

WORKING IN THE BUSINESS OF PLEASURE:
STIGMA RESISTANCE AND COPING STRATEGIES UTILIZED BY
INDEPENDENT FEMALE ESCORTS

by

JULINE A. KOKEN

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Social-Personality Psychology in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City
University of New York

2009

© 2009

JULINE ANTOINETTE KOKEN

All Rights Reserved

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the
Graduate Faculty in Social Personality Psychology in satisfaction of the
dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

12/ 10/ 2008	Jeffrey T. Parsons, Ph.D
Date	Chair of Examining Committee

12/10/2008	Maureen O’Conner, Ph.D
Date	Executive Officer

Tracey A. Revenson, Ph.D.
William E. Cross, Jr, Ph.D.
Sarit A. Golub, Ph.D., MPH
David S. Bimbi, Ph.D.
Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Abstract

WORKING IN THE BUSINESS OF PLEASURE:
STIGMA RESISTANCE AND COPING STRATEGIES UTILIZED BY
INDEPENDENT FEMALE ESCORTS

by

Juline A. Koken

Adviser: Professor Jeffrey T. Parsons

The stigma attached to prostitution, as well as the nature of the labor itself, place unique demands on the coping resources of female sex workers. The purpose of this study is to qualitatively identify and explore the strategies used by Internet-based independent female sex workers to manage stigma and the emotional demands of performing sexual and emotional labor, as well as to identify potential relationships between reported coping strategies, demographic characteristics and outcomes on measures of emotional well-being. In-depth interviews were conducted with a diverse sample of 30 female Internet sex workers. Women also completed a measure of burnout, safer sex practices with clients, and demographic information which informed the qualitative analysis. The women in the sample drew on approach and avoidance focused coping strategies to manage the demands of their work as well as work related stigma, and coping strategies were thematically different between women high and low in burnout. Women of color were more likely than white women to meet criteria for burnout and reported confronting racism and discrimination on the job. The majority of the women reported managing the impact of stigma by telling few or no loved ones about their work; many reported feeling socially isolated as a result. Implications: the stigma associated with prostitution impacts the mental health of sex workers and may lead to an increased risk of burnout and social

isolation. Women of color face an additional stressor in the form of racism and discrimination on the job. Women lower in burnout expressed greater job satisfaction and enhanced self-efficacy for coping with work related stress; social policy on sex work should attend to the diversity of women's experiences in sex work and the role that venue, race, and class may play in shaping these experiences.

Acknowledgements

I owe a debt of gratitude to my long time mentor, Jeffrey Parsons, for the professional opportunities as well as the personal support and encouragement that he has given me since I first became his student as an undergraduate. To William Cross, Jr., I would like to offer my deepest thanks for having been a constant source of inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and personal warmth throughout my time at the Graduate Center. It is impossible to overstate the impact he has had on my thinking and I feel extremely lucky to have had the chance to work with him as a student. I have been incredibly fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with Tracey Revenson, whose critical feedback always improves my work and my thinking, and whose personal encouragement has meant very much to me. She is a model to me as a teacher and mentor. I would like to thank David Bimbi for his years of mentoring and friendship, which I hope we will continue throughout our careers. To Sarit Golub I would like to express my thanks for her invaluable insight and advice, which I hope I will continue to learn from in the years to come. To Brooke Wells and Christian Grov I am deeply grateful for their friendship and mentoring through the graduate student experience and beyond. Wendy Chapkis inspired me with her book “Live Sex Acts”, which sparked my love of sex work research and inspired me to go further in academia than I ever would have imagined.

