie modeling, erotic massage, bachelor party stripping, escorting, and professional domination.

To reinforce my argument for the similarities between erotic labor and other service work, I examine the literature on notably sexualized and/or vulnerable workers, such as waitresses (Hall 1993; LaPointe 1992; Loe 1996; Paules 1991; Spradley and Mann 1975), domestic workers (Rollins 1985), and fast food workers (Leidner 1993, 1996; Newman 1999). I track erotic laborers' work experiences from the process of

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<sup>1</sup> Minax and Carmen, both pro dommes, have done porn videos and photography. However, for the reason given above, I did not interview them about their experiences in porn.

acquiring a job, to training, to working, and, if applicable, to leaving work. I provide detailed descriptions of the work, grounded in the literature on service work, emotional labor, and organizational control. As well, because so many of the workers in this study identify as feminists, I use feminist theories of sexuality to explain workers' constructions of their erotic labor.

**CHAPTER 2**  
**“IT’S JUST LIKE ANY OTHER WORK, HONEY”:  
SEX, RISK, AND CONTROL  
IN SERVICE WORK**

As in Chapkis’ (1997; 2000) work, erotic labor in this analysis is treated as work. I discuss erotic labor just as sociological researchers discuss other types of service industries. Like other kinds of service work, erotic labor entails the need for controlling interactions with clients, carrying with it unique risks and resources. Erotic labor is, arguably, more risky than work at a department store or restaurant. Yet unlike some service workplaces, many erotic organizations provide very little support and do not require workers to adhere to specific company policies in their interactions with customers. Workers in other erotic organizations, however, must follow particular guidelines for behavior and are closely supervised and controlled. How, then, do women in such highly variable, and sometimes risky, working environments control interactions with their customers?

Workers’ means for controlling clients are limited in a number of ways. I concur with sex workers (Barbara 1993; Jasmin 1993) and other researchers (McClintock 1993b; Pheterson 1993) that erotic labor’s status as marginally legal or illegal, results in stigma and, thus, greater risk for workers and fewer resources for controlling customers. Erotic laborers must constantly work to maintain physical boundaries and to avoid customers who would stalk or physically harm them because they do not see them as humans who have rights. Alexander (1998) writes,

From a sex workers' point of view, it is the laws against prostitution and the stigma imposed on sex work that provoke and permit violence against prostitutes, and ensure poor working conditions and the inability of many sex workers to move on to other kinds of work without lying about their experience (185). The countries with the most restrictive legal systems, including the United States and many countries in Southeast Asia, have the most problems with violence against prostitutes (and women perceived to be like prostitutes), thefts associated with prostitution, pimping (especially brutal pimping), and the involvement of juveniles. Conversely, the countries with the least restrictive measures, including the Netherlands, West Germany, Sweden, and Denmark, have the least problems. No country, however, is totally safe for sex workers. The stigma still isolates them, and the remaining laws perpetuate that stigma, rather than dispel it and truly legitimize the women who work as prostitutes (205).

I further argue that the establishment and enforcement of norms governing the behaviors of erotic laborers' customers are typically weak and inconsistent (Enck and Preston 1988: 373-374). Erotic organizations encourage men's fantasies and promise their sexual fulfillment. As a result, many men patronize strip clubs or other sexually-oriented businesses, often assuming the workers are prostitutes and anticipating that their sexual expectations will be fulfilled (Boles and Garbin 1974b; Enck and Preston 1988). As in many service industries, managers often demonstrate little concern for the safety and well-being of workers and a great concern for customer satisfaction and repeat business. Customers' desires are often more highly valued than are workers' abilities to control interactions. Consequently, workers and their customers often do not know what

to expect from one another. For example, a customer might walk into two different strip clubs in the same city on the same evening and be allowed to touch the dancers in one, but get kicked out for groping in the other. The same is true in escorting. Because escorting is pushed underground and the intentions of workers and customers are not always clearly verbalized (for fear of arrest), customers may receive sexual services from one, but not another, escort in any particular agency. (For customers' perspectives on escort agencies, massage parlors, brothels, and strip clubs worldwide, see the *World Sex Guide* website.)

There are few set rules or steps that all erotic laborers and customers follow in each and every interaction. In some cases, workers' methods for establishing and maintaining control are severely curtailed by their organizations. As a result of the stigma associated with erotic labor and the general lack of strong norms, uncertainty in the workplace is often quite high for workers and customers. The high degree of uncertainty about how clients will behave augments risk and workers' vulnerability to customers' demands and expectations.

When uncertainty is high, standardization of interactions becomes an important mechanism by which some workers establish and maintain control over customers. I find evidence of standardization among workers who are employed by organizations and those who work independently. I explore the differences between self-employment and working for an organization and the variation in types and degrees of risks. Self-employed workers, such as independent pro dommes (abbreviation for professional dominatrix) and some escorts, experience more freedom in organizing their work, selecting clientele, and establishing their own hours and fees for services. Pro dommes



enjoy greater money making opportunities and are not accountable to rules and regulations of organizations. However, unlike employees of organizations, independent workers lack or must provide their own support, such as training, opportunities for communication with colleagues, and security and protection from clients.

For employees of organizations, management plays a critical role in the degree to which workers are permitted to establish and maintain control over customers. My research mirrors the complex dynamics Leidner (1996) observed in her work with McDonald's workers and insurance salespeople. The routines employers impose on workers may or may not enhance workers' power (Leidner 1996: 41-42). "In interactive service work, we find not a stable pattern of workers and managers acting on interests that are directly opposed to each other, but a complex dynamic in which each of three groups of participants has interests that bring them sometimes into alliance, sometimes into opposition with each of the other two" (39).

I submit that when workers are able to determine how they will standardize their interactions with customers, when they determine how they will protect themselves from risk (and hopefully increase their incomes), they are better able to control their customers. As well, for risk reduction techniques to be effective, organizations must support workers by providing training, security, and safe, non-abusive work environments. Conversely, when management does not enforce rules concerning physical contact between workers and customers or when occupation-specific norms are weak, women report greater on-the-job risks and, thus, a greater need to control their clientele. My research shows that jobs with the greatest degree of risk are also the least structured jobs, or the jobs with the least organizational support.

In disorganized, unstructured, or loosely structured workplaces, such as many erotic organizations, workers are not always subjected to strict guidelines governing their behavior with clients. Hodson (1999) characterizes disorganized, or anomic, organizations as low in normative standards and practices (294) and organizational communication (303) and high in management abuse and firings (302). Sometimes workers have very little contact with supervisors, and supervisors have no way of monitoring workers' behavior and performance. I find that, lacking standardization, many workers routinize their work in order to transform unpredictable situations into easily controlled transactions. For instance, workers without omnipresent organizations, such as the pro dommes and escorts I interviewed, establish their own norms and use their unique resources to contend with interactions with customers and the risks associated therein.

Despite the similarities to service work I have listed, erotic labor is different from other service work in obvious ways (Weitzer 2000). As I have already mentioned, erotic labor is riskier than most service work. As well, waitresses do not take off their clothes (although some wear very little [Loe 1996]) and customers do not typically expect to receive sexual services from them. In addition, conventional society typically draws a line between those service workers who "sell themselves" and those who do not. Researchers acknowledge the work of "selling oneself" in some kinds of service work where "the quality of the interaction is frequently part of the service being delivered" (Leidner 1996: 30; Hochschild 1983). "Selling oneself" in erotic labor, however, is often assumed to mean something quite different. Many non-erotic laborers speak disapprovingly of women who "sell themselves for money" or "sell their bodies," or

women who sell their private, intimate sexualities. The notion of selling one's private, intimate sexuality is problematic in that it assumes that sexuality is something to be reserved for the private domain (Hearn and Parkin 1995) and that the private self is somehow sacred. Erotic laborers reject the notions of "selling themselves" or "selling their bodies," arguing that they have not sold their bodies, but that their bodies are still theirs (Bell 1994: 77).

Zatz (1997: 283) calls attention to the challenge of theorizing the "product" of erotic labor. I argue that erotic labor is less a sale of one's sexual self and more so a sale of one's time and attentiveness. Customers seek out exotic dancers, phone sex actresses, and other workers for attention, conversation, and validation. As Vanessa, former club dancer, said, "I just think it's not really sex. Half of it was hostessing, just talking to people. And half of it was just watching dancing, and I think that's different from having intercourse with somebody." Or, in the case of domination, customers seek to explore unconventional fetishes, to relinquish their power, and to push their physical and emotional boundaries.

The majority of the workers with whom I spoke also mentioned at least once the notion of "being in character" or presenting to the customer a fabricated identity. Workers who have close physical contact with customers frequently develop fictional identities in order to protect themselves from possible harm. Workers, especially phone sex actresses, create elaborate characters specifically for the purposes of the work. For example, former phone actress Olivia commented that callers would prefer to speak to her character, "a blonde teenager masturbating," than to her non-work self, "a punk rock dyke sitting in her room reading a book." By creating work characters and fabricating

work identities, workers sell not their bodies or selves, but their time and attentiveness to customers.

Despite the overt sexuality in erotic labor, I suggest that it is not the sexual nature of the work that creates risk. Rather, it is the stigma attached to the work, in concert with the lack of strong norms and organizational support for workers, that makes erotic laborers, on the whole, a vulnerable population. I maintain, as Paules (1991) and Loe (1996) do in their studies of waitresses, that despite the risks and vulnerability associated with their work, erotic laborers are “not passive victims of exploitive processes” (Paules 1991: 131). Rather, workers exercise control, in varying degrees, over their work (Hodson 1999: 293). I show that workers, using the resources at their disposal, are generally successful in establishing and maintaining control and decreasing risk.

## CHAPTER 3

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### *Sex in the Workplace*

Gayle Rubin's (1984) theory of radical sexual pluralism reveals the privilege modern Western society grants to sexual acts, identities, and object choices at the top of the "hierarchical system of sexual value" (279). At the top of the "erotic pyramid" (279), or "within the charmed circle of good, normal, natural, blessed sexuality," (281) are married, monogamous, reproductive heterosexuals. "The most despised sexual castes currently include transsexuals, transvestites, fetishists, sadomasochists, sex workers such as prostitutes and porn models, and the lowliest of all, those whose eroticism transgresses generational boundaries" (279). Rubin's theory exposes the dominant heteronormative worldview that dictates that work and sexuality should be mutually exclusive and never, ever overlap. She also constructs a space wherein all sexualities have equal chances of being empowering.

Feminists do not universally share Rubin's perspective, however. Some radical and liberal feminists argue that "sex should be private and intimate, not commodified and part of public life" (Zatz 1997: 288), nor "sold, bought, bartered, or exchanged by others" (MacKinnon 1987: 59). Feminist theories of commercialized sexuality discuss prostitution and its implications for women's status but do not often consider erotic labor that does not involve sexual intercourse with clients. Applying feminist theories of prostitution to other kinds of erotic labor is problematic in that non-prostitute erotic

laborers are often very insistent on drawing lines between themselves and prostitutes. Yet MacKinnon (1989: 3), although she never engages the voices of the workers she theorizes, would almost certainly interpret all forms of erotic labor as she interprets prostitution and all wage labor – as inherently alienating. Women’s sexuality, she argues further, is never their own but exists only for men’s desires (118; Dworkin 1987). According to MacKinnon (1989: 149), prostitutes’ or other women’s claims to the contrary – that they are not oppressed, that their sexuality empowers them, that they enjoy their work, that they enjoy heterosexual sex – are nothing more than a display of false consciousness. In contrast to Rubin’s theory that no sexual identity, activity, or object choice is inherently degrading or disempowering, MacKinnon (1989) and Dworkin (1987) argue that heterosexuality, in all forms, is indistinguishable from rape.

Conventional Euro-American culture (in rare agreement with radical feminist discourse) also dictates that sexuality and money should not merge (Zatz 1997: 294), although for rather different reasons. MacKinnon believes sexuality disenfranchises and marginalizes women. She argues that men use sexuality as a tool for subordinating women in the workplace (MacKinnon 1980). Conventional society, however, is concerned less with inequality and more with morality. The dominant paradigm condemns mixing work and sexuality because sexuality must be monogamous, heterosexual, and take place at home, not because it oppresses women.

Despite demonization of sexuality in the workplace, Hearn and Parkin (1995) provide evidence for sex at all levels of wage labor. In *“Sex” at “work”: The power and paradox of organisation sexuality*, Hearn and Parkin (1995) call into question the notion that work and sexuality are wholly different entities. All kinds of workplaces, they claim,

are sexualized sites in which organizations shape sexuality and sexuality shapes organizations – workers meet future marriage partners, “social/sexual contacts” are made, extramarital affairs begin (Hearn and Parkin 1995: 10), and some workers choose to reveal or conceal gay or lesbian identities (Schneider 1987). Relationships between executives and secretaries are often highly sexual. “The word ‘secretary’ produces a host of signifiers . . . ‘office wife,’ ‘subservient,’ ‘attractive,’ ‘sexually available’ . . . and so on. For most men ‘having’ a secretary is a sign of sexual power” (Hearn and Parkin 1995: 147). As well, “apart from sexual acts and liaisons, explicit sexual behaviour in organisations can take many forms: sexual display, sexual advances, conspicuous sexuality in body movement and posture, sexual harassment, sexual horseplay” (Hearn and Parkin 1995: 102), the discussion of sexual conquests (Backhouse and Cohen 1980: 75), and “the exploitation of sexuality” (Hearn 1985: 117-119; Backhouse and Cohen 1980).

Erotic labor, insofar as it is accepted as work, is “presumed guilty until proven innocent” (Rubin 1984: 278). Yet, if we accept that eroticism and work are not mutually exclusive, we are forced to confront aspects of erotic labor that are common to other kinds of “legitimate” work. As Hearn and Parkin (1995) suggest, although we are more apt to recognize sexuality as an organizational goal in what the authors call “sexploitation organisations” (15), researchers should not ignore eroticism in other kinds of organizations.

Several studies have explored the sexualization of waitresses (Hall 1993; LaPointe 1992; Loe 1996; Spradley and Mann 1975). Hall (1993) argues, “the daily tasks of waiting tables are the rituals through which women servers are required to

present themselves as sex objects” (456). For example, tight, revealing uniforms emphasizing women’s figures are common in many restaurants (Hall 1993; LaPointe 1992; Loe 1996). Particular behaviors, as well, such as smiling, deferring, and flirting, subordinate waitresses, making them vulnerable to male customers (Hall 1993).

“Because of their subordination and vulnerable positioning, women become easy targets of verbal abuse, and of others’ (managers’, customers’, even colleagues’) displaced feelings” (Loe 1996: 406). In addition to “degrading comments, sexist behaviors, and ‘insults made in jest’” (Loe 1996: 410), Spradley and Mann (1975) recounted dozens of instances in which cocktail waitresses received comments on their looks or breast size and were touched, grabbed, and propositioned by customers and coworkers.

Waiting tables is, of course, different from doing erotic labor in that it is not criminalized or pathologized. Although waitresses, like some erotic laborers, are seen by many customers as less than human (Paules 1991; Stock 1997), waitresses are not constructed as morally degenerate or assumed to be prostitutes. Yet, the requirements for the job of waitressing are remarkably similar to those for erotic labor. In particular, waitresses, like many erotic laborers, are generally expected to perform emotional labor – to attend to customers’ demands, to engage and flatter customers, to smile, to be cheerful, and to tolerate insults and harassment.

In the case of waitressing, and, indeed, all service work, organizations play a central role in the degree to which workers exercise control over their customers. Hall (1993) argues, as I do in the case of erotic labor, “the options available for resistance vary with the type of restaurant and the service style it endorses” (462). For example, a waitress in Hall’s (1993) study contrasted her resources, as a waitress in an upscale



restaurant, with those of a waitress in a coffee shop. “She may ask customers to move, but if they choose not to move, she must work around them as best she can . . . In less prestigious restaurants a ‘waitress would hit the customer with her elbow and the bus boy would pour water on them if they were in the way’” (462). Several of the waitresses Spradley and Mann (1975) and Paules (1991) studied talked back to customers and even yelled at them. Spradley and Mann’s (1975) cocktail waitresses exercised a considerable degree of latitude in dealing with belligerent customers at closing time. Waitresses yanked ashtrays from tables, pulled beer bottles from customers’ hands, blatantly stared at customers, and made comments such as, “‘Let’s move it’” (56).

In “a sexually permissive environment” (Loe 1996: 410), such as the highly sexualized chain restaurant Loe (1996) called “Bazooms,” workers react in a variety of ways to the sexuality of the work and to lewdness from customers (417). However, such overt displays of annoyance with customers, as shown in Spradley and Mann (1975) and Paules (1991) were unacceptable at Bazooms. “Bazooms girls” (Loe 1996: 399) were required to “put up with shit” (411), while “actively setting boundaries, negotiating circumstances, reacting, and in many cases resisting” (418). Loe (1996) lists such actions as bringing “personal histories into the job to educate customers” and “quietly voiced contempt for customers and managers” as mechanisms for maintaining a modicum of control in a workplace that grants women little latitude in their roles as “the objects of male fantasy” (419).

Waitressing, work constructed as legitimate but done in a sexual context, bears a remarkable resemblance to erotic labor. Armed with differential resources, waitresses face the challenge of controlling customers who see them as sex objects (Loe 1996) or as

non-human (Paules 1991). Researchers must not, therefore, take for granted control, or lack of control, over customers. It is not simply the sexual or erotic context in which work occurs that makes workers vulnerable. Rather, we must look at organizations and how they vary in the degree of control they permit workers to have in the workplace.

### ***Vulnerability in the Workplace***

Lack of support from work organizations leaves workers extremely vulnerable. Organizational support takes a variety of forms, including structuring the workplace in such a way that customer abuse of workers is not tolerated, creating conditions in which workers perceive control over work processes, management provides security, workers receive training, workers feel their employer values them and that they are paid and treated fairly, they participate in decision-making processes, and their grievances and concerns are considered important.

Domestic workers are a classic example of vulnerable workers who may or may not be employees of a particular organization. Independent or self-employed workers have no one behind them to fight for their rights, to guarantee fair wages and working conditions, and no one to shield them from risk and abuse. Judith Rollins' (1988) study of Northern and Southern domestics provides several examples of vulnerability in the workplace. Domestic work typically involves one independent worker and one household employer. Some domestics expressed satisfaction with their independence. One woman commented, "I don't have to like people . . . No aggravation. You're your own boss. You do what you want to do" (79).

Although many domestics preferred to work independently rather than for organizations, their independence often left them economically and socially vulnerable.