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother Linda, who is a lifelong source of inspiration and who taught me to have an open and questioning mind. To my father Scott goes thanks for teaching me to read and for challenging me throughout my life. To my partner Greg I offer my thanks for his love, patience and support. To my dear friends Roger, Kathy and Glenn, and Steve, I am forever grateful. Finally, this dissertation is also dedicated to the amazing women who participated in the study – thank you for trusting me with your thoughts and experiences.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iv
Acknowledgments.....	vi
List of Tables.....	vii
Chapter One: Introduction.....	1
Chapter Two: Methods.....	34
Chapter Three: Results.....	48
Chapter Four: Discussion.....	88
Appendix A: Interview Protocol.....	110
Appendix B: Standardized Measures.....	114
Appendix C: Demographic Questionnaire.....	116
References.....	123

List of Tables

Table One: Demographic Characteristics.....	103
Table Two: Educational Attainment.....	104
Table Three: Scores on Burnout Subscales.....	105
Table Four: Levels of Burnout.....	106
Table Five: Qualitative Themes by Emotional Exhaustion Level.....	107

Chapter 1:

Introduction

While social scientists have amassed a large body of research on women in prostitution in the decades spanning the latter half of the twentieth century to the present day, the majority of this research reflects the framing of prostitution as a social problem. Hence, research on prostitution as deviance, vector of disease, and symptom or sequelae of psychopathology or trauma comprises the focus of nearly all literature on prostitution. However, the feminist movement and the burgeoning prostitutes' rights movement which has gained momentum over the last two decades introduced a new framework for viewing prostitution: that of prostitution as labor or *sex work*.

In spite of the reframing from 'prostitution' to 'sex work', the stigma associated with this activity persists, particularly in regards to women's participation in sex work. Sex work related stigma, as well as the emotional and sexual nature of the labor itself, place unique demands on the psychological coping resources of female sex workers. This is especially true of the labor performed by a sub-group of female sex workers, independent 'escorts' who make contact with clients without the mediation of a third party and endeavor to provide companionship and convey the impression of caring for the client as well as sexual services. In addition to the emotional and physical demands of escorting, these women must also manage the impact of stigma associated with prostitution on their personal lives.

The primary aims of this study are to (1) qualitatively identify the strategies utilized by Internet escorts to manage the stigma associated with sex work, (2) identify the ways in which women engage in emotional labor as a strategy for providing the optimal

experience for their clients, while at the same time drawing a boundary between the ‘work self’ and ‘personal self’, and (3) to compare the rates of sex work related burnout among this emerging group of independent sex workers to a comparison sample of sex workers described in previous research.

Background & Literature Review

The Social Meaning of Women in Prostitution

Female prostitutes have long symbolized sin, immorality and disease in religious and medical literature (Ditmore, 2006; Roberts, 1992). Unfortunately, social scientific research on female sex workers has often reflected and reproduced the stigma against prostitution through work which casts these women as victims or deviants (Koken, 2006; Pheterson, 1990; Vanwesenbeeck, 1994; 2001). This body of research rarely questions the underlying assumption that prostitution constitutes a social problem, and that women need to be protected from prostitution- or that society needed protection from prostitutes.

Feminist research and theorizing in the decades between 1980 and 2000 was characterized by a contentious debate regarding the meaning of women in prostitution. Many radical feminists cast the prostitute as the essence of women’s sexual objectification (Dworkin, 1997; Farley, Baral, Kiremire, & Sezgin, 1998); in contrast, ‘sex positive’ feminists argued that prostitutes could be gender/sexual outlaws defying taboos of female chastity (Califia, 1988; Leigh, 1997; Sprinkle, 1998). Other feminist scholars argued that prostitutes should be viewed as “workers” who may choose to engage in sexual labor, while acknowledging that for many women choices are limited by poverty and access to resources (Scoular, 2004; Thukral, Ditmore & Murphy, 2005; Vanwesenbeeck, 2001). These feminist standpoints on the social meaning of

prostitution/sex work have implicitly and explicitly shaped a number of studies on the well-being of women engaged in paid sex (Koken, in press).

The experiences of women in prostitution are diverse (Thukral & Ditmore, 2003; Thukral, Ditmore, & Murphy, 2005; Vanwesenbeeck, 1994; Vanwesenbeeck, 2005) and defy simplistic reduction to narratives of “victimization” or “liberation.” The present study approaches prostitution as a form of voluntary paid labor that women may choose to engage in under circumstances ranging from the luxurious to the destitute. Women who were trafficked into prostitution against their will are a highly specific group of sex workers who have been the subject of hotly contested research and social policy (Ditmore, 2005; Doezema, 2002); at the same time, women who have asserted that they have consciously chosen employment in sex work have been neglected or viewed by anti-prostitution feminists as non-existent (Fawkes, 2005; Vanwesenbeeck, 2001). It is this group of women- those who identify as having chosen their work free of coercion - which will be the focus of the present study. As the term prostitute too often implies a conflation of the person with the work and has become loaded with the stigma attached to prostitution (Koken, Bimbi, Parsons, & Halkitis, 2004), the term *sex work* will be used here in place of ‘prostitution,’ except when the stigma attached to prostitution is being intentionally referenced.

Theoretical Foundations of Research on Sex as Work

The proposed study rests on theoretical foundations which extend far beyond the study of sex work. Before moving into an analysis of the key studies of sex work which I rely upon in my proposed study, it is necessary to briefly elaborate on the theories which these key studies were built upon. First, the study of the performance of sex work rests

upon the notion that one performs and presents ones' self in social situations as outlined by Goffman (1959) in his dramaturgical model. Second, as the social taboo against prostitution renders it one of the most stigmatized activities a woman may engage in, Goffman's theory of stigma management (1963) remains useful in examining how sex workers cope with stigma. Third, the notion that sex work, as a form of service work, requires emotional labor was elaborated upon originally by Russell-Hochschild (1983), in her study of flight attendants. Thus sex work, as a form of emotional labor, may be experienced as highly stressful, drawing on the coping skills of the women who perform it. Fourth, the contributions of coping theory outlined by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) may be applied to the strategies used by sex workers to manage the demands of the labor. Finally, the work of Maslach (1976), one of the major originators and contributors to the study of burnout is an essential foundation of research on sex work related burnout. Taken together, these theories provide a strong foundation for the analysis of the impact of performing sex work on the sex worker.

Performing the Self

In *The presentation of self in everyday life* (1959) Erving Goffman outlines the unspoken rules that compel the individual to present the appropriate 'public face' in interaction with others, as well as the techniques that may be utilized by the individual towards this end; this work of symbolic interaction theory is now known as the *dramaturgical model*. Through 'successful' use of these techniques, unspoken social rules remain so, and interpersonal interactions proceed smoothly. The dramaturgical model focuses on the external aspects of this performance: the art of *impression management*, or manipulating one's presentation of self to

others through careful management of one's facial and verbal expression. The internal, emotional aspects of this performance are not well developed in the dramaturgical model, although Goffman allows "...they [the players] must be taken in by their own performance to the degree that is necessary to prevent them from sounding hollow and false to the audience" (Goffman, 1959, p.214). Later, social psychologist Arlie Russell-Hochschild (1983) 'filled in' this model of the presentation of self through her theory of emotional labor.

Stigma

The presentation of self becomes a more laborious task when the individual is working to manage or conceal a potentially discrediting characteristic. For persons with "concealable stigmas," (such as being a sex worker) the decision to conceal or reveal one's membership in a stigmatized group becomes a crucial strategy for managing the impact of stigma on one's life (Goffman, 1963; Sanders, 2005c; Unger, 1998; 2000). Stigma management strategies often take the form of "*information management*" techniques such as "*passing*," (hiding one's stigma in order to "pass" as a non-stigmatized person); or "*covering*," a strategy characterized by selective disclosure to trusted confidantes or family members- "the wise" (Goffman, 1963).