Employers are not required to provide Social Security benefits, paid sick days, or vacations (Rollins 1988: 76-78), thus creating and reinforcing an unequal relationship between workers and employers (91). Domestics' vulnerability is made manifest in still other ways – through the exaggerated performances of deference that employers expect (155-203) and incidences and fear of sexual harassment and abuse from male employers and their sons (150-151).

Rollins' (1988) work shows how independent self-employed workers are often vulnerable. However, even workers who belong to organizations do not necessarily enjoy the guarantee of organizational support. Organizations control their employees within a variety of different management styles that may enhance or undermine workers' control over clients.

Hodson (1999) has written about five particular styles of control – direct personal, bureaucratic, craft, professional, and bilateral (see also Edwards [1979]). Of the five, direct personal (characterized by “close and frequent supervision” [Hodson 1999: 304]), bureaucratic (characterized by “a written code of rules” [305]), craft (characterized by “long training in combination with substantial experience, which leads to significant worker autonomy over how to organize work tasks” [305]), and bilateral (characterized by “some formal input by workers into decisions about the organization of work” [306]) are most relevant to the discussion of control of employees in erotic organizations.

Also of exceeding importance to the discussion of control in erotic organizations is Hodson's (1999, 2001) notion of anomic organizations. In anomic, or disorganized, organizations, there are no clear norms, rules are not specifically stated, and management often harasses and is abusive toward employees (2001). Hodson (1999) argues that

normlessness in the workplace has more negative consequences for workers than do even the most restrictive bureaucratic workplaces.

The different kinds of organizational control grant workers differential access to resources for controlling their customers. Craft workers and workers in bilateral organizations, for instance, have greater latitude in deciding how they will organize their work – deciding which clients they will and will not interact with, determining what services they will provide, and setting fees for services. Craft organizations, in particular, include “safeguards” against the management abuse found so frequently in direct personal control organizations (Hodson 1999: 317).

Workers whose organizations utilize direct personal or bureaucratic control experience less control over how they interact with customers and organize their work. Work in such organizations is often closely monitored and entails strict standards and guidelines. Direct personal control and bureaucratic control are particularly disadvantageous for workers in risky occupations, such as some kinds of erotic labor, because they limit the precautionary measures workers are allowed to take.

Workers who belong to direct personal control or bureaucratic organizations enjoy less control over their work than do self-employed workers. Fast food workers, for example, are subject to very strict guidelines and experience little control over the organization of their work tasks (Leidner 1993, 1996; Newman 1999). Although they are members of organizations, they often receive little support from their management and are, as a consequence, very vulnerable. Newman’s (1999) study of fast food workers in Harlem exemplifies workers’ vulnerability in their stigmatized and denigrated occupation. At management’s insistence, workers must defer to their customers,

regardless of how rudely customers treat workers. Workers must do everything in their power to keep customers happy, or risk losing their jobs. (89).

Fast food workers are severely restricted in their resources and options for controlling customers. At the same time, however, McDonald's and other fast food restaurants are characterized by strong norms of routinization that constrain customers as well as workers. Leidner (1993) discusses organizations' practices of routinization and their effects on workers. To ensure that transactions will run smoothly, service workers are typically subjected to standardized routines they must follow in interacting with customers. Labor process theorists have historically interpreted such routines as infringements on workers' autonomy. As well, increased routinization of work tasks increases workers' vulnerability in that they become more interchangeable (Garson 1988: 226).

Leidner (1993) concludes, however, "in some situations, service routines provide workers . . . with benefits that help account for their frequent acquiescence in managerial designs" (22). She argues that routinization can create a sense of empowerment in that it enables workers to maintain a level of control over transactions with customers. In this way, when workers are following managers' rules, they need not take personally reactions from unhappy customers. At the same time, in a standardized organization, customers cannot expect rules to be bent to accommodate their particular desires. The rules are, simply, the rules, and, in order for the interaction to run smoothly, customers must comply with routinization. Leidner contends that routinization is a viable source of power for some workers.

Examples of fast food workers (Leidner 1993, 1996) demonstrate the extreme implications for routinization in the workplace. Undoubtedly, in many service-oriented workplaces, workers' cooperation with routinization is required and often directly or indirectly monitored by management. What has been explored far less, however, is routinization and vulnerability in workplaces in which workers are not closely supervised, and the organization provides very few guidelines for workers' and customers' behaviors. I provide evidence of erotic laborers' self-created routinization, thus expanding on Leidner's (1993, 1996) argument.

## CHAPTER 4

### METHODS

To answer the question of how workers control customers, I conducted semi-structured ethnographic interviews with current and former erotic laborers over the telephone, over email, and in person. I selected interviewing, rather than a survey methodology, for a number of reasons. First, because so little of the literature addressed my questions about techniques for control of clients or pertained to the workers in whom I am interested, this research is exploratory. I was not sure what concepts would emerge as salient, nor how I would measure them. Only through ethnographic interviews could the concepts come to the surface. Second, several of the issues raised in the interviews are not readily quantifiable. Subjective meanings of work and feminism, for example, cannot be placed on a scale. Finally, by opting for a survey instrument over an ethnographic interview, I would have lost the invaluable stories and thoughts that emerged within open communication. Moreover, as Hodson (2001) has noted, ethnographic methods reveal the anomic characteristics of organizations that quantitative methods have not detected (207). A survey would not have captured the disorganization and anomie in organizations, variables that are critical to understanding erotic labor.

I interviewed respondents in the spring and fall of 2001 and the winter of 2002. I initially located key informants through personal acquaintance. To recruit additional subjects, I also contacted several organizations (Blackstockings, Exotic Dancers' Alliance, Exotic Dancers' Union, Promise, Prostitutes' Education Network, and

Prostitution Research and Education), all of which have unique political goals and approaches to erotic labor.<sup>2</sup> I obtained subsequent respondents through snowball sampling.

A drawback to the method of snowball sampling is that it does not yield a representative sample and is, therefore, not generalizable to the population. In the case of erotic laborers, however, there is no way to determine to what degree the present sample is representative or non-representative. Census data or other datasets with demographics for the entire population of erotic laborers in the United States are not available. In the absence of erotic laborer demographic information, I adopt Brewis and Linstead's (2000) approach to non-generalizability. Brewis and Linstead acknowledge that respondents' stories may be specific only to their own experiences and not necessarily generalizable to the population, or even to the population of workers. However, in order to understand their experiences, it remains imperative that researchers understand the ways in which *individuals* resist, deconstruct, and reconstruct mainstream society's pejorative constructions of their work (10).

When the snowball sampling method failed to yield additional respondents, particularly those who are not tied to organizations, I recruited women over the Internet. I visited a domination website a respondent had mentioned and found no shortage of links to other pro dommes (abbreviation for professional dominatrix). I emailed twenty-three women, and nine completed interviews. Eight of the Internet recruits answered interview questions over email, and one local woman agreed to an in-person interview. Some of

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<sup>2</sup> Promise and Prostitution Research and Education are anti-pornography and anti-prostitution. Blackstockings, Exotic Dancers' Alliance, Exotic Dancers' Union, and Prostitutes' Education Network favor workers' rights and fight for improved working conditions.



the women expressed reluctance about speaking on the phone; others stressed that they were very busy and that email would be more time-efficient. Although the email interviews were not as in-depth as the phone and in-person interviews were, the information respondents provided over email corroborated that which I had already discovered. As well, Internet respondents agreed to correspond with me again, if further clarification became necessary.

Throughout the interviews (twenty-one in total, nine conducted over the telephone, three in person, and nine over email) I asked respondents how many jobs they had; how they acquired their jobs; how long they had worked at their jobs; what their bosses, coworkers, and customers were like; what training they had received; what kinds of management policies there were; who made the decisions about services offered and fees for services on the job; what sorts of security measures were taken; what kinds of social support they had within their workplaces; what they liked and did not like about their jobs; and (if applicable) why they left their jobs. We also spoke of the meanings they give to their work, particularly in the context of feminism. Appendix A contains the interview schedule.

Out of the twenty-one women in my sample, fifteen have worked or are currently working for particular clubs or other organizations. The fourteen pro dommes (abbreviation for professional dominatrix) are self-employed, although six have worked for commercial dungeons. Fifteen of the twenty-one women are currently doing some kind of erotic labor. Eleven of the women worked in only one occupation; ten worked in two or more. Eight have worked as club dancers, one worked also for two bachelor party stripper companies, and another danced in a peepshow. Two worked as lingerie models,

three as escorts, six as phone sex actresses or phone dommes, two as erotic masseuses, and fourteen as pro dommes. Appendices B and C show the employment and demographic information for all respondents.

The age range is fairly wide, spanning from twenty to “over forty,” with a mean of twenty-six. Just under half of the women started erotic labor at or before age twenty. All the women over thirty work as pro dommes. The total amount of time doing erotic labor varies from one month to sixteen years, with a mean of about four years. With few exceptions, the women are mostly white, and most have a high level of education. Like Sweet and Tewksbury (2000), I find, contrary to popular perception, many erotic laborers have more than basic education. All but one of the women in my sample have at least some college education and nine have at least a college degree. Slightly fewer than half of the women were college students when they started working. One started working while in high school.

I also find a rainbow of sexual orientations among respondents. I anticipated that erotic laborers would not necessarily fit neatly into the straight/gay binary. In an effort to create space for non-traditional orientations, I asked respondents how they describe their sexual orientations. Fewer than half of the women identify as heterosexual, two of whom acknowledged past bisexual experiences and one of whom identifies as “dominant heterosexual.” Other respondents used a variety of terms to describe their sexual orientations. The non-heterosexual women described themselves as bisexual, lesbian-identified bisexual, queer, bi-queer, polyamorous queer, gender queer, queer pansexual dyke, and gender fuck. Later, I will return to the topic of sexual identities as they complement or contrast with work identities.

Some of the respondents are very out and open about their work, while others do not discuss their work with family or friends. To protect the identities of all respondents, those who are out and those who are not, I have given utmost attention to confidentiality. I use pseudonyms for workers' names and the names of organizations. I also conceal the names of cities and states where respondents have lived or worked. In fact, I do not even know the real full names of any of the pro dommes.

As mentioned earlier, there is considerable disagreement between some pro dommes over whether they do or do not consider domination to be sex work. In communicating with women whose opinions on sex work I was unaware of, I was, therefore, particularly conscious not to immediately equate their work with sex work. I asked pro dommes how they define sex work and why or why not they consider their work to be sex work. Respecting respondents' subjective definitions provides greater insight into workers' constructions than does imposing on them my own notions of erotic labor.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **EROTIC LABOR IS SERVICE WORK**

Collections of erotic laborers' essays (e.g., Delacoste and Alexander, eds. 1998; Nagle, ed. 1997; Queen 1997; Sycamore, ed. 2000), in their inclusion of contributions from workers in a variety of occupations, have been invaluable to constructing a space for workers' voices. Collections of workers' essays, however, offer little theoretical analysis. To my knowledge, Wendy Chapkis (1997, 2000) is the only researcher to include more than one erotic occupation in a single analysis. Her sample includes women working in the United States and in the Netherlands in both legal and illegal occupations. She includes numerous occupations in her sample, yet she does not, as I do, conduct a systematic evaluation by occupation.

Chapkis (1997, 2000) contends that organizational characteristics, such as management rules and regulations, typically have a negative impact on workers' levels of control over customers. An extremely important aspect of management policies is the regulation of physical contact between workers and customers. Chapkis (2000) argues that rules and policies serve more to protect organizations from legal repercussions than to reduce the risks workers face (185).

Although Chapkis' (1997, 2000) work is the most thorough in addressing the effects of management policies on erotic laborers' levels of control, the evidence I provide of variation in management support poses a challenge to her work. She argues that management policies work against, more often than in favor of, women's autonomy.

However, I find, the relationship between management's control of workers and workers' control of customers is much more complex than Chapkis considers.

Depending on the environment created by the management, policies and structures can function to empower women. The workers in this sample appreciated managers' concerns for their safety and interpreted concerns as signs of respect. As Jane insisted, "When women's bodies are the commodity, customer service has to come secondary to women's choice." Those employers who operated their businesses in ways that decreased risk and vulnerability made the experience more potentially empowering. I argue that dynamics between management, workers, and customers are highly variable, and workplace norms can enhance or preclude workers' control.

My research shows that there are fundamental differences between experiences with customers in different areas of erotic labor. An increased need to control customers typically corresponds to an increase in on-the-job risk. Moreover, high-risk jobs often have less security and fewer norms for workers and customers to follow. For a comprehensive approach to the present analysis, I assess all chronological events in erotic laborers' careers, from making the decision to work, to getting a job, to working, to quitting work (if applicable), and to the constructions of their identities. Appendix D presents summaries of the organizations.

### ***Making the Decision to Work***

Understanding women's motivations for entry into work reveals the potential quality of their experiences. Going into the research, I did not assume histories of abuse among erotic laborers as motivation for entry into work. Rather, I seek to understand the meanings women assign to work before making the decision to do it. Workers in the

same occupations tended to have similar motivations and interests, based on their perceptions of what the work would be like, the need for fast cash, or, as in the case of most of the pro dommes, their previous involvement in the BDSM (Bondage & Discipline - Dominance & Submission - Sadism & Masochism) community.

The phone actresses with whom I spoke mentioned flexibility as an attractive feature of the job. Phone sex and domination lines operate all day, everyday, and women can schedule themselves to work at any time. The women in this study, unlike those in Flowers' (1998) and Rich and Guidroz's (2000) studies, did not work out of an office. They had only to be at a phone to which operators could forward calls. Sonia commented that she took calls while vacationing in San Francisco, two thousand miles from her Midwestern home. Diva, as well, enjoys working only a few hours a day, while still making enough money to support herself.

All of the phone actresses (and many of the other workers) had the advantage of entering their occupations through friends' referrals. They were able to discuss the work and ask questions before and during their phone acting careers. The opportunity to communicate with coworkers was especially crucial, given the physical isolation of the work. Sonia, for example, was the only woman in her Midwestern city who was working for her particular company. Had she not been previously acquainted with other women doing phone sex, she would not have had the opportunity to give and receive social support, and the effect of physical isolation may have been augmented.

The dancers were also attracted to the flexibility of club work. Some had also, from a young age, fantasized about being exotic dancers. Sarah and Jane recalled attraction to the sexuality, the power, the rebelliousness, and the money. Jane described

her entry into exotic dancing: “When I was seventeen, I really, really wanted to be a stripper. I loved the power that they seemed to hold over men, and the money, of course, my god.”

For Jane, the money was the main motivation leading her through various jobs, always seeking out greater and greater income. Her search ended when she began escorting and making more money than she had made in all previous dancing jobs. She made \$10,000 in three weeks at her first escort job when she was eighteen years old. The possibility of making hundreds of dollars in just one hour also drew Kira to escort work. Kira was having financial problems and needed to make a great deal of money in a very short period of time. Jane referred her to the agency for whom she was working at the time, and Kira started immediately. Escorting was never something Kira had fantasized about or even considered until she experienced a dire need for immediate cash.

Unlike the detachment Kira felt from her work, the overwhelming majority of the pro dommes had connections to the BDSM community before beginning work. All but one had experience with domination or fetishes for some time before becoming pro dommes. The one exception, Morganna, had worked previously as a corporate executive and never had an interest in BDSM. Upon deciding to have a baby on her own, she chose professional domination as a temporary occupation to bring money in quickly.

Every domme mentioned freedom as a motivation for entering independent domination. Like other self-employed women they were attracted to a greater earnings potential (as compared to working in an organization) and the flexibility in work-scheduling (Lombard 2001). Many also expressed disdain for working for organizations. Being *petit bourgeois*, pro dommes exercise full control over their businesses. As self-

employed small business owners, dommes enjoy the freedom of choosing their hours of operation, handpicking their clientele, and controlling their cash flows. Apart from enjoying the practice of BDSM in their personal and professional lives, independent pro dommes feel a tremendous amount of freedom in their work.

It is important to mention that few of the women spoke of desperate financial crises or outside influences forcing them to take up erotic labor. Most all of them anticipated that the work would be empowering, or at least tolerable, until they made enough money. This is an important distinction – “If she works because someone else expects or forces her to, or because she simply has no other economic alternatives (and remember that there are few nonprofessional forms of work available to women in this society that pay as well as [erotic labor] can), the likelihood increases that she will experience (erotic labor) as oppressive” (Queen 1997: 184-185).

### ***Getting a Job: Interviewing***

Interviews for erotic labor jobs do not entail the kinds of questions employers typically ask in other kinds of interviews. Kira recalled the interview process for Heartbreakers escort agency (Heartbreakers and all other organization names are pseudonyms) as different from a “normal job interview, like, ‘Why do you want to do this? How would you benefit our company?’ . . . They just want you to go out and sell yourself.” She explained the brief interview process:

Kira: I just called the agency and said that I wanted to do an interview and met them at Burger King . . . Kinda shady. Not the classiest people involved in this kind of work . . . They didn’t really ask me much of anything, except that they just explained to me the job. And it was things like, “How tall are you? What are



your measurements?” And then they trimmed some measurements off and, “What name do you want to be called? And this is how you get paid. And this is what you do” . . . They don’t really care.

Emily: What did they tell you would be involved in the job?

Kira: Massage. That’s the big word that’s always used in escort agencies . . .

They’ll say “nude dancing” or “lingerie dancing” . . . They try to glamorize it . . .

Like you’re gonna be a showgirl, and it’s not.

Like Kira, exotic dancers Sarah and Vanessa described the interview/audition process as brief. Sarah and Vanessa had auditions at Bumpers, a strip club in a Midwestern college town, where they danced privately for the manager. Vanessa reported that the interview process is not rigorous, although generally the manager will want to see the woman’s identification to verify that she is of age. (The “shady, scuzzy” club Jane first worked at when she was seventeen did not, however, check her identification.) Vanessa added that the manager asks what experience the woman has, but “they don’t really care . . . If you have no experience, they’re not going to say no.” Sarah mentioned, as well, that the owner of Bumpers went over the policies with her, explained that she would be paid in cash, completely under the table, and that her name would always be kept confidential.

The managers of phone fantasy companies also explained the policies and procedures to new actresses during interviews. Sonia described the interview process for phone sex work as “a drawn out conversation.” She explained, “They basically let you know what to expect, talk to you about your expectations, and ask you . . . do you feel comfortable with this scenario? Do you realize that any of the following things might be

involved, including rape, incest, young kid calls, severe torture . . . Make sure that you're aware of what's on the table before you get involved. And if you seem like you have no qualms about it . . . then you're pretty much on board . . . It's kind of a self-selective process. If you even bother to try it, there's a good chance you're serious about it."