Concealable stigmas appear to have an even greater negative impact on the mental and physical health of individuals than those who live with visible stigmas (Cole, Kemeny, Taylor, & Visscher, 1996; Frable, Platt, & Hoey, 1998; Huebner, Davis, Nemeroff, & Aiken, 2002; Meyer, 2003; Shehan, LaLota, Johnson, Celentano, Koblin, Torian, et al., 2003). This may be due in part to the isolation of living with a concealable identity - one could potentially be in proximity to a member of one's group and never

know it. Additionally, the stress associated with managing the stigma can be considerable. Individuals with concealable stigmas are in the unique position of being able to “pass”; however, the considerable effort one must invest in passing is a source of considerable stress for the individual who passes. Through passing, they close themselves off from accessing support from others who either share their group membership, or who would not judge them according to the stereotypes promoted by mainstream society.

Emotional Labor

Arlie Russell Hochschild’s theory of “emotional labor” picks up where Goffman’s dramaturgical model left off, outlining the ways in which the individual works not only to present the ‘appropriate’ emotion in social interaction, but how the individual in fact manufactures this emotion. *The managed heart* (1983) examines the use of emotions on the job and the ways in which service workers must ‘sell’ their emotions as much as they do the service they provide. The institutional side of emotion work can be seen when workers are expected to perform (and ideally feel) certain emotions on the job, while suppressing less desirable ones- this Hochschild terms emotional labor.

The worker who engages in emotional labor may employ one of two strategies when attempting to convey the desired emotion. In “surface acting,” a technique first described in the dramaturgical model (though not labeled such), the individual may manipulate their facial and vocal expression to display an emotion that may not be genuinely felt by the person displaying it. This may result in a sort of “emotive dissonance,” which may be experienced as a source of work-related stress. The emotive dissonance that accompanies surface acting disappears when the actor manages to perform what Hochschild terms

“deep acting.” In deep acting, the player produces the emotions called for by the demands of emotional labor, yet experiences these emotions as genuine, at least while they are performing them.

Coping

Lazarus and Folkman spurred decades of research on stress and coping following the publication of their seminal text, *Stress, appraisal, and coping* (1984). Although not the first researchers to study coping styles, their rigorous review of theory and research clarified what was known in the field at the time of publication. They define coping as “. . . constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person” (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, pp. 141). Prior to the onset of coping response, however, a cognitive appraisal evaluates the beneficial or threatening aspects of a situation. The cognitive appraisal process is significant for individuals with concealable stigmas, as they confront the potential for loss of status or gain of social support when they encounter individuals who are unaware of their stigma. Their choice of coping style follows their primary appraisal of the situation.

Two broad styles of coping are described in the Lazarus and Folkman (1984) text: “emotion-focused coping” and “problem focused coping.” They posit that these coping styles are situation dependent, and that individuals will engage in problem-focused coping when they feel a source of stress is preventable, endeavoring to avoid a stressful situation entirely. On the other hand, when a stressful situation is unavoidable, individuals may engage in emotion-focused coping, managing their own affective response to the situation. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) caution against conflating coping

styles with outcomes, or labeling certain styles of coping as “bad” while others are “good,” emphasizing that all styles represent an effort to cope.

The problem and emotion focused coping styles described by Lazarus and Folkman are akin in many ways to the theories of Goffman (1963) and Hochschild (1983) described earlier. The information management techniques (Goffman, 1963) practiced by individuals with concealable stigmas may be characterized as a form of problem-focused coping. Here the individual avoids the stressful situation (loss of status due to being identified as a member of a stigmatized group) by “passing” as a non-stigmatized person, or selectively sharing information with “the wise” (covering), a strategy that allows for access to social support while minimizing the potential for loss of status. On the other hand, the emotional labor of “deep acting” described by Hochschild (1983) is a perfect example of emotion focused coping. Here the individual manages their presentation of emotions internally, making the affective experience more congruent with their outer performance, and hence lessening the stress of “surface acting”, performing emotions which are felt to be insincere.

Since the publication of Lazarus and Folkman’s (1984) handbook, theories of coping have evolved beyond the model of emotion or problem-focused coping into a construct of approach-avoidance strategies (Carver, 2007). Threat appraisal, an individual’s perception of a negative event that may occur, may activate avoidance coping (the individual works to escape the negative outcome) or proactive coping, a strategy which aims to prevent possible stressful events. Through this lens, information management techniques may be conceived of as an avoidant coping strategy which aims to prevent the loss of status that may be associated with revealing one’s concealable stigma. An

approach strategy, on the other hand, could take the form of a person who seeks out the company of like-minded individuals, such as the escort who works to carefully screen her clientele in order to maximize both her profit as well as her enjoyment of the work itself.

Work-Related Burnout

Decades of research on work-related burnout has demonstrated the potential costs of the stress that may accompany the performance of emotional labor. The social psychological study of burnout traces its origins to clinical observations first reported by a psychiatrist working within a health care agency (Freudenberger, 1975), and a survey investigating emotional stress on the job conducted by social psychologist Christina Maslach (1976). Today, burnout as a construct is defined as a syndrome that may develop in response to chronic on the job stress. The three components of burnout are 1) emotional exhaustion, 2) cynicism and detachment from the job (depersonalization), and 3) decreased feelings of personal competency on the job (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Emotional exhaustion may stem from the stress of engaging in emotional labor. When one feels emotionally exhausted and unable to produce the ‘appropriate’ feelings, depersonalization or distancing from one’s work may constitute a coping mechanism. The third component of burnout, lack of self efficacy and feelings of low competency at work, may stem from the feeling that one is not able to meet the needs of their clients, and thus must separate one’s self from the work, or become cynical. Contextual factors such as workload, social support on the job, and degree of autonomy (the ability to have a say in determining one’s working conditions) have been found to be correlated with burnout (Maslach et al., 2001). The most commonly used measure of burnout, the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) created by Maslach and Jackson (1981), was designed

for service workers and has provided a standardized assessment of these three factors, as well as excellent construct validity (Maslach et al, 2001). With the reframing of prostitution as a form of labor, or sex work, research on sex work as a form of service work has grown and with it the study of burnout as its potential consequence (Vanwesenbeeck, 2005).

Key Research on Sex Worker's Well-Being

The body of research on sex work is large, encompassing literature from many academic disciplines. I have chosen to include only studies that focus on sex work and well-being that have sampled predominantly female sex workers, as the experiences of male sex workers are unique to this group because of differences in gender and sexuality (Koken et al, 2004). While both male and female sex workers serve a primarily male clientele (Vanwesenbeeck, 2001), the cultural trope of “prostitution” centers on women who provide sexual services to men. Hence much of the stigma and stereotypes associated with prostitution focus on women. The power dynamics between men and women in a male dominated society have generated vigorous debate among feminist scholars and sex work researchers (Sanders, 2005c; Scoular, 2004). However, as male sex workers engage in homosexual activity when they provide services to a male clientele, and are frequently gay or bisexually identified, male sex workers are confronted with the stigma associated with homosexuality in addition to the stigma associated with sex work (Bimbi, 2007; Koken, Bimbi, Parsons, & Halkitis, 2004). For these reasons I have chosen to focus on the experiences of women sex workers for the purposes of the present study.

The body of literature concerning the well-being of female sex workers has

predominantly been carried out in western European nations. This is partly due to the fact that researchers rarely study coping or well being of sex workers in developing nations (see Farley et al, 1998, for an exception), and partly because of the relative social and legal tolerance of sex work in Europe. For this reason, there are clear limits to generalizing from the circumstances of sex workers in Europe to indoor female sex workers in the United States, where sex work remains criminalized. However, the data presented here represent one of the first studies on independent sex workers in the U.S.