Sonia, Olivia, and Diva felt it was helpful to know what to expect from phone sex. It is of exceeding importance that the managers are forthright about the job description with potential employees. Managers fully informed actresses that they would receive calls for rape, torture, and incest fantasies. Having this information, actresses, like those in Rich and Guidroz's (2000) study, were able to place restrictions on the kinds of calls they would accept. Any woman who had a history of abuse, or simply had an aversion to non-conventional fantasies, was not required to take those particular calls. Phone actresses, therefore, immediately understood the extent to which they would control their callers and their work.

### ***Starting a Job: Training and Organizational Support***

After interviewing new employees, some managers provide training. Training workers was one way in which bosses showed concern for workers. Although generally not extensive, respondents considered training to be helpful in that it encouraged new employees to be safe. The manager of Bumpers, for example, taught Sarah and Vanessa to collect tips in their panties in a safe way, so that a customer couldn't grab their money or panties away from them. At most clubs, the bouncers and the management encouraged dancers to be safe, to watch around them for men who were grabbing women, and to turn in anyone who was acting inappropriately. The owner of Bumpers also gave Sarah and Vanessa tips on interacting with customers and advised them to smile and be friendly.

All the dancers commented, however, that their coworkers taught them the most about interacting with customers and making money.

Sonia and Olivia's company also provided additional training materials and opportunities. Olivia recalled receiving porn movies and magazines to assist her in developing story lines. As well, the women listened in to calls on three-way calling to get an idea of what to expect. Olivia's company also helped her build a character. She said, "They counseled me on how to get my voice a lot higher . . . be more convincing as a fantasy girl. And giving me tips on all the femme-y, ditzy, bimbo type things to say because I don't know very much about that."

Workers who received training recalled a greater understanding of what to expect on the job and a stronger command of the resources available to them for controlling customers. Training in very disorganized organizations, however, is often nonexistent. Kira, as an escort for Heartbreakers, received training, not from her managers, but from Jane, her recruiter, coworker, and friend. Jane had received training at the first of the three agencies for whom she worked and applied the skills she learned there to all calls with other agencies. If Kira had not been friends with Jane, she would not have had any idea how to conduct herself during a call and would have been infinitely more vulnerable.

Besides the lack of training, Kira was shocked that the owners of Heartbreakers did not explain to her the state laws concerning sexual conduct. She expected they would convey rules to her about what she should and should not do:

As a student of political science, I knew more about what the (state) legal code was about sexual conduct than they did. And, for me, that's a little disturbing . . .  
If you're in a risque business that is scrutinized and . . . interrogated on what

exactly your practices are, you would think that you'd at least want to know what the law was. And they didn't . . . Of course, the agency told you, "Don't engage in oral, anal, vaginal sex." But it wasn't enforced . . . I think that a company should at least be able to provide for the escorts that they're hiring what the law is.

The lack of training and the lack of concern for the law gave Kira the perception that the owners of Heartbreakers did not care about her or any other escorts. Whereas providing training for dancers and phone actresses creates a safer and more supportive environment, Kira interpreted the lack of training as a complete lack of concern and respect. Legal awareness is crucial for escorts since they may or may not know that the law prohibits more than oral, anal, and vaginal sex. Knowledge of the law was especially critical for Kira, since she had no prior experience in any kind of erotic labor. In a disorganized workplace, inexperienced workers go blindly into their new jobs with very little guidance.

For self-employed workers, such as independent pro dommes, training is often a matter of personal responsibility. As mentioned above, most of the dommes in this sample were involved in BDSM before going "professional." Most were already familiar with the equipment and the fetishes, and knew how to communicate with clients (also referred to as play partners). To enhance their skills, most of the pro dommes attended workshops, took CPR and safety classes, read books on their interests in BDSM, and mentored under other pro dommes in their areas.

Katrina explained that new pro dommes often learn the technical side of domination from a mentor, but style and specialization are highly individualized.

Katrina, for example, taught herself Japanese rope bondage, a marketable skill that attracts clients to her. Other pro dommes excel in particular types of torture or fetishes or have a sophisticated knowledge of medical equipment or other specialties. Katrina described the development of personal style as “something that comes naturally or it isn’t meant to be.” Her reification of aptitude in domination indicates that some things simply cannot be taught. For independent pro dommes, an experienced mentor can teach a new domme how to use the equipment or how to acquire clientele. Yet “style” is something that comes not from mentoring or workshops but from someone’s “dominant nature.”

For self-employed pro dommes who, from personal experience, already have knowledge of their field, training is not necessarily essential. However, as I have shown, other workers, especially those with limited coworker interactions, consider training vital. Club dancers frequently receive advice from more experienced coworkers, but phone actresses and escorts are often left to their own devices. Sonia and Olivia were fortunate to receive training materials from their managers and to have friends in the phone sex business. Escorts, on the other hand, must fend for themselves. If they are lucky, they, like Kira, have a friend who is willing to educate them.

The content and extent of training in erotic organizations vary. Although long-term training is not always necessary, training of some sort is a positive aspect of organizations. Many erotic organizations, however, are disorganized or anomic and perhaps unwilling to invest their time in workers who will not likely stay with them long. Like other “disrespectful, disorganized, and chaotic workplaces,” there are often disadvantages to working for such organizations (Hodson 1999: 318). Workers face challenges in establishing and maintaining control over their customers in organizations

that often limit their abilities to do so. In the following section I show different workers' techniques for balancing personal control over customers with the characteristics of their jobs and the organizations for whom they work. To illustrate my argument that risks and resources for minimizing risks vary between occupations and organizations, I have arrayed the occupations in this study on a continuum of risk and need to control customers.

***Peepshow Dancers (n = 1)***

Because peepshow dancers are separated by glass from their customers, they are, generally, the erotic laborers with the lowest degree of on-the-job risk. Although there is no physical contact between dancers and customers, customers often persist in attempting to control dancers' behaviors. In *The Lusty Lady*, Erika Langley (1997) gives her account of dancers' mechanisms for contending with customers' demands at a West Coast peepshow:

Some customers use the swimming gestures to indicate "Open up your pussy," and there's also the twirling signal for "Turn around." This kind of thing makes me feel furious and disgusted, but my co-workers are quick to educate me in snappy comebacks: "I'm not lost, I don't need directions." "Would you like honey-mustard vinaigrette with your order?" "I don't take orders for quarters!" (167). Being able to ignore rude customers seems to be one of the major virtues of the Lusty's unique set-up. The customer is not always right. If they are extremely rude or abusive, they can be handily bounced. The support staff is swift and effective. Turning your butt to the customer can be a gesture of disgust, blocking his view for having such bad manners. Or you can walk away. The Lusty Lady

charm school teaches politeness through punishment, with rewards for good behavior. A smiling man can get star treatment and special attention just because he recognizes other humans in there behind the glass (168).

Diva, the sole peepshow dancer in my sample, spoke of her work experiences in much the same way as Langley (1997) did. She contrasted the freedom she felt in the peepshow with the more oppressive conditions of another workplace, a West Coast strip club where she had worked previously. In the club, dancers were required to be polite to customers and verbal abuse and grabbing from customers was not grounds for their ejection from the premises. In the peepshow, however, dancers were not required to defer to customers.

The structure of the peepshow, in its elimination of physical worker-customer contact, makes workers' needs to control customers less urgent than in other lines of work. At the Lusty Lady, even when customers attempt to take control of their interactions with dancers, management does not place restrictions on dancers' methods of maintaining control. Additionally, dancers' hourly wages, as opposed to dependence on tips, decrease competition between workers and, thus, results in greater workplace solidarity (Dudash 1997: 100-101).

Although problems internal to the organization have been documented (see [www.livenudegirlsunite.com](http://www.livenudegirlsunite.com); Brooks 1997; Chapkis 2000: 197-200; Peterson 2000 for a discussion of workers' complaints against the owners of the Lusty Lady in San Francisco and the subsequent formation of a dancers' union), the Lusty Lady is, at least on the surface, organized in such a way as to enhance workers' control. As in all occupations,

permission to control all aspects of one's work is an important contributing factor to the reduction of risk.

***Phone Fantasy Actresses (n = 6)***

Phone sex and phone domination actresses have only voice-to-voice contact with customers and, hence, no need to control physical interactions. However, workers experience the necessity of controlling the direction and content of conversations. *The fantasy factory: An insider's view of the phone sex industry* by Amy Flowers (1998), includes scant information on actresses' attempts to control conversations and gives virtually no insight into the structure of the actresses' organizations.

The phone sex company Rich and Guidroz (2000) studied provided actresses with a list of calls that were acceptable to refuse, including "children calls, anal calls, animal calls, domination calls, rape calls, etc" (45). Although the organization prohibited actresses from belittling or insulting callers, some workers resist restrictions on their work. One actress in Rich and Guidroz's (2000) study "uses a 'good touch-bad touch' response during her 'little girl' calls to demonstrate the wrongfulness of adult sexual contact with children. When a caller says to her, 'You know I'm going to touch you,' she responds with a high-pitched voice, 'My mommy taught me about good touch and bad touch. That's bad touch and I'm going to tell my mommy'" (46).

Phone fantasy is unique in erotic labor since there is only voice-to-voice contact with customers. However, phone sex actresses seek to maintain control over their conversations with customers in order to feel a sense of control over their work. Unlike other telephone workers, actresses develop elaborate characters for their work and discuss



intimate sexual topics. Thus, having the freedom to refuse certain types of calls becomes an important mechanism by which actresses maintain control over their callers.

The women in my sample did not place restrictions on the types of calls they would accept. Yet they exercised control over their work in four main ways, none of which have been mentioned in previous research. They took control of the actual conversations, they used their characters to maintain boundaries, they used their organizations to control callers, and they approached their work in an open, accepting, and non-judgmental fashion.

The actresses who accepted all kinds of calls scripted their conversations in order to keep the calls “within the context of fantasy.” For example, so as not to endorse illegal activities that several callers wished to discuss, actresses would preface conversations by saying, “We can have a fantasy about that.” Unlike Flowers’ (1998) operators, the women in the present sample felt confident that their callers were usually able to separate fantasy from reality. They also felt that prefacing conversations about illegal acts with “we can have a fantasy about that” enabled them to control the direction and content of calls.

Sonia explained her technique for keeping callers’ fantasies strictly in the context of fantasy:

Sonia: I think with the incest and the kid calls, you had to reiterate in the beginning, “OK, we can have a fantasy about this.” You couldn’t actually tell the person, because sometimes he might say, “There’s this girl that lives down the street. I wanna rape the shit out of her.” And he’d say, “I want you to tell me to do it.” And you’d say, “Well, we can have a fantasy in which you do that.” And,

therefore, you have to say, “We can have a fantasy,” so that you’re not endorsing him doing something illegal . . . I think it was the only way to deal with the situation because he wants his fantasy fulfilled, and it might not be something that you agree with, but he’s paying money to have this done. And if you don’t like that, you should probably get out of this line of work . . . It’s really important to keep that boundary clear. I know that most men who call phone sex, and myself, have some fantasies that are fucked up. And I don’t think that’s necessarily even because we were abused, or because we had bad youths, or because there’s something wrong with us, but because it can be really hot to incorporate a taboo into your fantasy world. But it’s really important to draw the line between your fantasy and your everyday life. And so in no way does depicting non-consensual sex . . . make it OK to do that.

Emily: How easy do you think that is for your callers? Do you have any sense of that at all?

Sonia: I think most of the callers have a pretty good idea. I don’t know that I would say most of the callers had victimized people because I think that the men who are gonna rape or are gonna assault a child aren’t gonna call phone sex.

They’re just gonna do it . . . So I’d say most of them have a pretty clear idea.

Diva mentioned that she talks about all fantasies, but she always educates callers about the boundaries she sets in her real life:

I’ll tell guys that in my real life I have two boundaries. One is that anything I do is consensual, and the other is that it’s not going to cause harm to someone . . . I don’t encourage men to go out and do things. I always keep it in the realm of

fantasy, like role play and stuff like that . . . Because role play is just like being a kid and playing make believe. As far as anything else, guys like to hear about how I like young girls, stuff like that. And I'll say stuff like, "Yeah, when I was 12 I did it with a 12-year-old girl." But I would never say now I'd do it with a 12-year-old girl . . . I never give them the impression that it's something that is reality . . . I hope that kind of carries with them, that line between fantasy and reality.

Even though Olivia, Sonia, and Diva accepted all kinds of calls, there were, inevitably, instances in which they felt uncomfortable. Olivia mentioned that when she was uncomfortable with a call, she would "slip into character" or "play dumb." In this way, she, like the fast food workers Leidner (1993) studied, did not feel personally attacked.

Relying on a character, not a true description of herself, also aided Olivia in constructing phone sex as acting, not as a personal affront. Other erotic laborers, such as escorts, dancers, and pro dommes, construct characters for work, as well. However, in jobs that require physical presence with customers, workers must endeavor to maintain physical as well as emotional boundaries. Phone actresses are not required to perform "attentive gestures" (Hochschild 1983: 109), while other workers are. As a result, phone acting is easier for workers to control.

Workers' control in the phone sex organizations in this study is similar to what Hodson (1999) calls bilateral control (306). These organizations offer workers at least some sense of support and control over the way they work. The actresses generally concurred that, while they did not have much input on the company's major decisions,

they exercised a great deal of control over how they organized their own work. Diva recalled that her manager had taught her if she was uncomfortable with a particular topic or caller, she should give him up to two warnings. If he did not cease discussing the unpleasant topic, she was free to hang up. Lisa, who worked for a phone domination company, also recalled that she was required to accept every call that she received but had permission to hang up on any callers she considered rude. Although she did not have control over whom she spoke with, she maintained a degree of discretion in her communication with callers.

Sonia and Olivia's organization acknowledge that dealing with calls for unconventional fantasies might raise some concerns among actresses. Olivia felt fairly sure that her callers were only talking about fantasies, not describing their real-life activities. Yet, at times, she was concerned about some of them, and her organization encouraged her to report concerns:

I called the office (regarding a particular caller) and I was like, "Hey, this guy told me that he's having sex with his niece . . . Should you call the police?" Because they would, if they thought there was really something illegal going on . . . And sometimes if a guy was freaking out the women, they would call him and bitch him out. Basically, there was this one guy who got off on scaring the girls on the phone . . . Sometimes he'd be very abusive. Sometimes he would try and get a rise out of you by telling you he was having sex with his daughter . . . I was freaked out so I called the office back and was like, "Hey, what the hell was that guy about?" And the office was like, "Yeah, one of the owners had to call him up and tell him to quit doing that if he wants to keep calling."

In this way, Sonia and Olivia's company valued the actresses' feelings of safety. The fact that they took seriously women's complaints about disturbing callers created an environment in which the workers felt safe. As well, workers had a feeling of security that, if a caller were hurting a child, the company would notify the police.

Phone sex actresses employed a fourth technique that aided them in their ability to control their work – a non-judgmental approach to all fantasies. Sonia, Olivia, and Diva approach phone sex from a sex radical pluralist perspective. That is, none of the women privilege particular fantasies over any others and all of them would validate their callers' fantasies, insofar as they did not become reality. Rubin's (1984) theory of sex radical pluralism maintains that no sexual desire, identity, or object choice is morally or ethically privileged over any other, as long as all parties consent. According to the theory, taboo fantasies are not inherently bad as long as they do not become a reality in which someone is coerced. Approaching phone sex with a sex radical perspective is helpful to actresses, particularly when dealing with potentially sensitive issues such as rape and incest.

Diva, in answer to the question of what skills does a person need to be a good phone sex actress, responded from a very "Rubin-ist" perspective. Although she did not use the term sex radical pluralist, it was clear that she approaches her work from that perspective. Phone sex actresses, she explained, must have "very open boundaries," a "high tolerance for other people's sexualities," and "a belief that sex is inherently good." She commented, "You can't be sexually repressed and be a sex worker. It doesn't work." Thus, approaching phone sex from a sex radical pluralist perspective enhances actresses' perceptions of control. Had they felt ashamed or uncomfortable with the conversations, their feelings of control over customers would have decreased considerably.

The structure of phone fantasy makes it an occupation in which workers are likely to exercise control over customers. First and foremost, there is no physical contact between workers and customers and, thus, a very unlikely threat of physical risk. Bilateral control (Hodson 1999: 306) and organizational support, characterized in phone fantasy by encouraging women to report harassing callers and permitting women control over what and with whom they spoke, also increase workers' control. Moreover, phone fantasy actresses have adapted to their work in unique ways that enhance their control. By limiting their calls to only those with whom they are comfortable, by keeping their calls in the context of fantasy, and by approaching their calls with an open mind, actresses increase their control.

A setting in which workers feel control over their work also lends itself to workers' empowerment. Olivia, for example, stated that since doing phone sex she is more comfortable talking about sex and feels that she is freer for having pushed her boundaries. Diva also mentioned feeling a greater sense of appreciation from her callers than she has in any other job. She enjoys being a part of and creating their experience. Phone fantasy, thus, offers benefits to workers that are not as readily available in all jobs.

***Club Dancers (n = 6)***

Club dancers fall in the middle of the continuum of risk and need to control customers. From previous research we know club managers vary in the degree to which they are committed to minimizing risk and enforcing workers' control of customers. Previous sociological research has examined, to varying degrees, dancers' interactions with customers (Boles and Garbin 1974a, 1974b; Chapkis 1997, 2000; Enck and Preston 1988; Forsyth and Deshotels 1997; Frank 1998; Gonos 1976; Lewis 2000; Maticka-

Tyndale 2000; Perucci 2000; Price 2000; Ronai and Ellis 1989; Ronai and Cross 1998; Wood 2000). Only a few of these studies, however, look specifically, and in detail, at organizations' roles in facilitating or precluding workers' control over customers (e.g., Chapkis 1997, 2000; Lewis 2000; Maticka-Tyndale 2000; Price 2000). In accordance with my argument that strip club norms are weak, several researchers have also noted that "the rules are enforced with little regularity, and that money is often the determining factor in whether or not contact, especially sexual contact, is allowed" (Erickson and Tewksbury 2000: 273; Boles and Garbin 1974b; Forsyth and Deshotels 1997; Ronai and Ellis 1989; Skipper and McCaghy 1970). My research is unique in that previous studies have not compared club dancers' techniques for controlling customers with the techniques of other erotic laborers.

Unlike phone sex and peepshow work, club work entails face-to-face physical interactions with customers and club personnel. Inside clubs, dancers have constant contact with managers, security, DJs, waitresses, and other dancers. As a result, workplace dynamics take on substantial importance. Competitive relationships between coworkers hinder the formation of positive workgroup cultures and weaken women's social support networks. Unfavorable relationships with management cause myriad problems for women as well.

While doing participant observation in a strip club, Ronai and Ellis (1989) observed that dancers were generally effective in keeping customers' hands at bay. Dancers used strategies such as dancing faster to avoid wandering hands, scolding customers in a playful manner, and appealing to management regulations to contend with men's aggressive attempts at touching them. However, when these strategies were

unsuccessful, dancers felt a significant reduction in control over their work (Ronai and Ellis 1989). Similarly, when dancers' control is compromised by disinterested managers and lax security, women are less able to maintain control over customers.

Former club dancer Jane described the unregulated interactions between dancers and customers at her first dancing job, which she started at 17. "Lap dances at the first club I worked at were pretty sleazy. There was actually a curtain you could pull, and it was just you and the guy. And the girls could do whatever they wanted." However, at The Honey Pot, she found, "Legality was very important . . . if you ever pulled the bottom of your t-bar (thong panties) across so a guy could see your vulva or something like that, you'd be gone . . . They could get in a lot of trouble for that." The managers and bouncers at The Honey Pot cared less about workers' safety than they did about keeping the club in business. That is, worker-customer interactions were regulated less to protect workers and more to protect the business.

Ronai and Cross (1998) argue that the presence of bouncers makes strip clubs the safest venues in the sex industry (104). However, according to Jane, "the clubs are as bad as it gets." Diva corroborated Jane's statement, recalling that if dancers did not tip bouncers, bouncers would ignore dancers' requests for security. With bouncers, managers, DJs, and other dancers "looking out for themselves," who will "fuck anybody else in the place over to bring in the money for themselves," clubs are not always as safe and supportive as Ronai and Cross (1998) suggest.

I provide evidence from numerous clubs, all using a range of variations on bilateral control of workers. I also discuss disorganized, anomic clubs. In this way, I do not put myself at risk of making the mistaken assumption that all club work is,



essentially, the same. Indeed, one of the goals of my research is to show variation in the degree to which workers are able to control their customers. The continuum in this study represents the variation in risk and need to control customers between occupations. The dancers' descriptions of their clubs provide evidence for variation within occupations, as well.

Vanessa, who danced in three different clubs, described the worker-customer relationships in each. At Bumpers, a club in a Midwestern college town:

Dancers were allowed to touch customers, just on the arms and legs, not in any private parts. But they were not allowed to touch you at all. Like if someone touched my leg, I could tell the bouncer that I didn't want them near me at all or I wanted them removed . . . We had a lot of power in that. That level of care isn't typical though. That was in (a Midwestern college town) so that was really conservative, which is good because the club had to be . . . We had great security precautions. The bouncers were really on our side and we didn't have to do anything we weren't comfortable with. If a customer was making us uncomfortable, we were not pressured at all to be nice to him.

The management style at Bumpers is a kind of bilateral control. Dancers exercised control over which customers they would work with and how close they would get to them. At Bumpers, Vanessa and Sarah were free to take precautions as they felt necessary. When giving lap dances, Sarah would always ask her customers to sit on their hands. Vanessa stayed constantly conscious of her surroundings:

I did learn how to watch myself and I did learn how to grab someone's hand before it grabs me . . . I definitely feel that I learned skills that helped me, being

able to watch all parts of my body, being aware of men around me, and be able to be assertive and be like, “Hey, fuck you! Get away!” Stuff like that. Part of that could be just from being an assertive person in general, but I definitely learned how to have eyes all over my head at once.

Vanessa contrasted her experiences at Bumpers with her experiences in two clubs in England, where she worked as a tourist one summer. The management and bouncers at Paradise, an upscale champagne bar, were very different from what she had experienced in the Midwest:

No touching allowed, theoretically. Except that you’re sitting with men in their booths as they’re drinking champagne and eating . . . And I think a lot went on there that was not acceptable . . . I once complained to the manager that a guy was trying to touch me and he was like, “Don’t worry about it.” Like, go ahead and sit with him anyway . . . That was my last night working there.

Management at Paradise did not attempt to enhance workers’ control over customers, nor did they make any efforts to inform workers or customers of what behaviors were and were not appropriate. Paradise is a particularly anomic organization, as workers were often unclear on how much control they had. Diva had a similarly negative experience at Sugar and Spice on the West coast. Like Paradise, Sugar and Spice did not enforce rules that would protect workers. Diva was generally disgusted with her customers and management, who had no respect for the dancers:

It was a social activity; women were scenery. Usually (the customers) would be drunk right away . . . Generally, jerks. It’s like the place they come to be jerks with other men and have that be validated . . . You can be mean to the girls there

without anything happening to you. You can't touch (the dancers) in certain ways, but other than that you could do pretty much anything. If I walked up to a guy and I said, "Hey sweetie, want a show?" They could be like, "What are you kidding? You're ugly!" That was allowed.

Vanessa's third and final place of employment, Scandals, in England took the greatest security precautions. Workers and customers had no physical contact whatsoever. Customers left tips on the stage but did not touch dancers at all. Dancers at Scandals made far less money than dancers at Paradise or other clubs in which touching is a possibility. However, for Vanessa, the high level of security balanced her decrease in income.

The ways managers treated dancers and the kinds of working environments they created had a profound impact on workers' levels of control. In clubs where management does not intervene on the dancers' behalf to protect them from customers, where managers do not demonstrate concern for the reduction of risk, where managers do not enforce rules (anomic organizations), workers tend to feel exploited and expendable. At Paradise, Vanessa explained, "I definitely felt like the message was to treat these guys like the nice rich men they are . . . It was their club and were kind of just hired hands." At more bilateral organizations such as Bumpers and Scandals, however, "We were the boss. It was our club, they were the customers, and they were there to see us. And so if they were being assholes or jerks, or if they got drunk and started causing a fuss, they were out."

From listening to dancers' stories, we learn that clubs vary greatly in the degree to which management takes an active role in reducing risk and increasing workers' control.

There is potential for workers' control, but the responsibility of creating an environment in which there is adequate security and reduced risk – no unwanted touching or grabbing from customers – falls in management's hands. Dancers take precautions, such as watching all around, being aware of their surroundings, and asking customers to sit on their hands during lap dances. However, if management overlooks workers' calls for help, workers' risk and need to control customers will increase.

***Lingerie Models and Erotic Masseuses (n = 4)***

Like club dancers, lingerie models and erotic masseuses have physical face-to-face contact with customers and must work to control their clientele. The risk and need to control customers in modeling and massage, however, are slightly greater than in club work. There is no available literature on lingerie models and very limited, largely descriptive research on erotic masseuses (e.g., Armstrong 1978). Thus, a brief explanation of modeling and massage work is in order.

A customer buys a one-on-one session with the masseuse or model(s) of his choice. In the Australian massage parlor where Minax worked, the manager assigned masseuses to customers, rather than letting customers choose, thus eliminating competition between workers. Individual masseuses were sent to chat with potential customers, a practice Australians refer to as parlor style. At Minax's place of employment, if a worker felt uncomfortable with a potential client, she was not required to work with him. At Trixie and Jane's lingerie modeling shops, customers chose a model from several who were on shift together.

Modeling sessions last 15 to 20 minutes and take place in any of a number of different rooms in the shop (i.e., porn video room, shower room, VIP suite, dungeon).

The experiences of the two models in this sample were rather different. Jane's shop, Temptations, offered pre-specified service packages. Trixie's shop, Peaches, left the extent of services offered to the discretion of the model. Massage sessions in Minax's parlor lasted an hour to two hours and included "a full nude shared body massage, followed by a body slide." For an additional tip, Minax would also do fetish modeling, that is, engaging customers' fetishes for stockings, feet, urination, or various other items, activities, and body parts.

Unlike in clubs, massage and modeling customers are allowed to masturbate (models also refer to their workplaces as "jack shacks"). As well, because the worker-customer transaction is secluded from shop personnel, the possibility of engaging in the sale of sexual services is greater in lingerie modeling shops and massage parlors than in clubs. Touching or groping models and masseuses is not, however, allowed. Yet customers frequently proposition workers, assuming the shops are in the business of selling sexual services. (In Australia, however, all forms of prostitution are legal. Some of Minax's coworkers offered oral sex as an "extra," but Minax did not. She recalled allowing especially nice customers to touch her, if she were in the mood, and for a tip.)

There is a slightly greater risk to modeling and massage work than is observed in club work since workers and customers are alone throughout the session. However, like clubs, some form of security is present and, in the case of an emergency, may be summoned to the room with the press of a "panic button." The models and masseuses in this sample did not report feeling overwhelmed by risk at work. Nevertheless, throughout any given session, workers must fend off their customers' verbal or physical requests for sex. Unlike club dancers who have the freedom to walk away from

unpleasant or overly demanding customers, models and masseuses stay in the room with their customers until the session is over.

Jane worked very briefly as a lingerie model in a Midwestern college town and described her shop, Temptations, as “very structured” (her manager gave her a book of rules, something unheard of in other erotic organizations) and a “customer-oriented” business. Temptations exemplifies bureaucratic control of workers, in that workers are required to follow written rules (Hodson 1999: 305). The management offered particular packages that dictated the model and customer’s activities – “Topless is \$50 for 15 minutes; nude is \$100; touching oneself, \$150.” As Jane found out, however, pre-specified packages and an emphasis on customer service, decrease workers’ control and their chances to make money. When workers are required to be polite regardless of how customers treat them, their level of control decreases considerably. “Temptations depended on repeat clientele. They wanted the men to come back. You can’t operate it that way. It’s definitely a fly-by-night sort of thing or the girls just aren’t going to make any money. They approached it from a way too legitimate standpoint.”

The masseuses and models in this study worked actively to control their work and reduce risk. Trixie felt she had control over her customers and her income at Peaches, a lingerie modeling shop in the Southeast. She explained:

You had to take control, start getting the money because that was the whole reason you were there . . . It was all up to you. They have to sit there, no hands. They have rules. Everything’s up to you, how close you get. How much they tip is up to them, but you make it clear that what you do for their money is up to you. Trixie did not recall many instances in which she had a difficult time controlling

customers. She noted that they would often persist in propositioning her, but simply explaining to them that she was not a prostitute was usually enough to counter their advances. Customers would often insult her as well, implying that she was promiscuous. She said, “They would say things to make you feel bad . . . Sometimes people would drive by and scream, ‘Whores! You’re nothing but a bunch of fucking whores!’ . . . That’s the kind of thing, you don’t forget that.”

Trixie’s organization, Peaches, like the phone sex companies, is an example of bilateral organizational control. The owner held mandatory meetings, at which models and managers discussed new ideas, comments, and complaints. Trixie felt the owner took workers’ complaints and suggestions very seriously and included them, at least somewhat, in decision-making processes. As well, although management encouraged models to be very polite to customers, the management gave workers some degree of latitude in interactions with customers. Trixie remembered that, on occasion, she and her coworkers would “get sassy” with customers, “tell them they were assholes and to leave.” Although models were encouraged to be nice to customers, Trixie remembered that the management did not expect workers to tolerate too much. She remarked, “I think there was an extent to which everybody who works in that business, including the security, the managers, they understand there’s a point where you don’t want to take anymore. And they don’t blame you. If they would hear things getting rude out there, they would come out and just ask (the customer) to leave.”

Minax enjoyed a similarly high level of protection from customers in another bilateral organization, Silk Stockings. The management did not require masseuses to participate in a session with any customers who made them feel uncomfortable.

Management also gave workers free reign in their sessions. Of course, workers were encouraged to be polite and to provide good customer service, but they were also entitled to handle situations with their clients in any way they saw fit.

Minax, who now works as a pro domme, explained, “With the massage, it’s interestingly like domination in that they’re lying there. You’re doing everything to them. It’s like a subtle form of domination, which is more in tune with my character.” She conceded, however, that there is a degree of risk in erotic massage. “Massage is very precarious because you’re very, very close to full service (prostitution) there. So things can happen. Energy and desire can get mounted, and you’ve got to be able to manage that.” When I asked her how she managed or controlled her sessions, she explained two techniques:

I had a few different techniques, but mostly what they call in the business “tease and denial” is one of my favorite things. Take them to the edge, and then tell them no. It’s one of my favorite things to do, and there are people who will pay money for that, which is great, because then we’re a perfect match . . . I pretty much don’t allow certain things to happen. In massage what I would do, if I had some guy who would be like, “Oh, yeah, baby!” I’d be like, “Oh, yeah, baby?” Even more so. “Oh, you’re so hot! Oh, turn me on!” And just fucking pump it up about ten degrees, which would then either freak them out or turn them on so badly that they’d have to jizz pretty quickly. Whatever the case was, I always ended up winning.

The combination of high organizational support and Minax’s own techniques for dealing with customers and reducing risk resulted in a high level of control. She also



mentioned her age as another factor that contributed to her control. Minax did not start erotic labor until she was thirty-five and feels that because she started at a much older age than most women do, she was less likely to tolerate customers attempts to take advantage of her. “Because I started so late in life and because I’ve always been a bit of a hardass. I come from the school of hard knocks. I’m from a very poor family, single mom.” Thus, like the phone actresses who incorporated their personal attitudes toward sex into their work, Minax used her age and her life experiences to her advantage, to reduce risk and increase control.

Modeling and massage work are similar to club work in that the level of control workers have is at least partly dependent on the level of support management provides. Although the risk to modeling and massage is greater than in occupations we have already seen on the continuum, Trixie and Minax’s organizations supported their workers. Their organizations provided security and assisted in the reduction of risk by allowing workers some leeway in controlling customers, as well as opportunities to make money. Although models and masseuses were always encouraged to be polite to customers, management did not expect workers to tolerate grave insults or assaults. In Jane’s organization, however, the management treated workers very differently. The pre-specified package policy limited workers’ incomes. Also at Temptations, repeat clientele was more important than workers’ control. Thus, modeling and massage work, like other kinds of erotic labor, exemplify the importance of organizational support for workers’ control.

***Bachelor Party Strippers (n = 1)***

Unlike club dancers and lingerie models, customers hire bachelor party strippers to dance at their homes or, sometimes, in restaurants or office buildings. Strippers may work alone or with coworkers, may or may not be accompanied by a supervisor, and may or may not be allowed to bring a friend for security and company. Regardless of whether or not a bachelor party stripper is accompanied by some kind of security, she is on the client's turf. Because she is in an unfamiliar environment with, generally, a large number of men and a great deal of alcohol, she is, necessarily, at a disadvantage when attempting to control her customers.

The need to control customers is often greater among bachelor party strippers than among women working in clubs or shops where security and coworkers are consistently present. Many stripper companies, like some lingerie modeling companies, depend on repeat customers and employ techniques of direct personal control (Hodson 1999: 304). Certain managers supervise workers very closely and have very stringent rules that restrict women's techniques for controlling customers. Jane, the only woman in this sample who worked as a bachelor party stripper, described the two companies for which she worked, Calendar Girls and Knockouts:

(The owner of Calendar Girls) didn't get that I would not fuck him. Like, he just saw that as a part of the job . . . And after it became increasingly clear that I was not going to sleep with him as part of my job, he just quit calling me for work . . . But even though he was a dick, he always insisted on going with me, just because he didn't want anything to happen to me.

Jane had a more positive experience with her manager, however, working for Knockouts:

(The owner of Knockouts) has a lot of respect for the girls. He sees them as, he's not making any money without them. They are his source of income. And he brings an entourage to all the parties. He collects our money as soon as our money is stuffed in our g-strings . . . He would bring, at minimum, himself, his wife, and another man . . . Working (for Knockouts) was a lot different (than working for Calendar Girls). I didn't have to worry about hoarding my money because (the owner) took care of all that for me. . . He just really took care of us.

Bachelor party strippers' need to control their customers and the risks they face are greater than those faced by workers we have seen so far. In highly risky situations, workers' control is exceedingly important but is often undermined by management. Jane explained the Calendar Girls owner's approach to workers' treatment of customers:

(The owner of Calendar Girls) would, if I wasn't paying attention to a certain guy, he would make me. Like, say the bachelor was just a real dick . . . I would dance for him from afar, but I wasn't going to touch him. (The owner) would be like, "Come on, they're paying a lot of money now. Let's do a little better than that." And if . . . something shady happened, if the guys were drunk and getting a little feel-y, getting a little overconfident, at some of my workplaces (such as Knockouts), that would be grounds to leave immediately. I'd just get up, I'd walk out, and my boss would just be happy that I got out safe. With (the owner of Calendar Girls), he'd be shitty that I didn't do all I could to try to keep relations civil and stay and keep the customer happy.

Management's control over workers inhibited workers' control over customers. Supervision, as a characteristic of direct personal control, precluded workers from taking their own precautions (Hodson 1999). Without a supervisor present, Jane would have been freer to leave uncomfortable or potentially risky environments. She was unable to do, unable to fully protect herself and to exercise control over her work, because her supervisor was constantly monitoring her.

The structure of bachelor party stripping and the stigma against strippers necessarily places workers at risk. Jane recalled that customers routinely insulted and degraded her, as if she were "nothing but a piece of meat for their pleasure." For workers, perceiving (let alone maintaining and establishing) a sense of control is extremely difficult when customers insult and managers harass them. Clearly, in situations in which a woman enters a stranger's house to strip for him and his friends who are all drinking alcohol, maintenance and establishment of workers' control is key. Managers who take control away from workers drastically increase on-the-job risk.

### ***Escorts (n = 3)***

Escort work is situated near the most risky extreme on the continuum of occupations in this study. Because there are no other current studies on escorting in the United States (I consider Foltz 1979 to be out of date because it is pre-AIDS), my research is unique in providing insight into the techniques women use to control customers in what is one of the most risky occupations in legal erotic labor. I have suggested that high-risk work is associated with workers' greater need to control customers. The case of escort work serves as an example of risky work in which norms

are weak, and organizations play only a marginal, if any, role in workers' interactions with customers.

Lacking the standardizing aspects of worker-customer interactions and relative safety in club work, the escorts in my sample attempted to routinize their escort calls to ensure easily controlled transactions. These escorts imposed routines on their calls – by treating each and every customer the same way and by following a kind of script (modified for pricing purposes). In so doing, escorts were able to reduce on-the-job risks and, at the same time, maximize their incomes.