The relatively tolerant legal and social climate of the Netherlands provided the setting for one of the first methodologically rigorous investigations of the well-being of female sex workers. In 1994, Ine Vanwesenbeeck broke new ground with the publication of *Prostitutes' Well-Being and Risk*. This book described the combined findings of two empirical studies of female sex workers in the Netherlands who worked in a diverse array of settings, from the street to upscale independent escorting. Two studies are presented in Vanwesenbeeck's 1994 book. The first study focused on coping and psychological well-being of current and former sex workers, and the second studied factors associated with condom use among current sex workers. Both studies assessed several of the same constructs, and in her 1994 publication, Vanwesenbeeck combined data from these two samples and presented a synthesized analysis of the findings.

Vanwesenbeeck theorized that physical and emotional well-being in sex work is related to historical, personal, and contextual factors. Historical factors include prior history of childhood abuse or victimization. Personal factors include adult experience of abuse, and coping strategies (problem solving, dissociation, re-defining the problem, or drug abuse). Contextual factors are stigmatization of sex work, financial need, working

conditions (including venue) and demographic characteristics such as age, education level, and citizenship status. The interaction of these factors, with job satisfaction, was theorized to shape the well-being of women working in prostitution. Well-being was conceptualized as the absence of illness or injury and emotional problems.

Vanwesenbeeck viewed well being as an ongoing interaction between the woman and her environment, whereby changing circumstances in health, employment and migration status might improve or worsen the life of a sex worker.

Vanwesenbeeck's research is notable for the attention it pays to social class, and to the variations of class within prostitution. Noting that prior research of non-sex worker populations had shown associations between living in poverty with higher rates of psychological problems, and greater use of ineffective coping strategies (such as substance abuse), Vanwesenbeeck predicted that she would uncover similar outcomes among her sample- especially when taking into account the loss of status that accompanies entering prostitution. Additionally, as earlier research on sex work indicated that most sex workers lived in poverty, they were hypothesized to be vulnerable to the same physical and emotional health problems faced by poor people who were not sex workers.

The first study, or 'coping and well being' study, recruited 60 current and former sex workers (90% of whom were born in the Netherlands) through snowball sampling and newspaper advertisements. The women completed a questionnaire that included measures of well-being, childhood sexual abuse, partner abuse, and violence on the job; the Utrecht Coping List, frequency and type of drug and alcohol consumption, and current or former work venue.

The second study, focusing on condom use with clients, sampled 127 current sex workers recruited through outreach to women in their working environments. As non-Dutch born women were under-represented in the first study, Vanwesenbeeck and her colleagues made a special effort to recruit migrant women in the second study; as a result non-Dutch born women represented 36% of the participants in this second sample. As in study one, participants completed a questionnaire that included measures of childhood sexual abuse, partner abuse, and violence on the job; the Utrecht Coping List, frequency and type of drug and alcohol consumption, and current or former work venue. Additionally, participants also completed a measure of job satisfaction, condom use, attributions for responsibility of condom use and communication about condoms with clients; number of clients seen per week, working hours, earnings, length of time spent with each client and perceived financial need for staying in the work.

Ultimately, the combined results of the two studies uncovered a diversity of experiences among women engaged in sex work. Across both studies, distribution of work venue resembles a “normal curve,” which seems to reflect the distribution of venues in the Netherlands at the time of sampling. Few ($n = 11$) women worked on the street (street based sex work is uncommon in the Netherlands, where sex work is legal, but working on the street is not), while many women worked in windows ($n = 48$), and brothels and clubs ($n = 92$); a small number of women worked from home ($n = 11$) or through escort agencies ($n = 9$). Vanwesenbeeck used data gathered from age matched female respondents as part of a national Dutch health survey as comparison data to her sex worker sample. She found that while approximately one fourth of the women sampled were experiencing mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, and

substance abuse, another 25% percent of the sample scored higher on measures of emotional well-being than the average non-sex worker comparison sample. The remaining fifty percent of women sampled scored somewhere in between. The women who were most likely to score in the lower 25% on measures of well-being and job satisfaction were also the most likely to be working in the least paid, most dangerous venues for sex work, such as on the street, or in brothels where third parties allowed women little control over their working conditions. Migrant women were also more likely to be working in these venues. Ex-sex workers scored at the bottom of the sample on measures of well-being, raising the possibility that women who were poorly suited to the work were most likely to leave it.