I find, as Foltz (1979) did, that escorts' prices are very flexible. Jane explained the pricing techniques she learned in her first escort job. She applied the following approach to every call she did at each agency she worked:

A lot of the places I'd go to afterward didn't work the same way, but nobody, no other escorts ever made as much money, no one that I've met has ever made as much money as I do without actually sleeping with the guys or touching them. So I think it works pretty well for how it goes . . . I'd go out to meet the guy wherever he was, usually at a house or apartment . . . When I got to the hotel I'd size the guy up as best I could . . . You could tell pretty quickly if a guy wants a ditzy kind of girl that he thinks he can manipulate. You play the ditz. Or if he's an older, more distinguished intellectual businessman, then you have to bust out some of your literary knowledge on him. Whatever you have to do to make the guy think he's found a gem. And we talk about price. I tell them that I offer three different sessions. There's a basic session, an erotic session, and a full fantasy session . . . And I tell them that the basic session is for a more shy type, maybe for

men who have never done it before. It offers massage and blah, blah, blah, nude modeling, stuff like that. And most guys are gonna hear that and say, “Well, that one’s nor for me. I’m not shy guy.” So the next one is the erotic session, which involves a more sensual massage, more nudity, blah, blah, blah. And then the full fantasy session, in which I told them that I offer my full services. Now I’m sure doing your research you’ve come across the term “full service,” which means prostitution, basically. But my full services certainly didn’t . . . The idea was you were as ambiguous as possible. And usually when you tell them that third package offers your full services, and they assume they know what that means and they go for that. But no package is different from the other. You do as little as you possibly can. It’s not like, “Well, he bought this package so I have to do these things” . . . It’s kind of like a gauge to see how much money you’re gonna get out of the guy. If you tell him the packages are \$400, \$700, and \$1,000, and his jaw drops like he can’t even pay the \$400, then you know what range you’re working in . . . A lot of the girls would go and, “Fifty dollars for topless, \$100 for nude.” No . . . If I could get \$300, I’d take \$300. If I could get \$800, I’d take \$800. But I’m not gonna tell him \$300 when I could get \$800 . . . I approached it from a much more business-like perspective than most of the girls do.

Kira also spoke of price negotiation and “evaluating your prospect.” Both women used their initial evaluations of the client to help them determine how much to charge. The client’s appearance and location are keys to establishing price. Both women charged more from men staying in expensive hotels than they did men in motels. Body language was also a clue to how much a man would be willing to spend: “How nervous somebody

is, how comfortable they are with what's going on . . . (If it's a customer's first time with an escort) you can get away with doing less and having less expected of you and setting rules and boundaries a little easier than (with) someone who's done this several times."

After collecting the money, Jane had a particular routine she went through with clients:

I'd tell him to get comfortable. And most guys had done it before, and they know that means get naked and lay down on the bed. And I'd go to the restroom, and I'd usually come out in a bra and panties. And a naked man is much less apt to run after you when he realizes you've done nothing but stolen his money. So you've got to get him naked. And usually I'd dance around and just encourage him to touch himself. Because if a guy comes, he doesn't have any use for you anymore. So then you can just be like, "Well, happy coming! See you later!"

But then sometimes they would get angry and they'd be like, "You know, when I called you I didn't expect to be touching myself over here. What the hell's going on?" And at that point it's like, "Well, what do you mean? Did you think I was going to be touching you? I'm not a prostitute. You should have been told that on the phone. We are escorts; you can't put your hands on us." Then they flip out, like, "Fuck, I've been conned" . . . I've had several guys get pretty angry. I had to run out of a couple places. But my bodyguards . . . have definitely taken care of me at times.

In the above description, Jane also addresses the risk in escorting. Both Kira and Jane felt their approach yielded a higher financial return, but risk was definitely a factor.

Kira explained:

It's a hustle. It's more dangerous in that way . . . Because when you say "full fantasy" and you're very vague about what actually takes place in all of the packages and they think that (they are) going to get sex and you're like, "Oh, hour's up! Gotta leave, bye!" And they get angry, which I never had happen to me. But it was a risk.

Kira and Jane amassed a considerable amount of money through escorting. Jane made \$10,000 in three weeks at her first agency job when she was eighteen years old. While working out of state she made \$6,000 in one week. But with the enormous financial return, there came a risk and a fear for one's life and safety. Both women commented that there was always a risk that a client could pull out a gun or rape them. In precarious, unpredictable situations, keeping control of clients was, at times, very difficult. Kira explained the challenge of controlling clients:

(The agency owners) say to do these massages. And you think, "OK, I can do a massage. No problem." And you really don't realize how defenseless you are, even though you're giving a back massage. And you think, "I'm gonna be doing a back massage. They'll be all relaxed and not trying to go at me." And the only reason I say that is because I know that now, after doing it, is that you're trying to give a back massage to kill time. And sometimes it's almost a struggle to keep them on their stomach to kill time to give a back massage because they wanna touch you. And by law, they're not supposed to. But what are you gonna do? It's part of the job.

Despite the difficulty of controlling clients, both Kira and Jane felt they were able to maintain control. I wanted to understand how they could stay in control of a situation



that could so easily shift to disaster. Kira explained her techniques for maintaining control:

There were a couple of things. First of all, if they were shady places, I'd try and bring a guy friend. I always kept my shoes on . . . And a lot of it is mental . . . When I did it, I had . . . a really short black skirt and black jacket business suit. And I wore that . . . The classier I looked, the better I looked, the more money I could charge . . . I think that it's all about the impression that you give out to who you're working with . . . So I always made a point to make sure I looked very classy, that I looked very nice, that I had perfume on, that I wasn't just like, "Give me \$50, and I'll suck your dick" . . . For me, it was an image, an attitude. And I had to play that role, I think, to be able to deal with myself and what I was doing . . . I walked in there like I was assertive, I knew what I was doing, "don't fuck with me," and not shy and vulnerable . . . It's about having a presence and putting out your presence that "I am in control of the situation." And just kind of praying, I guess, and it worked most of the time, that the men caught that and respected it, or at least feared it, perhaps . . . Beyond that, there wasn't whole lot you could do. Both women brought bodyguards on particular calls, although not on each call.

When Jane began working for Pin-Ups in another Midwestern city out of her home state, she hired a friend as a bodyguard. Kira did the same when going on calls to poorer neighborhoods in her Midwestern college town. Both women spoke of setting up scenarios with their bodyguards where he would introduce himself to the client and instill in the client a sense he would not tolerate mistreatment of the escort.

I discussed risk and control, critical components of escort work, at length with Kira and Jane. Kira felt Heartbreakers encouraged security “to some extent,” but received the impression that the agency did not care one way or another what the escorts did. Jane, however, interpreted the experience at Heartbreakers in a more positive light:

That one was actually good. I didn't do it long because I found the job (with Pin-Ups) where I was making just tons more money . . . Heartbreakers had a lot of respect for the girls . . . If it came down between the client and the girl, then fuck the client. You could have another client in ten minutes when one calls. But the girls, you have to respect . . . I had free reign; I could do whatever I wanted . . . I could take any precautionary measures. Well, they encouraged me to do all I could to keep myself safe. If I didn't want to go on a call, if I talked to the man and he seemed drunk, then there was no way they were gonna send me. I could choose for any reason to go, not go.

Having the ability to make choices in a situation where control is limited by a potentially risky environment was extremely important. But while Jane was working for Pin-Ups, her manager took control from her:

I was treated with such disrespect. I insisted on bringing a bodyguard with me. He was my friend . . . and we went to (a Midwestern city) to do this work . . . The clients were calling and saying that some dude was with the girl and that they was really scaring them off. And a lot of them wouldn't even answer the door because they looked out and saw a guy instead of a . . . vulnerable little girl. And they wouldn't even answer the door. So I was losing a lot of calls that way. And they told me that I was no longer allowed to have him with me. I was paying him out

of my pocket. He was just there for my protection, but they wouldn't allow me to have a bodyguard because it was scaring the client . . . And my thinking is that if a man was threatened by that, then I have to wonder . . . what exactly his intentions were.

Safety and control are very precarious in escorting. Yet the perception of control is crucial in a situation where personal control is limited by a potentially risky environment. As Kira mentioned, simply having the perception that one has control is critical to a smooth call.

Escort agencies do not typically impose regulations concerning interactions with customers (apart from advising them not to engage in oral, anal, or vaginal sex), and there is no guarantee of safety. Very normless escort agencies are examples of anomic organizations (Hodson 1999). Agencies are not coherently organized around specific norms, and management is generally disrespectful (318). I argue that normlessness in escorting increases on-the-job risks. Managers do not provide security (in some cases they forbid escorts to take security measures), and there are no agreed-upon standards that all workers and customers follow. As a result, workers must invent their own techniques for establishing and maintaining control over clients, often without the support members of other organizations enjoy.

Escort agencies are extremely anomic, with virtually no control over workers whatsoever. However, because these women were not constrained by rules governing treatment of customers, they felt like "free agents." Unlike the experiences of fast food workers who are subject to very strong behavioral norms, uncertainty among escorts is extremely high. Agency owners did not regulate workers' fees for services or their

interactions with clients, and, as a result, the escorts felt a tremendous amount of decision-making power.

Yet, that freedom came at a price – fear for one’s life. In many clubs, protection from customers is, for the most part, guaranteed. But, Jane pointed out, in clubs, “it’s less of a scam,” and women are not able to make as much money as they could in a “less legitimate” occupation. The money was certainly greater, but there was always an element of risk. In anomic organizations, such as the escort agencies in this study, normlessness resulted in high risk for workers and an urgent need to control customers. Without guaranteed security, escorts are left to their own devices to reduce risk.

***Pro dommes (n = 11)***

The work of pro dommes is rather different from that of other erotic laborers. I equate the degree of control independent dommes exercise over their work with Hodson’s (1999: 305) notion of craft control. As mentioned in the section on training, most pro dommes have extensive training and experience. As a result, they exercise considerable control over the way in which they organize their work. As self-employed small business owners, independent pro dommes decide which clients they will and will not see, where they will hold their sessions, what activities they will participate in, and how much they will charge for their services.

Pro dommes who work as employees for commercial dungeons do not, however, enjoy the same level of control over their work as do independent dommes. Commercial dungeons are often very poorly or abusively managed and typically lack organizational support. The illegal status of commercial dungeons also impacts workers’ experiences. Although the practice of BDSM is legal, individual businesses such as commercial

dungeons typically do not hold business licenses and are, therefore, illegal.

Consequently, young, inexperienced dommes are more vulnerable to exploitation and physical assault by dungeon owners. As a manager of a dungeon, Katrina allowed dommes to turn away customers who were drunk or otherwise potentially violent, suspicious, or difficult. The owner, however, ignored the practice of protecting workers from customers when Katrina was not present.

According to the respondents who have worked independently and for organizations, BDSM in commercial dungeons is radically different from BDSM as practiced by independent pro dommes. Independent pro dommes typically advertise their services on the Internet or in magazines or newspapers and go through a rigorous screening process with each potential client. Customers contact dommes through email or on the telephone to request appointments. Some dommes correspond with clients over email for up to several months before meeting with them in person. Others require that clients fill out a lengthy questionnaire. Pro dommes typically require their clients to provide a traceable landline phone number, and generally do not give out the address of the venue (usually her home or a space she rents) until the client confirms. Dommes design rigorous screening procedures to weed out clients who could hurt them or who will expect prostitution.

Dommes take numerous security measures during sessions as well. Minax has a security monitor so she can see clients before they enter her building. In Milan's dungeon, several of the dungeon master's live-in slaves are always present and watching out for her safety. Allegra also mentioned that she is never alone in the building when meeting with first time clients. Josephine also has a non-participatory guard or a

participatory *domme* with her during her sessions. She also carries a cell phone and leaves all the information about her session – the client’s contact information, where they will be meeting, the phone number of the venue, and the planned length of the session – with her mother.

Katrina argued that the risk of encountering violent clients as an independent is far less likely than as an employee in a commercial dungeon. However, she argued that independent *dommes* face more risk than any other erotic laborers. The kind of risk, however, is fundamentally different from that faced by other workers. Both Katrina and Minax described their clients as submissive men who are unlikely to act out violently. *Dommes*’ clients “want to dress up in . . . rubber-wear, or leather, or they want to be tied up, and put into bondage, or spanked, or caned, or they want to dress in ladies’ clothing, or they want to be urinated on, or they want to be abused by a dominant female” (McClintock 1993a: 93). A client seeking out a *domme*’s services may request needle play, fantasy wrestling (Carmen’s specialty), Japanese rope bondage (Katrina’s specialty), pony play (Milan’s specialty), nipple torture, cock and ball torture, play with homemade torture devices, and a whole variety of activities. The risk, therefore, lies not only in the threat of physical violence against a *domme*, but in the possibility that the client will be hurt as well. Apart from the research on workers’ and customers’ risks of contracting sexually transmitted diseases, this study is the first to differentiate between different kinds of risk in erotic labor – risk for the worker and risk for the customer.

In order to contend with a high degree of risk, many *dommes* use a kind of script in their initial appointments with clients. *Dommes* do not, however, script their interactions with clients to the same degree as the escorts in this study do. Relationships

between dommes and their clients are much more involved, and dommes design sessions around particular clients' needs and requests. However, dommes do script initial interactions in that they generally ask the same kinds of questions of each new client.

Dommes ask several questions about the client's health and whether he is on any medications. After obtaining health information, pro dommes and clients negotiate the scene they will enact. If, for example, a client is taking medication that thins the blood, Katrina noted that she suggests a scene that will not involve needle play. As is typical of all BDSM scenes, professional or private, the dominant and the submissive choose a safe word that the submissive can use if the pain becomes too much and is no longer pleasurable. Milan added, "You never session with someone if they've been drinking or you can smell anything. You don't want to mix BDSM with any drugs or anything." If a client's senses are dulled or he is unable to feel pain or communicate, he runs an enormous risk of being severely injured. If he is uncomfortable or in pain but is unable to call the safe word, the domme is not going to know he needs to stop.

A unique characteristic of pro dommes' work is the emotional labor they perform. In their review of the service work literature McCammon and Griffin (2000) note that research on emotional labor has typically outlined the positive emotions that workers instill in customers. Researchers have put less emphasis on other kinds of emotions among customers (282). Bill collectors, for example, must express anger, pressure, and a sense of crisis (Hochschild 1983; Sutton 1991). Pro dommes, in their performance of emotional labor, instill feelings of fear, humiliation, and victimization.

Katrina described the emotional labor she performs as a pro domme:

I think that you definitely have to have a dominant personality. Do not be afraid to push boundaries with people . . . Even though we can be tactful in real life, in our professional life we can insult people. We're not afraid to push boundaries or limits . . . (It takes) not being afraid to say what's on your mind. This is really hard to explain. But if you have a client in your dungeon who is some dot com millionaire and drives up in a Rolls Royce and puts down \$600 on the table, you know you can project, I mean, I feel it in my heart, but you can project that you are so much more superior to him. And that's what they feed off of, that's what they want. They want superiority . . . If (clients) try (to say), "I have to leave my pager on because work might call," I give them a little lecture about how work doesn't really need him. In fact, nobody really needs him. This is his way of making himself feel important and needed. So you're gonna have to turn your pager off if you want to be with me. It's that sort of thing. So even though it's presented as this bitchy thing and being in character, I sincerely feel that way.

Katrina's work allows her the freedom to express her dominant personality. As well, within the session, she has a higher status than her client has. On first glance, she has absolute power over him. Yet she concedes that, just like other kinds of service work, professional domination also entails customer service:

My job really depends on customer satisfaction . . . It is the same as stripping in a sense, or waitressing, that you are satisfying the customer. Because he's not gonna come back to you if you don't listen to him. And one of the greatest skills that you can have as a *domme* is making him believe that is exactly what you are not doing . . . That's the true art. That you're not there to satisfy him, that you're



there to satisfy yourself. That's the art of being a professional domme. That's really the greatest asset that I've tried to perfect, and I think I have it quite down, is making them believe that it's all about me. That's what I have on my website. This is all about me . . . Really it's about them. They're the ones that are the customers. You're catering to them on a certain level. They want to believe that they're caught in some terrible coincidence that's brought them to some terrible dungeon of implements and toys and they're a total victim. But they really have a lot of control. They just don't know it. And your job is to make them not know it . . . A lot of dommes get wrapped up in, "I do what I please." But really you're catering to them, ultimately. Your true skill is you cannot let them know that.

The fact that pro dommes do not perform typical emotional labor necessarily makes them less vulnerable, as they take a powerful, rather than deferential, role. Although dommes and clients face risk, the norms of BDSM serve to protect both parties. Carmen also noted that she encounters the greatest risk in the first few minutes of the session, while she is chatting with the client and getting to know him. It is at the point of introductions that pro dommes must gauge how safe they feel with their clients. After they have introduced themselves and he pays her tribute (fee for services), she will restrain him, hog tie him, bind him, or gag him. During the session he will not be able to harm her. Milan explained that clients, with the exception of the few who do not understand the etiquette, know they are not to look her in the eye, are not to touch her, not to sit on the furniture, and always to kneel below her. The norms and etiquette of BDSM, thus, protect dommes from physical harm.

Norms, such as the negotiation process and the use of a safe word, also protect the client. Negotiating the scene beforehand eliminates the risk of putting a client in a position that compromises his health. The safe word is exceedingly important. BDSM is very theatrical, and, therefore, a client screaming, “Stop! Oh, mistress, it hurts!” is not enough to make her cease. The client must use the safe word in order to end the scene.

Domination entails the greatest degree of risk and the greatest need to control clients. However, the examples of strong norms in BDSM show that reduction of risk and enhancement of erotic laborers’ control is possible. No work is inherently risky and no workers are inherently without control, unless norms are weak and organizations are anomic. Professional domination as a form of craft production offers workers a high level of control. Through the cultural norms and their techniques for maintaining control, we see pro dommes’ success in reducing risk and enhancing their control.

### ***Quitting Work***

High turnover plagues nearly every erotic occupation. Six out of the twenty-one workers in this sample, or almost one-third, have quit erotic labor altogether. In this section I show workers’ reasons for quitting. Reasons for quitting vary greatly. Some workers who have quit experienced conflicts with managers, insufficient income, burnout, lack of organizational support, and fear of damaging one’s future career opportunities. Appendix B contains information on which respondents quit erotic labor and the amount of time they participated in it.

Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) posit that high turnover, as well as physical isolation and competition between workers, weaken occupational and workgroup cultures (420). I find myriad examples of physical isolation, competition and other factors encouraging

high turnover and discouraging the formation of strong cultures. Without strong occupational or workgroup cultures, organizations never improve working conditions and are unable to encourage workers to stay.

High turnover thwarts workgroup identification and organization. Turnover is particularly problematic for erotic organizations, as for so many women the job is only something temporary (Chapkis 2000: 197). Vanessa, a former club dancer, said that, for her, dancing was “a fun thing to be doing for right now.” When asked if there are other lines of erotic labor she would consider pursuing, she answered, “I probably wouldn’t do it now that my career is progressing. That would damage my chances in the career I’ve chosen.” Sarah, another former club dancer, was forced to quit when her father discovered her job. She said with regret, “I thought it was empowering. I loved it. I never would have quit if my dad hadn’t found out.”

Other workers are drawn to erotic labor, like Kira, “because of a serious need for immediate cash.” She quit her job as an escort when she no longer needed the money. Jane, Sonia, and Diva also mentioned leaving particular dancing, phone sex, and escorting organizations for the sole purpose of making more money elsewhere. Formation of an occupational or workgroup culture is very difficult when workers have no intention of remaining at any particular job or organization for a significant period of time.

Physical isolation, another deterrent to culture formation (Ashforth and Kreiner 1999: 420), is a reality for workers who do not interact directly with coworkers. Kira recalled there was never any occasion for escorts to meet one another, nor did the agency owners encourage women to network or organize. Ashforth and Kreiner (1999: 420)

argue that, despite physical isolation, even self-employed individuals or individuals who work independently “seek out other members for both instrumental and expressive social support.” However, in the case of escorting, networking with coworkers was only a possibility when (if) the agency owners facilitated coworker cooperation or when a woman entered the business through a friend’s referral.

Kira discussed the isolation she felt while working as an escort:

It’s not like you can go say, “I’m having problems with what I’m doing” . . . It wasn’t a very positive, “Can we talk to the other girls? Can we network and see how they deal with certain situations with a customer?” . . . There was none of that . . . And I thought those things were important.

She commented that she occasionally saw other escorts at the agency while she was dropping off money. Kira continued:

Heartbreakers didn’t want you to talk to the other escorts, and, really, other escorts didn’t want to talk to you. I was kind of the lone person in . . . wanting to have monthly meetings . . . about how everybody was doing and how they dealt with this situation or this type of customer . . . I can only say that because of the nature of the work that perhaps some of the escorts were involved in sexual activity, as far as oral, anal, vaginal (sex), that they didn’t want to talk about that.

In Kira’s description we see a kind of resistance to occupational culture formation. Escorts were not interested in shaping a positive workgroup culture. The individualized and secretive nature of escort work precludes the development of coworker networks. As a result, there is no mechanism by which the occupation of escorting assists workers in forming positive work identities. What effect isolation and

the lack of positive workgroup culture has on escorts is a topic for further research with a larger sample.

Much of the same is true of isolation among phone actresses. Sonia and Olivia worked from their homes and were the only women in their cities who were working for Cheerleaders, their phone sex company. However, even if there are other phone actresses in one's city, they are difficult to locate. Because there is not always an office where workers convene, phone sex is a rather invisible occupation.

To alleviate physical isolation, the owners of Cheerleaders facilitated and monitored an Internet-based discussion group for actresses to "blow off steam," "joke about the idiocy of the customers," "get to know everybody who works there," and to communicate "regarding hours and schedule changes." On the surface, the discussion group appears to be a positive outlet and opportunity for women to connect, give and receive social support, and, perhaps, solidify a workgroup culture. However, Sonia and Olivia indicated the discussion group did not perform such positive functions. When Sonia complained to the discussion group about a recent reduction in calls and her income, her employees told her:

"You either shut up, or you don't have to work here." Basically, either stop asking questions or you're fired . . . I was being censored by my employer regarding anything that might be even slightly unfavorable that I might say about the company. It was sort of like, "Look, we can do no wrong. And if you even question anything regarding your employment with us, you're out the door." So I said, "I don't want to be censored; I quit."

The lack of organizational support (or the illusion of support, in Sonia and Olivia's case) almost certainly exacerbates workers' physical isolation. Yet, for those workers who stay in their organizations, competition between coworkers is often intense. "The occupational reward structure (e.g., pay, promotions) may pit members against one another, thus undermining their trust and cohesion" (Ashforth and Kreiner 1999: 420).

Jane said of her highly competitive lingerie modeling job, "It's just a bunch of girls competing for the money and attention of these guys, and so it's really catty and it's so anti-sisterhood." She went on to describe the competitive environment at a gentlemen's club in her Midwestern city:

I think the clubs are about as bad as it gets . . . You're being watched by the DJ, by the managers, by the other girls, by the bartender . . . Everybody is looking out for themselves . . . They'll fuck anybody else in the place over as much as they can in order to bring in the money for themselves. And girls will conspire against you.

Ashforth and Kreiner maintain that, many times, even in such competitive environments, workers "succeed in forging strong subcultures, although their attitudes toward their peers may remain ambivalent" (1999: 420). However, in the case of erotic labor, the effect of competition on workers is augmented because it perpetuates inhibitors to workgroup culture formation. For so many women, the work is temporary and they form no loyalties or attachments to the organizations. As a result, women who do not enjoy the environment in their workplace will simply leave and seek employment elsewhere. In effect, in many cases, the possibility of formation of an occupational culture is made exceedingly difficult.

Several of the women in this study gave additional reasons for quitting their jobs. At least five women quit at least one job for reasons that I classify as a lack of organizational support. Four women specifically mentioned incidents of sexual harassment or assault from managers. Former club dancer Vanessa, for example, had heard rumors from her coworkers that her boss and his son asked for sexual favors from the workers. While working as a bachelor party stripper, Jane's boss stopped calling her in for work when she refused to have sex with him. Carmen and Katrina's boss at a commercial dungeon attempted to sexually assault them and their coworkers. As mentioned in the section on escorting, Jane left her organization, Pin-Ups, because they did not provide sufficient support in the form of security.

A final reason for quitting erotic labor falls under what Hochschild (1983) calls burnout, a result of deep acting at work. Jane's job with Pin-Ups was her last in erotic labor. She explained:

That ended it all. I did that week and I just had a pretty enlightening experience.

At that point, I did not care if I was poor for the rest of my life or if I just had 'joe schmo' jobs for the rest of my life. I was not going to subject myself to that one more day, not for any amount of money.

Both Jane and Kira spoke of escorting as emotionally draining. The stressful requirements of "acting" on the job and keeping her work a secret from friends and family exhausted Kira:

Keeping up the lie to my best friend. My parents didn't know. And it's acting.

It's almost like creating a multiple personality for yourself. You can't get emotionally involved in it, so detaching yourself emotionally is emotionally

draining. I don't know if that makes sense, but covering yourself up to go in to some guy that you think is gross and touch his hairy back and massage and masturbate in front of him . . . to prep yourself up to say this is what you're going to do and to go do this. And then to say, 'OK, now I can be (myself) again and I'm not Kira' is emotionally draining. Because every time I would turn into Kira, I lost a little bit of (myself) because Kira would come back to the changeover . . . I found myself being more and more . . . sexual. Not caring as much about . . . having casual sex with somebody. And that's not me. I was trying so hard to make a distinction between work and personal . . . And I felt myself carrying over that hard ass-ness, that detachment from the work into my sexual life. And I didn't like that.

Jane and Trixie shared Kira's sense of emotional exhaustion. For Jane, the harmful effects of mistreatment and disrespect from bosses, coupled with the difficulty of acting, had added up to such a degree that she could no longer continue erotic labor in any capacity:

I completely, completely destroyed myself to the core . . . I had eradicated any sense of myself that I had. And I was just an empty vessel that could fill myself up with any personality that the situation required . . . There was no real, core Jane anymore. I was just playing to . . . whatever the client wanted that was giving me money . . . I just lost myself completely, and I just lost any respect for myself at all. I began to see myself as these guys saw me, I guess . . . As a whore, basically. None of them had sex with me so they couldn't say that definitively. But not someone that was human, not somebody that had a life they were going



back home to after the job, or not somebody with an agenda, like trying to pay for college or whatever with the job. They were just a slut; they were just a stripper.

Here Jane and Kira touch on Hochschild's notion of deep acting in emotional labor, or service work. In situations where workers are required to express emotions they do not genuinely feel, they often experience a loss of self:

It becomes harder and harder to keep the public and private selves fused. As a matter of self-protection, they are forced to divide. The worker wonders whether her smile and the emotional labor that keeps it sincere are really hers. Do they really express a part of her? Or are they deliberately worked up and delivered on behalf of the company? . . . In resolving this issue, some workers conclude that only one self (usually the nonwork self) is the "real" self (Hochschild 1983: 133).

. . . Emotional labor poses a challenge to a person's sense of self . . . The issue of estrangement between what a person senses as her "true self" and her inner and outer acting becomes something to work out, to take a position on (136).

When the pressure of expressing insincere emotions problematizes personal boundary maintenance, the result is unsuccessful emotion management, emotional exhaustion, and burnout. Workers, like Kira and Jane, who do not "develop a healthy estrangement" (Hochschild 1983: 189) are unable to determine when they are acting and when they are not. Yet I submit that erotic labor is not inherently alienating. My findings corroborate those of Weinberg, Shaver, and Williams' (1999) in their research with male, female, and transgender prostitutes in San Francisco. They found that "emotional damage, if it occurs, is much more likely to come from negative social attitudes, loss of control over the work situation, or harassment from clients and the

police than the sex itself” (519-520). Although the women in this study were not having sex with their clients, the same factors are operating in both kinds of work.

I find the problems that led most of the women to quit their work were, generally, more a result of a lack of organizational support than aversion to the nature of the work. To be sure, Jane’s stories are testimony to the deleterious effects of deep acting in a stigmatized occupation under non-empowering working conditions. However, the majority of workers in this study complained more about working conditions and management abuse than about the nature of the work. Bosses’ sexual demands and management’s undermining of workers’ control were extremely common themes throughout the interviews. Women’s problems with their jobs were not typically consequences of the nature of the work, but of the working conditions. Most women did not find dancing, massage, or doing phone sex inherently alienating. They generally understood what the work would entail and what they would be expected to do. Some, especially the phone sex actresses and club dancers, enjoyed their work, drew benefits from their experiences, and found it empowering. Thus, the problems they had at work were often products of anomic organizations. Sexual harassment from bosses and isolation from and competition between coworkers were contributing factors to quitting. Workers without strong commitment to their organizations and to the work, without positive and empowering workgroup cultures have little or no reason to stay.

### ***Personal Identities and Work Identities***

Throughout the interviews I discovered two unanticipated aspects of women’s identities that shaped their constructions of their work – feminist identities and sexual identities. The majority of respondents (fifteen out of twenty-one) identify as feminists,

and, as already mentioned, the majority also describe their sexual orientation as something other than heterosexual. Heterosexual women appear to be equally likely to identify or not identify as feminists. However, nine of the ten non-heterosexual women identify as feminists.

In the interviews we did not discuss at length how having a non-heterosexual orientation might have an impact on their constructions of their work. However, the topic of how an individual's sexual orientation might complement or contrast with the sexuality one displays at work might be fruitful for future research. McCaghy and Skipper (1969) have looked at lesbianism as an outcome of erotic labor. Yet I do not believe, as they do, that erotic labor causes women to become lesbians. Most lesbians will tell you they are lesbians, not because they hate or are repulsed by men, but because they like women.

Vanessa addressed her sexual orientation in the context of her work: "Many dancers have at least bisexual tendencies . . . I guess if you have a job where you dance naked with other women, it kind of calls for that. Also, I think if you're an exotic dancer you tend to have more liberal tendencies in general, as far as sexual things are concerned." Perhaps, then, non-heterosexual women are more likely to be open to exploring non-heteronormative sexual expressions. Or, perhaps, as a result of working in an erotic context, workers discover an attraction to their coworkers or other women.

Minax, who enjoys merging her personal and her private life, also discussed her sexual orientation and gender as they inform her work:

I myself feel like I'm not necessarily female or male, although I'm clearly female to a lot of people. Interestingly enough with a fair amount of make up on I get

taken as a tranny, transvestite, fairly often. And I can even use that to my advantage in scenes with clients who've never seen me before. So where I've had clients up on the St. Andrew's cross or somewhere else and I've never seen them before and they don't know me, but they've told me they're interested in anal or strap-on play, I might have my strap-on on. And so that when I brush up against them from behind they see this very feminine (body) but then they feel (the strap-on) . . . Most of my clients probably get very much turned on by the fact that I am highly masculine and yet I am still female.

Minax and other dommes commented that they gain a tremendous amount of pleasure from the practice of BDSM in their professional and private lives. That is, for most dommes, their work complements their sexual orientation toward domination. The notion of deriving pleasure from merging the personal and the professional poses a challenge to Hochschild's (1983) work. Hochschild argues that emotional labor in service work alienates workers from their true, private selves and forces them to construct barriers between work and self. Yet my evidence shows that, for some women, erotic labor reinforces their sexual identities and/or creates a space for creativity and exploration of sexualities. Further research on the topic of erotic labor and sexual orientation is necessary, however, to fully address or challenge Hochschild's claim.

I have shown how workers' control in erotic occupations and organizations vary. Just as experiences of control at work vary, the meanings women assign to their work vary as well. Although feminism shaped many women's work identities, for others feminism was not at all meaningful in the context of their work. Yet most of those who do not identify as such mentioned familiarity with and support of feminist goals, such as

social and economic equality and reproductive rights. Diva, Trixie, and Milan, for example, spoke of having respect for feminists but not feeling that they were feminists because they do not feel they “actively fight sexism.” Katrina, although she participates in a variety of pro-woman, anti-globalization, anti-capitalist, “anti-anti-porn” (that is, pro-porn and against anti-porn groups) activism, does not align herself with any particular factions. She explained:

I can't say I've read every feminist book in the world, but I've read some . . . And I have my own ideas about it so it's almost a mixture of female supremacy, it's a cocktail of all different kinds of idealism. But I don't call myself a feminist. I don't say, “I'm a feminist,” but I'm a huge advocate of women's rights, especially women in the workplace. So it's not to say that even though I don't call myself a feminist, I'm not advocating or working on women's rights . . . I've never bought into a certain group's ideas. I've always had personal reasons for why I do what I do and why I have certain ideas.

Two dommes, Sandra and Lori, gave interesting answers to the question of whether or not they identify as feminists. Their responses were quite different from most of those I heard. Lori answered that she and her clients cannot be equal – “I must be placed above them for the domination to take place.” When asked if she calls herself a feminist, Sandra answered, “No, not really. I think women are as intelligent as men, and I know I'm stronger than some of my clients, but I am from the old school. Women should be the nurturers and run the household, and men should make the money.”

Among those women who do identify as feminists, I find that the meanings they give to their work vary with their approaches to feminism and that which they feel they

personally gain or lose from participation in erotic labor (in particular, notions of self-esteem and empowerment). Many women frame their work identities around their feminist identities. In other words, they use their knowledge of feminism to locate themselves within their erotic occupations.

MacKinnon (1989) asserts that women's sexualities and erotic labor cannot empower them. Yet I find that many women in this study derive self-esteem, pleasure, and greater assertiveness through their work. In contrast to MacKinnon, Rubin (1984) creates a valid space for all sexual fantasies, activities, identities, and object choices so long as all parties consent. Of course, being aware of feminist debates over whether erotic labor is good, bad, or indifferent for women (e.g., Duggan and Hunter 1995; Overall 1992, 1994; Shrage 1994), several of the women struggled with the implications of their work. At the same time, others consider their work to be consistent with their feminist identities.

Thompson and Harred (1994) see women's empowering constructions of erotic labor as nothing more than attempts to deflect stigma. I refute the claim that women's positive affirmations of their work are simply rationalizations and argue, instead, that working conditions shape the meanings women give to their work. Organizations that provide support and enhance workers' control can empower women and enable them to derive benefits and pleasure from their work. I also argue throughout the discussion of feminist identity as it shapes erotic laborer identity that the degree of control women exercise over their work is key to understanding their constructions of erotic labor as feminist or anti-feminist. I first look at *how* women construct erotic labor – as pro-

feminist, anti-feminist, or both. I then look to the structure of the work to explain *why* workers experience erotic labor in the ways they do.

### *Feminism*

I discovered four themes of erotic labor as feminist and three themes of erotic labor as anti-feminist. According to some women, erotic labor can be feminist because (1) it can increase women's self-esteem and assertiveness; (2) it can be an opportunity for exploring sexual expression and freedom; (3) it can be an opportunity for women to educate clients about the redistribution of power; and (4) it is good part time work for social and political activists. I find, as well, that other erotic laborers construct their work as anti-feminist because it (1) can decrease women's self-esteem; (2) is a system of violence that dehumanizes and devalues women; and (3) is something women are forced into out of economic necessity.

Some women expressed feelings of erotic labor as both pro- and anti-feminist.

Former club dancer Vanessa felt torn over conflicting feminist ideologies:

We used to have these really intellectual discussions in the back room. You have lots of college students, "How can we be feminists and exotic dancers at the same time?" That's a really tough one . . . I guess in some ways it is wrong, and all women should unite against objectification of women. And here I am, I'm just making money off of other women's objectification. Is that right? Am I just making the situation worse for women worldwide? It's a cost-benefit thing though. I am increasing the supply of dancers in the marketplace . . . I was definitely increasing (the customers') idea that they could spend money to get women. But at the same time, at that cost to society, there was a lot of benefit to

myself as an individual. You know, besides just the monetary gain, I loved it. It made me so happy. I realized there was a cost, but, for me, I felt the benefits definitely outweighed it. And I really love dancing . . . I can't help but feel that exotic dancing is kind of an art form.

Here, Vanessa carefully weighs the costs and benefits and decides she gains more than she loses as a feminist. She spoke of two benefits in particular – self-esteem and assertiveness. She spoke at length many times throughout the interview about the positive effect dancing had on her self-esteem:

It totally increased my self-esteem. Before I started dancing . . . I didn't think I had a hot body and I didn't think I was pretty at all . . . After working there, I was like, oh my gosh, I am so hot shit. I am so cute . . . And I didn't really worry so much about my appearance at other times. I didn't worry about wearing makeup to class . . . because at night you want me! . . . And I felt totally gorgeous, totally sexy. And I stopped worrying about what I ate.