In contrast, women who worked towards the top of the pay scale in sex work, and worked independently, were most likely to score in the top 25% of measures of well-being and job satisfaction. These women were also more likely to be native Dutch, had higher educational attainment, and a better standard of living overall. Vanwesenbeeck's respondents reported significantly higher rates of childhood abuse when compared with Dutch population studies of childhood sexual abuse; however, past experience of such abuse was not predictive of current levels of well-being.

Some limitations of Vanwesenbeeck's research must be considered when evaluating her findings. First, as mentioned previously, the studies were carried out in the relatively tolerant climate of the Netherlands, where there are fewer legal restrictions on sex work and a supportive political and academic atmosphere for feminist research. Also, differences between the two samples, such as the inclusion of ex-sex workers in the first study and the focus on including more migrant women in the second study limit

comparisons between the two samples, and present a limitation to combining the two samples for analysis. While some measures were included in both samples (venue, drug and alcohol use, victimization), many new measures were included in study two. This study is significant for its inclusion of women from a variety of work venues, yet statistical comparison between venues is limited by the small, non-random sample of 187 women. Finally, as with all studies of prostitution and other ‘hidden’ populations, volunteer bias may have skewed the sample.

In 1997, feminist sociologist Wendy Chapkis continued the exploration into women’s experiences in sex work with the publication of her book *Live Sex Acts: Women Performing Erotic Labor* (1997). This work builds on Vanwesenbeeck’s (1994) research, but utilized qualitative methodology to explore women’s strategies for coping with the emotional demands of performing sex work. Chapkis’ (1997) publication was the result of several years of ethnographic research in the United States and the Netherlands, and weaves together interviews with women in a variety of sex industry professions. Drawing on Russell Hochschild’s (1983) theory of emotional labor, in which gendered service jobs are viewed as necessitating the production or appearance of ‘appropriate’ emotions, Chapkis (1997) explored the ways in which sex workers managed their emotions on the job. A sample of 50 sex workers, political activists, trafficked women, dominatrices and others involved in the industry (such as brothel staff and law enforcement officers) participated in open-ended qualitative interviews, which Chapkis conducted in Dutch or English, depending on the participant’s preference. The qualitative interview data was then examined for themes and fit with Hochschild’s (1983) theory of emotional labor.

The women Chapkis interviewed emphasized the importance of drawing boundaries

between their work lives and personal lives; this enabled them to give the client a pleasurable experience without feeling that they had sold a 'private/personal' part of themselves in the process. Sex worker Jo Doezenia (who later earned her PhD in development studies, and became a respected lobbyist and human rights advocate) states:

"Now it is true that there are parts of myself that I don't want to share with my clients. But drawing boundaries in my work doesn't mean that I am in danger of being destroyed by it" (Doezenia, as quoted in Chapkis, 1997, pp.75).

This perspective offers an alternative to the view held by anti-prostitution feminists (such as Barry, 1995; Dworkin, 1997; Pateman, 1988) who state that prostitution is 'selling ones' self' and an abuse of one's personal integrity. The question of interpreting women's reported experience arises here in noting that what may be 'drawing boundaries' (an emotionally healthy coping strategy) to one person may be viewed as 'dissociation' (a pathological response to victimization) by another. One sex worker interviewed by Chapkis, Cheyenne, expressed frustration at the ways in which her skills may be misinterpreted by outsiders due to the stigma associated with being labeled as a 'prostitute':

"...I know how to maintain my emotional distance [from clients]. Just like if you are a fire fighter or a brain surgeon or psychiatrist, you have to deal with some heavy stuff and that means divorcing yourself from your feelings on a certain level. You just have to be able to do that to do your job. But if you're a prostitute who can separate herself from her emotions while you're working everybody condemns you for it. I don't get it" (Cheyenne, as quoted in Chapkis, 1997, pp.79).