For Vanessa, exotic dancing was an empowering experience that enhanced her self-esteem. It made her feel more confident and better about herself. A particular skill she developed on the job also contributed to her sense of empowerment:

It definitely taught me assertiveness . . . Just keep (customers') hands away and still smile, but be assertive. I did learn how to watch myself and I did learn how to grab someone's hand before it grabs me and be like, "Hey, bouncer! Over here!" . . . I definitely feel that I learned skills that helped me, being able to watch all parts of my body, being aware of men around me, and being able to be assertive and be like, "Hey, fuck you! Get away!" . . . Part of that could be just



from being an assertive person in general, but I definitely learned how to have eyes all over my head at once.

Jane's constructions of erotic labor were also tied up within feminist debates. However, like her work experiences with exploitive escort agencies, bachelor party stripper companies, and other organizations, her discussion of feminism and erotic labor is decidedly darker:

Is it a woman's choice, should a woman be able to subject, not subject herself, but use her womanly wiles and gifts in order to bring in money or is she just perpetuating a system that's, ultimately, keeping her in submission, ultimately, keeping the patriarchy in power? . . . It was a matter of choice for me, just about women being able to do whatever they wanted to do. For me, being able to make whatever choices I wanted to make, no matter whether they were the best for me or the best for society at large, being able to make that choice . . . I used to see it in a lot more simpler terms before I started doing it. I used to see it as a matter of supply and demand. There are guys demanding titties, and I supply them . . . I just don't see it as such a cut and dry, "Damn it, it's my body, it's my choice" issue anymore. It is any woman's body; it is any woman's choice. But I think that there are such deep self-esteem issues that should be dealt with . . . I think that we're dealing definitely with an entire culture of low self-esteem and disrespect for one's own self and one's own body.

Both Vanessa and Jane discussed erotic labor in economic terms, such as "supply and demand" and "cost-benefit." However, for Jane, the economic equation did not work out in her favor. While she mentioned she once thought of erotic labor in such terms, the

longer she stayed in the industry, the worse her situation became and the more complicated and less coherently resolved her constructions became. While she mentioned an “initial self-esteem boost,” the effects did not last, and “the exact opposite started to be true.” After two years in and out of various jobs, Jane quit erotic labor once and for all.

The notion of self-esteem, increasing or decreasing as a result of participation in erotic labor, was a common theme. Olivia works in a safe, supportive, female-operated lesbian bar, and her constructions of dancing mirror Vanessa’s:

It’s definitely a weird thing to have your income connected to your physical appearance. That can definitely give you some body image issues. Fortunately, I haven’t really had to struggle with that stuff very much. I’m pretty OK with my body. Actually, in some ways dancing really has been good for my body image . . . Just to know that I can get paid for exposing myself, that somebody would pay money to look at me naked. I love getting attention from hot butch women. There’s definitely some benefits in having lots of attractive ladies telling me I’m cute and giving me money.

Although some workers in this study indicated personal conflicts in resolving their identities as feminists and erotic laborers, for others there was no conflict whatsoever. At the core of former phone sex actress Sonia’s construction of erotic labor is her notion of the work as an opportunity for sexual expression:

I don’t see any conflict between being a sex worker and being a feminist. I think they’re consistent . . . in that part of being a full human being and being liberated is being able to make your own choices about your sexuality. And if that involves

receiving money for displaying sexuality, then that should be included in your freedom of expression.

Sexual expression and freedom were also very important to Olivia's constructions of phone sex, dancing, and feminism:

It made me feel like a better person in a lot of ways . . . I feel freer and I feel like I have more possibilities in myself . . . Just being able to talk about sex more freely, being able to feel good about my body, to share it with other people, being able to be more open and free about myself . . . I'm going to consistently work to not let myself or any other woman that I know be restricted because of her gender.

(Feminism) also means working against patriarchy and against all those kind of forces that create it, just to make everybody free, men and women. I'm definitely concerned with equality in every aspect.

Jane and Kira's approaches to women's economic positions colored their constructions of erotic labor and feminism. Both women concurred that participation in erotic labor is something women are generally forced into out of economic necessity.

Kira gave a very eloquent explanation of her point:

It is a job that you must look at the economics of choice . . . It is not a choice of true and absolute free will. It is the only job out there where you can make \$250 an hour and not do shit. And, as a woman, you're keyed into it . . . The economics of choice is like supply and demand. Low supply – there's not a lot of women who will do it. And the demand out there is great . . . When you take the fact that, socially, (women) are brought up to be valued for (their) sexuality, it's a market of high demand, of high cash flow. And that's another thing. It's

immediate cash . . . You're constantly hitting your head on a glass ceiling; you're still making less than a man. And even though these are things that might not be all consciously thought about, those all together make up the economics of choice for a woman who is trying to get a job where she has flexibility because maybe she has kids or she's going to school or she needs a lot of money very quickly to pay bills, to pay school, to fee babies . . . It is a choice with condition.

In Kira's quote, we see MacKinnon's (1987, 1989) influence on the radical feminist construction of erotic labor as men's exploitation of women's sexuality. Most certainly there are numerous unfortunate cases of women who are pushed out of economic necessity into exploitive work. Shannon Bell (1994) responds to the notion that women are forced, out of economic need, to do erotic labor by arguing that in a capitalist, racist, patriarchal society, no woman has the ability to make a free choice. All choices are made within the constraints of inequality. Thus, making the choice to work as a secretary or a lawyer is no freer for a woman than the decision to do erotic labor (Bell 1994: 110-111).

In many ways, Jane's constructions of her work followed MacKinnon's model of erotic labor as a system of violence against women:

After I've been there and I've quit and I've had a good year to reflect, I think it is an absolute tragedy. It just makes me so sad to see it going on . . . Women are doing nothing but hurting all women . . . by catering to what I consider sick desires, by providing this service. But the thing is, it's the oldest profession in the world. It's not going anywhere. It's not like me quitting is really doing the world a whole lot of good. So if somebody's gonna be doing it, these girls might as well

be making money. But I really don't think there's anything worse you could do for yourself.

Kira echoed Jane's sentiment that women's sexuality is taken from them and devalues them. She detached herself somewhat from the MacKinnon model by saying, "Instead of being the feminist who hates porn, I hate society for creating the situation where porn is a hot commodity . . . Pornography is so sexist. That's why I have a problem with it." She argued that to deal with the underlying social implications of sex and violence against women in pornography and erotic labor, "you have to take a step back and educate socially and culturally and figure out why it exists and there's a market for it in the first place":

Because of our Puritanistic roots in this society, sex, although it is everywhere, is still forbidden to us. It becomes the cookie in the cookie jar . . . And it's culturally enforced that this is what men should want. And so they're told they should want it to be a stud. You shouldn't want it because you're going to go to hell and it's sinful and it's bad. And it just becomes this forbidden fruit. And women in our society are second-class citizens and valued (for) either their sexuality or their ability to have babies and cook. You know, the whole Madonna and the Whore thing . . . And the combination of that fact, where women are second class citizens, and the fact that . . . we live in this Judeo-Christian-Puritan society where sex is still forbidden and sinful and you're not supposed to do it until you get married. And yet it's all over the media. It's that forbidden fruit . . . It's that cookie in the cookie jar.

In attempting to resolve the feminist debate over erotic labor, Jane spoke, as MacKinnon does, of the harmful implications erotic labor and pornography have for women. She spoke, as Stock (1997) does, of men's abilities to dehumanize erotic laborers and other women through porn and the resulting effects of violence against women:

You're just not human (to men) . . . They're able to completely, totally dehumanize women . . . It's amazing to me the positions these women are in, like anal sex videos where the woman is obviously wincing in pain. And men are able to just look at this and completely, completely remove any sense of humanity. She's nothing but a piece of meat for his pleasure . . . I liken it to what Hitler did with Jewish people in the Holocaust. He completely dehumanized them and he encouraged Germans to see them as something subhuman. And, therefore, any atrocities that were committed against these subhuman creatures were justified because they weren't living by the same rules as everyone else. There wasn't a common human decency required because they weren't human . . . It's so cliché and trite to say it, but it's just objectification of women. We aren't individuals with souls and dreams and aspirations. We're just tits and ass. And it's a whole lot easier to commit atrocities against something that's just a piece of meat.

Here, again, Jane touches on a "loss of self," framed not only by her work experiences but by her approach to erotic labor and pornography as violence. However, in her attempt to resolve the conflict, she incorporates some of the tenets of Rubin's theory of radical sexual pluralism, as well. As our conversation evolved into a discussion of pornography, Jane attempted to sort out which kinds of porn should be legal and which

should not. Although she had already made several statements that fell under the rubric of MacKinnon's theory, her constructions were also tied up with Rubin's perspective:

Anything that is directly, physically, or mentally, any time a woman is in danger in those ways, it should be illegal. Or any images depicting that. But then again it's such a hard issue because some people are into S&M. And although they would never think about going out and raping a woman, maybe they like to see images of women tied up or women gagged . . . My philosophy about sex between people is really, really simple . . . If it's consensual between adults and one in the group is threatened, everybody's consenting, and everybody's happy, then whatever goes on, goes on. And that includes anything for me.

Unlike the escorts in this study who felt disempowered, the nature of professional domination reinforced pro dommes' feminist inclinations. Minax discussed the exchange of power as integral to her work and to her constructions of feminism:

I've always been a feminist in that I've always felt as though any type of oppression is wrong, that power is something that needs to be exchanged, not used or wielded over another person. In domination work I can play with that more freely and more consciously. I can make conscious decisions. You're giving your power over to me now. You are not always a little worm. Today, for these two hours that you're here with me, you're my little worm because that's where you need to be right now in order to understand other things about yourself. But you're giving me that power; I'm not wielding my power over you.

Carmen also spoke of power and her politics as they relate to her work:

I have very strong political opinions. And with my political opinions I have no problem dominating white men. I see them as the dominant class and purveyors of the patriarchy, if you will. So it's really not a stretch to me to genuinely humiliate and degrade them. And still do it with a certain amount of love. But it's definitely not a difficult thing to do . . . I see it that there's sort of an innate balance of power that exists in every person. If we were all singular entities, we would have no need for power exchange . . . Capitalism lends itself to consolidating power in the hands of those who have capital and taking power away from the disenfranchised. You end up with a situation where particularly those who have positions of power – cops, lawyers, people who are forced to exercise power or those with a lot of money – end up having too much power on one side of the spectrum. They become unbalanced, which is very unhealthy. And so (BDSM) is a way of relinquishing that control . . . As a queer woman of color I can appropriate power in a way that I can claim things of my own, claim language of my own, claim power for my own. Even if it's not recognized by society, I can still do it.

Some pro dommes use their work to advance their political objectives and activism. Josephine, for example, a self-proclaimed female supremacist said, “I live a life that acts as a role model to other Women, and am aware of this – a feminist act.” Minax believes that encouraging clients to push their personal boundaries will result in positive changes in their lives. She said:

I think that the more I contribute to changing these things, even if they seem very flimsy, you'd be surprised. I get clients who the more and more they open up to



me and the more we have an engagement with each other, the more they understand the world around them a little bit more. Have more tolerance for difference, for example.

Katrina, although she does not call herself a feminist, considers erotic labor to be an ideal occupation for female activists:

Sex work is almost the perfect profession for all women activists because it gives them freedom and it's enough money . . . Carmen and I have almost taken to recruiting women, especially women with radical political ideas. Like a woman we met in Cincinnati (at a protest against police brutality), she's a phone sex worker and we were like, "You'd be a great *domme!*" . . . "You need something part time? You've got a great body. You should strip."

Thus, according to Katrina and Carmen, erotic labor provides ample income opportunities for women who wish to make a living "without being under the thumb of the man" and to participate in social and political activism.

From listening to erotic laborers' stories, we gain an understanding of the how and the why in women's constructions of their work. Feminist workers explained *how* they interpret their work as pro-feminist, anti-feminist, or both. MacKinnon and Rubin's theories, which are not based on empirical evidence, are limited in the extent to which they inform us on what workers believe to be true about erotic labor. Because so many workers jump back and forth between the negative and positive poles of erotic labor we cannot even begin to theorize the implications for their work without acknowledging both the good and the bad. The evidence from this research shows that we can understand *why*

erotic laborers construct their work as pro- or anti-feminist by examining workers' control on their jobs.

### *Control*

In the earlier analyses of the occupations, we saw that some erotic laborers worked in organizations with empowering structures and high levels of organizational support. In the previous section we heard former exotic dancers, Vanessa and Sarah, describe their empowerment and increased self-esteem and assertiveness as results of their work. The structure of their club, Bumpers, allowed them considerable freedom and control over their interactions with customers. Vanessa also related that she had support from management and security and was not pressured to do anything with anyone with whom she was uncomfortable. She perceived a great deal of control over her work and her customers. Thus, she enjoyed a greater possibility to experience erotic labor as empowering. Working in a safe, supportive organization is certainly a factor contributing to workers' opportunities for empowerment.

Sonia and Olivia's constructions of phone sex as feminist work also correspond with work that permitted them a high level of control over their callers. The structure of phone sex, as outlined earlier, and women's open and tolerant attitudes toward all sexualities contribute to their constructions of erotic labor. Provided that organizations grant workers control, the likelihood increases that workers will experience and discuss their work as positive and in line with their feminist beliefs.

I have shown how erotic organizations can function to empower workers by allowing them some latitude in how they interact with customers and by providing organizational support. However, erotic labor is not universally empowering. The

structure of lingerie modeling was not at all empowering for Jane. At Temptations, Jane said she felt like “an employee.” She recalled, “You show up and you clock in and you take your clothes off for package #2 . . . If I’m going to be taking my clothes off, I’m going to be setting all the parameters. All of them.” In an organization such as Temptations where workers exercise very little control over their interactions with customers, there is little space for empowerment.

For workers who do not belong to organizations, such as independent pro dommes, or workers whose organizations play only a marginal role, such as escorts, experiences of empowerment and disempowerment are a little different. Escorts and independent pro dommes are not accountable to a larger organization in the same way as other erotic laborers are. The escorts, for example, felt their work was structured such that they “had free reign,” were “free agents,” and could make all their own decisions. I have shown, however, how risky escort work can be and how control is often a perception rather than a guarantee.

Kira and Jane, as a result of their disempowering experiences in escorting, were unable to imagine a possibility where women willingly enter erotic labor for both money and pleasure. They did not construct their work experiences as empowering, nor did they construct erotic labor as pro-feminist. I argue that the exploitive working conditions and lack of organizational support in Kira and Jane’s organizations must have contributed to their constructions of erotic labor as overwhelmingly negative for women.

The discussion of feminism and erotic labor was particularly difficult for Kira and Jane to reconcile. The decision of where one stands on the sensitive topics of erotic labor and porn is difficult enough, without the added complication of one’s own experiences as

an exploited worker. Certainly a woman whose experiences are steeped in exploitive working conditions and unsuccessfully managed emotions cannot easily locate herself as a feminist in erotic labor.

The ambivalence so many women felt about their work also indicates that the MacKinnon and Rubin models are not adequate for analyzing women's complex constructions of erotic labor. Yet it is clear from the examples the escorts gave that their work had an impact on the way they felt about themselves and their constructions of feminism, pornography, and sexuality more generally. Therefore, to understand how women feel about their work, we must look at organizational dynamics as at least partial determinants of workers' constructions.

Feminism, thus, manifests itself in erotic labor in a variety of ways. For those women who felt disempowered by their work, like the escorts in this sample, participation in erotic labor was contrary to feminist goals and activism. Women whose work was structured in such a way as to enhance their control over customers drew benefits from their work, such as increased self-esteem and assertiveness. Others, such as some pro dommes, use their work as a form of feminist activism by attempting to educate their clients about the redistribution of power. Still others, who spend a great deal of time participating in social and political activism, espouse the economic benefits of erotic labor. For women whose work schedules are limited by the time they spend involved in activism, erotic labor allows them time to participate in political projects and make a living wage at the same time.

Obviously there is no singular experience in erotic labor or a unitary approach to feminism and erotic labor. The MacKinnon and the Rubin models of erotic labor are

clearly insufficient tools for understanding women's constructions of their work. Rather than wearing out the same feminist theoretical arguments, regardless of how applicable or inapplicable they are, research on erotic labor must engage new perspectives. To develop new theories on erotic labor it is more advantageous to examine how women feel about their work in the context of working conditions and organizational support.

Yet we must not throw feminist theories out of the discussion entirely. For these women, feminist ideologies helped them make sense of erotic labor, whether it meant erotic labor as empowering or erotic labor as degrading. I argue that these workers are doing more than "rationalizing" their participation in a stigmatized occupation. Rationalizing implies that they downplay the negative, while illuminating the positive aspects of erotic labor. I find that many women readily acknowledge that which makes them unhappy about their work. I submit, as well, that the meanings they construct are not simply attempts to deflect stigma. Their meanings are infused with sophisticated understandings of feminist arguments and leftist political objectives. Whether erotic labor empowers or disempowers them, feminism most definitely informs their constructions of their work.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

I have argued that erotic labor, although it is not traditionally recognized as such, is service work. My claim is in direct conflict with the radical feminist notion of erotic labor as inherently violent against women. I have also suggested that dominant feminist models of erotic labor are inadequate for fully understanding women's constructions of their work. I submit, as well, that it is not the sexual nature of the work that makes erotic labor risky and the workers vulnerable. Rather, it is the stigma of illegal or marginally legal work and the lack of organizational support that precludes the formation of strong occupational norms that would serve to protect workers.

The stigma against erotic labor and the industry's status as illegal or marginally legal encourage managers' and customers' mistreatment of workers. Because so many workers are liable under prostitution laws (regardless of whether or not they have sexual intercourse with clients), the extent of legal and management support they receive is limited. Organizations, who are often more interested in protecting themselves from legal problems than protecting workers from harassment and abuse, thus contribute to low levels of worker control.

I have shown that it is not the sexual nature of the work that creates risk and worker vulnerability. As the research on waitresses, domestics, and fast food workers shows, many service workers are vulnerable in sexualized workplaces. According to this analysis of workplace control, the difference between erotic laborers and other sexualized

and vulnerable workers is that other service industries are guided by strong norms and organizational structures. Without strong norms and support from organizations, risk and uncertainty are high and, as a consequence, workers are, on the whole, quite vulnerable.

Workers' methods for controlling clients and reducing risk are the focus of this study. By placing the various occupations on a continuum, I am able to explore workers' differential needs for and approaches to control of clients. Hodson's (1999, 2001) work is therefore useful for looking at the varied styles of workplace control in erotic organizations. The organizations in this study serve as examples of numerous kinds of workplace control – direct personal, bilateral, bureaucratic, craft, and anomic.

The nature of workplace control and the extent of organizational support have a direct impact on the resources workers have to minimize on-the-job risk. Workers in organizations that employ direct personal or bureaucratic control are restricted in the risk-reduction measures they may take. Bureaucratic workplaces have strong norms, but those norms are not in place to empower workers. Workers are bound by company policies, rules, and standards that encourage customer satisfaction and constrain their decision-making abilities. Because workers are so closely supervised, they cannot take additional precautions as they see necessary. Workers in bureaucratic organizations, therefore, have fewer resources than workers in, for instance, bilateral organizations.

Workers in bilateral organizations are allowed to make some of their own decisions on how they organize their work and, possibly, on company decisions. Although there may not be strong norms in bilateral organizations, such workplaces do tend to provide support in the form of training and security. In a secure working environment, having the ability to make choices on what kinds of services one will

provide and with whom one will interact increases workers' control and protects them from on-the-job risks. Workers who have decision-making power and support from their organizations are, thus, able to develop risk-reduction techniques. However, workers in bilateral organizations, in turn, often have fewer resources (but, in the case of erotic labor, likely less risky work and less need to control customers) than self-employed craft workers (such as pro dommes).

Craft workers have generally had extensive training and experience in their fields and, therefore, exercise a high degree of control. In the case of self-employed craft workers, there is no larger organization from which workers may draw support and workers are responsible for their own training and security. However, as this evidence shows, craft workers are adept at developing their own strategies for organizing their work and controlling their clients. In the case of professional domination, the subcultural norms of BDSM also aid them in establishing and maintaining control.

Workers in anomic organizations, such as escort agencies, have a great need to control customers but comparatively less organizational support for reducing risk. Managers in anomic workplaces play a very marginal role in the way workers organize their work tasks. They do not establish clear norms for behaviors and are often abusive and inconsiderate toward employees (Hodson 1999: 294, 302, 303). As a consequence, workers must develop their own strategies for organizing their work and reducing on-the-job risks. Without the support of an organization, workers are incredibly vulnerable. This research shows that, of all the workers in the various kinds of workplaces, workers in anomic organizations experience the greatest need for controlling clients.



Across the different erotic organizations, managers' enforcement of rules concerning worker-customer interactions is almost entirely inconsistent. However, workers' whose organizations provide support – structuring the workplace in such a way that manager and customer abuse of workers is not tolerated, management provides security, workers receive training, workers feel valued by their employers, they are paid and treated fairly, they have a voice in decision-making processes, and their grievances and concerns are considered important – perceived great control over their work and, as a result, experienced their work as empowering. However, a lack of organizational support increases the likelihood that workers will construct their work as disempowering and alienating.

Moreover, when workers are able to organize interactions with customers in ways they feel will maximize their incomes and minimize risk, when management and security personnel enforce rules that protect workers, and when workers perceive control, they often report feelings of empowerment. Independent workers, as well, report feeling empowered through their work, as they have full control over the precautions they take, who they will accept as clients, how much they will charge, and other work activities. Their empowerment is, thus, in great part, a product of the high degree of control they have over how they organize their work.

I have also argued, as Hodson (1999) does, that organizational norms are key for workers' full participation and risk reduction in the workplace. Anomic organizations do not set forth norms concerning the organization of work and workers' control over customers. Escort work and domination work most clearly exemplify the implications for norms in erotic labor. In the case of domination, norms constructed around the

BDSM culture (i.e., the client is submissive to the domme; the domme and the client negotiate the scene to be performed; safe words are used so that the client may end a scene when he wishes to do so; the client must not use drugs or alcohol) protect dommes from physical and legal risks. Their techniques generally allowed them to minimize risk and maximize their incomes. In the case of escorting, however, workers and clients have less clear ideas of what to expect from one another. In order to reduce risk and increase control, workers develop their own techniques for routinization. Escorts' techniques, they often admitted, however, were not necessarily guarantees of safety.

In discussing the relationship between routinization and workers' abilities to control customers, there is a balance to consider. In many highly routinized service jobs, workers experience a loss in decision-making ability (Leidner 1993). Some of the workers in this study routinized their work in order to increase their control and enhance their decision-making ability. At the same time, they desired support from their organizations. I find a greater ability to control customers among workers in craft or bilateral organizations who were able to make their own choices on what they would do and for whom they would do it. Workers with the greatest resources for controlling clients were, thus, more likely to experience their work not as degrading but as empowering.

## APPENDIX A

### INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

#### *For telephone and in-person interviews*

Have you worked as an exotic dancer, an escort, a lingerie model, or a phone fantasy actress?

What is/were your jobs?

How many sex industry jobs do you currently hold?

If currently working: How long ago did you leave your most recent sex industry job? Do you currently hold any non-sex industry jobs?

If not currently working: How long ago did you leave your most recent sex industry job?

How long were you there? Why are you no longer at this job?

What is the approximate amount of time (combined weeks, months, years) that you have worked in the sex industry?

How did you get your first job in the sex industry?

How many sex industry jobs have you had?

What kinds of jobs within the sex industry have you had?

Why did you leave your past sex industry jobs?

How did you get into your most recent job?

What is/were your job title(s)? What kind of venue(s) have you worked at? What do you do there? What are the job requirements (i.e., dress, appearance, treatment of customers, etc.)?

Were you trained at the job?

Please give me a brief description of your work environment, including what service(s) are offered, fees for service(s), what other workers are like, presence or absence of security, and any management policies.

What is the average amount you earn on a weekday/night shift? What is the average amount you earn on a weekend shift?

Who knows that you work at this job? Does your family know? Do friends, fellow students, partners, your children know?

Are those individuals who know about your job supportive of your work or not?

What are a few things you like about your job? What are a few things you dislike about your job?

How is this job like or unlike other non-sex industry jobs for pay you've done?

On your job, who makes the decisions on such issues as services offered, fees for services, requirements of the workers, and other policies?

Do workers have a say in decision-making processes?

How do managers treat workers?

What are the rules about physical contact between workers and customers?

Who decides where to draw the line on physical contact between workers and customers?

Has a customer crossed that line with you, spoken to you in a threatening or abusive way, or treated you in a way that made you feel unsafe?

If yes: What happened? How did you handle it? Was this in accordance with management policies?

If no: How do management policies dictate a situation like this be handled? What happens if a worker violates those policies?

What are your customers like?

What do they talk to you about?

Why do you think men come here? What do you think they get out of this service?

Whether or not pornography should be protected under the First Amendment is a debated topic. Briefly give me an idea of where you stand on this issue.

Please tell me if you agree or disagree with this statement: An adult male or female who wishes to sell his or her sexual services should be allowed to do so without fear of arrest or punishment by law. Please explain your opinion on this issue.

Please tell me if you agree or disagree with this statement: An adult male or female who wishes to engage the sexual services of another adult male or female should be allowed to do so without fear of arrest or punishment by law. Please explain your opinion on this issue.

Do you have any sense if your attitudes toward the issues we just talked about have changed since you have taken a job in the sex industry?

How do you describe your sexual orientation?

Do you have a particular religious preference?

Do you have a particular political affiliation?

When you were growing up, did your family have a particular religious preference?

When you were growing up, did your family have a particular political affiliation?

Are there any other sex industry jobs that you would consider doing? Why?

Are there any other sex industry jobs that you think you would not like to do? Why?

Are you involved in any activist or support groups for women who work in your area of the sex industry?

Is there a "typical" woman or a "certain kind of woman" who works in your area of the sex industry?

Do you believe there are stereotypes about women who do your job? What are they?

Are there any stereotypes about women who do your job that you think are generally true or accurate?

Are there any stereotypes about women who do your job that you think are generally false or misinformed?

How old are you?

What race(s) do you consider yourself to be?

What is your marital status?

Do you have any children? How many?

In what part of the country did you grow up?

What is the highest year of school you have completed?

Are you currently a student at a university or other learning institution?

***For email interviews***

How long have you worked as a pro domme?

In what part(s) of the country have you worked?

How did you get started in domination work?

Were you involved in the BDSM scene before you started working?

Have you worked for a commercial dungeon? What was that like?

Do you work independently? (If applicable: How is a commercial dungeon different from working independently?)

Have you had any formal training in domination?

How do you obtain clients? Do you go through a selection process with clients? What do you look for in a client?

What are your clients like?

Please describe a good client and a bad client.

Please describe your sessions.

Are you ever concerned a client could be violent or overstep boundaries? Has that ever happened? What would/did you do?

Why do your clients like domination?

How do you define sex work?

Do you consider your work to be sex work?

Have you done sex work (exotic dancing, phone sex, escorting, lingerie modeling)?

Do you call yourself a feminist? Why or why not?

Who knows you are a domme? Are friends, family, etc. supportive or no?

What do you like about your job?

What do you dislike about your job?

What skills does a person need to be a good pro domme?

How is pro domme work similar to other work for pay you've done? How is it different?

Do you currently have any other jobs?

How old are you?

In what part of the country did you grow up?

How far did you go in school?

What is your marital status (never married, separated, divorced, widowed)?

Do you have any children?

What race do you consider yourself to be?

How do you describe your sexual orientation?

## APPENDIX B

## OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPANTS' WORK INFORMATION

Name	Job(s)	Age	Age when first started erotic labor	Total length of time in erotic labor	Currently working? (In what occupation?)	Where working/worked
Allegra	Pro domme	"Over 40"	--	5 ½ years	Yes (Pro domme)	Midwest
Aradia	Club dancer, Phone domme, Pro domme	35	18	16 years	Yes (Phone domme, Pro domme)	West coast, Canada
Carmen	Club dancer, Pro domme	22	19	2 ½ years	Yes (Pro domme)	Midwest
Diva	Club dancer, Peepshow dancer, Phone sex actress	22	18	6 months	Yes (Phone sex)	West coast, Southeast
Jane	Bachelor party stripper, Club dancer, Lingerie model, Escort	20	17	2 years	No	Midwest
Josephine	Pro domme	34	24	10 years	Yes (Pro domme)	Midwest
Katrina	Pro domme	22	18	4 years	Yes (Pro domme)	Midwest
Kira	Escort	20	19	2 months	No	Midwest
Lillith	Phone sex	38	28	10 years	Yes	East coast,

	actress, Pro domme				(Pro domme)	Southwest, Southeast
Lisa	Phone domme, Pro domme	34	31	3 years	Yes (Phone domme, Pro domme)	West coast
Lori	Pro domme	40	37	3 years	Yes (Pro domme)	West coast
Madame O	Club dancer, Escort, Pro domme	29	21	8 years	Yes (Pro domme)	Midwest, West
Milan	Pro domme	32	27	5 ½ years	Yes (Pro domme)	Southeast
Minax	Erotic masseuse, Pro domme	37	35	2 years	Yes (Pro domme)	Midwest, Australia
Morganna	Pro domme	36	36	1 month	Yes (Pro domme)	New England
Olivia	Club dancer, Phone sex actress	24	23	7-8 months	Yes (Club dancer)	West coast
Sandra	Pro domme	41	37	4 years	Yes (Pro domme)	West
Sarah	Club dancer	21	19	5-6 months	No	Midwest
Sonia	Phone sex actress	25	24	7 ½ months	No	Midwest
Trixie	Lingerie model	24	19	6-8 months	No	Southeast
Vanessa	Club dancer	23	20	3 full time summers and 36 weeks part time	No	Midwest, England

## APPENDIX C

## OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPANTS' DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Name	Where Grew Up	Marital Status	Education	Race/Ethnicity	Sexual Orientation	Feminist?
Allegra	Southwest	Divorced	Some graduate school	White	Heterosexual	Yes
Aradia	"Small town"	Never married	Ph.D.+ (12 years of college)	White	Heterosexual	Yes
Carmen	Midwest	Never married	Some college	Multi-ethnic Irish-Vietnamese	Polyamorous queer	Yes
Diva	Midwest	Living with a partner	Some college	White	Bisexual	No
Jane	Midwest	Never married	Some college	White	Bisexual	Yes
Josephine	Midwest	Never married	B.A. and B.S.	White	Bisexual	Yes
Katrina	Southwest, Midwest	Never married	Some college	White	--	No
Kira	Midwest	Never married	Some college	White	Undefined	Yes
Lillith	Midwest	"Married for five years to another woman; we parted in 1998"	Some college	White	Bi-queer	Yes
Lisa	Midwest, West coast	Separated	Some college	White, Jewish	Dominant heterosexual	Yes
Lori	West coast	"Married and divorced twice"	M.A.	White	Primarily heterosexual with some bisexual experiences	No
Madame O	Midwest	"Married but working on divorce ASAP"	Some high school	White	Bisexual	Yes
Milan	Midwest, Southeast	Divorced once, currently engaged	B.A.	White	Heterosexual	No
Minax	Midwest	Divorced	M.A.	"Poor white"	Queer	Yes



				trash”	pansexual dyke, gender queer	
Morganna	New England	Never married	B.A.	White	Heterosexual	Yes
Olivia	Southeast	Never married	B.A.	White-Native American	Queer	Yes
Sandra	West	“Never married but attached”	Some college	White	Heterosexual	No
Sarah	Midwest	Never married	Some college	White	Primarily heterosexual with some bisexual experiences	Yes
Sonia	East coast	Never married	Some college	White	Lesbian- identified bisexual, gender fuck	Yes
Trixie	Southeast	Living with a partner	Some college	White	Heterosexual	No
Vanessa	Midwest	Living with a partner	Some graduate school	White	Bisexual	Yes

## APPENDIX D

### OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPANTS' ORGANIZATIONS

#### Peepshow

Name of organization (Worker's name)	Where located	Degree of vulnerability	Degree of risk	Degree of standardization of interactions (as initiated by organizations)	Degree of standardization of interactions (as initiated by workers)	Level of organizational support	Degree to which norms influence customers' behaviors	Degree to which norms influence workers' behaviors
The Dollhouse (Diva)	West coast	Low	Low	High	High	High	Low	Low

#### Phone Fantasy Companies

Name of organization (Workers' names)	Where located	Degree of vulnerability	Degree of risk	Degree of standardization of interactions (as initiated by organizations)	Degree of standardization of interactions (as initiated by workers)	Level of organizational support	Degree to which norms influence customers' behaviors	Degree to which norms influence workers' behaviors
Cheerleaders (Olivia, Sonia)	Midwest, West coast*	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Low
Daydreams (Diva)	Southeast*	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Low

\*In all phone fantasy companies in this study, actresses work from home and live all over the country.

## Strip Clubs

Name of organization (Workers' names)	Where located	Degree of vulnerability	Degree of risk	Degree of standardization of interactions (as initiated by organizations)	Degree of standardization of interactions (as initiated by workers)	Level of organizational support	Degree to which norms influence customers' behaviors	Degree to which norms influence workers' behaviors
Girlfriends (Olivia)	West coast	Low	Low	Low	Low	High	High	Medium
Sugar & Spice (Diva)	West coast	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Low
The Honeypot (Jane)	Midwest	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Low	High	High
Bumpers (Sarah, Vanessa)	Midwest	Low	Low	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium
Scandals (Vanessa)	Midwest	Low	Low	High	High	Low	Low	Low
Paradise (Vanessa)	Midwest	Medium	Low	Low	Medium	Low	Low	Low

Erotic Massage/Lingerie Modeling

Name of organization (Worker's name)	Where located	Degree of vulnerability	Degree of risk	Degree of standardization of interactions (as initiated by organizations)	Degree of standardization of interactions (as initiated by workers)	Level of organizational support	Degree to which norms influence customers' behaviors	Degree to which norms influence workers' behaviors
Silk Stockings (Minax)	Australia	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	High	Medium	Medium
Peaches (Trixie)	Southeast	Low	Medium	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium
Temptations (Jane)	Midwest	Low	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium

Bachelor Party Stripper Companies

Name of organization (Worker's name)	Where located	Degree of vulnerability	Degree of risk	Degree of standardization of interactions (as initiated by organizations)	Degree of standardization of interactions (as initiated by workers)	Level of organizational support	Degree to which norms influence customers' behaviors	Degree to which norms influence workers' behaviors
Knockouts (Jane)	Midwest	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Low
Calendar Girls (Jane)	Midwest	Medium	Medium	High	Medium	Low	Low	Low

## Escort Agencies

Name of organization (Workers' names)	Where located	Degree of vulnerability	Degree of risk	Degree of standardization of interactions (as initiated by organizations)	Degree of standardization of interactions (as initiated by workers)	Level of organizational support	Degree to which norms influence customers' behaviors	Degree to which norms influence workers' behaviors
Frisky Kitties (Jane)	Midwest	High	High	Low	High	Low	Low	Low
Pin-ups (Jane)	Midwest	High	High	Low	High	Low	Low	Low
Heartbreakers (Jane, Kira)	Midwest	High	High	Low	High	Medium	Low	Low

## Commercial Dungeons

Name of organization (Workers' names)	Where located	Degree of vulnerability	Degree of risk	Degree of standardization of interactions (as initiated by organizations)	Degree of standardization of interactions (as initiated by workers)	Level of organizational support	Degree to which norms influence customers' behaviors	Degree to which norms influence workers' behaviors
After Dark (Carmen, Katrina)	Midwest	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium	Low	Low	Medium
Night Beat (Carmen)	Midwest	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium	Low	Low	Medium

## Independent Dungeons

Workers' names	Where located	Degree of vulnerability	Degree of risk	Degree of standardization of interactions (as initiated by workers)	Degree to which norms influence customers' behaviors	Degree to which norms influence workers' behaviors
Allegra	Midwest	Medium	High	Medium	High	High
Aradia	West coast	Medium	High	Medium	High	High
Carmen	Midwest	Medium	High	Medium	High	High
Josephine	Midwest	Medium	High	Medium	High	High
Katrina	Midwest	Medium	High	Medium	High	High
Lillith	Midwest	Medium	High	Medium	High	High
Lisa	West coast	Medium	High	Medium	High	High
Lori	West coast	Medium	High	Medium	High	High
Madame O	Midwest	Medium	High	Medium	High	High
Milan	Southeast	Medium	High	Medium	High	High
Minax	Midwest	Medium	High	Medium	High	High
Morganna	New England	Medium	High	Medium	High	High
Sandra	West	Medium	High	Medium	High	High

These tables represent only those organizations on which workers provided sufficient information to address all independent variables. Many respondents have worked for organizations very infrequently or for no longer than a couple of days or weeks and, therefore, did not provide substantial information on them.

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