In this way the stigma attached to prostitution colors the lens through which outsiders

interpret experiences. One wonders how Cheyenne's experiences, quoted above, would have been viewed by a person who equates prostitution with violence. Chapkis acknowledges that emotion work can lead to burnout or feelings of being alienated from one's "true" emotions, and argues that this relates not to sex work by definition, but to the control one has over one's working conditions, and other personal factors such as previous life experience, social support, etc. This perspective lends support to Vanwesenbeeck's (1994) earlier research finding that venue of work and other socio-economic factors were related to well being in sex work, as well as to the larger field of burnout research, which has found contextual and personality factors to be correlated with risk of burnout (Maslach et al., 2001).

There are several limitations that should be considered when evaluating Chapkis' findings. First and foremost, her methodology and sample were vaguely described in the text, rendering it difficult to compare with previously published studies. This may be due in part to the fact that Chapkis' book was written to be accessible for a lay readership of non-social scientists, but nevertheless limits assessment of her data. Additionally, the exploratory qualitative methodology and broadly defined research questions limit comparison with data from other studies. Chapkis' small sample ($n = 50$) included a variety of sex workers (not all of whom worked in prostitution) and those who worked in the sex industry. This diverse sample presents a valuable innovation on previous studies which mainly sampled street based sex workers, however the great diversity of individuals who participated in Chapkis' study prevent in depth analysis of the ways in which working venue (shown in Vanwesenbeeck's 1994 research to be significant factors) shapes women's experience of sex work. Also, Chapkis' sample was mainly

collected in the cities of Santa Cruz and San Francisco, and in Amsterdam- three of the most socially and sexually permissive cities in the world. Finally, the possibility of selection bias is strong, as many well known sex work activists participated in the interviews. However, as stated previously, Chapkis was careful to include women whose participation in sex work was coerced, as well as women who espoused beliefs she did not share. In this way Chapkis attempted to reduce any bias towards ‘positive’ findings that may have been present, while bringing valuable new perspectives to sex work research- those of women who were satisfied with their work and perceived many benefits to being a sex worker.

In the years following Chapkis’ (1997) publication, the study of sex work as emotional labor has become increasingly popular. The work of Teela Sanders (2002, 2004, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c) builds and expands upon previous qualitative work by Hochschild (1983) and Chapkis (1997), exploring the performance of emotional labor by female sex workers in the United Kingdom. These works seem uniquely a product of the time period in which the research was conducted- following decades of hotly contested ‘forced/choice’ debate among feminists (this is not to say that the debate is fully resolved), the foundational notion of ‘sex as work’ reached a degree of theoretical development and acceptance among many feminists and the larger community of social science researchers. The question of sex work as emotional labor is no longer one of ‘choice v. force’, nor of ‘victimization v. well-being;’ the theoretical assumptions underlying this burgeoning field of sex work literature seem to be ‘as sex workers, how may we maintain our safety, a healthy sense of boundaries between personal and working life, and take care of ourselves emotionally?’

Teela Sanders (2002, 2004, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c) explores this question in her ethnographic study of female sex workers in Britain, the majority of whom worked in a variety of indoor venues. Over a ten month period from 2000-2001, Sanders conducted over 1000 hours of onsite observation, and interviewed 45 indoor female sex workers in Birmingham. Contact was made with potential participants through a cooperative arrangement Sanders' made with the National Health Service outreach program to indoor sex workers. Through this program, Sanders gained permission to accompany social workers into brothels, saunas, and private residences where women worked. These key contacts who had previously established a relationship of trust with the sex workers assisted Sanders in recruiting women for her study. Inclusion criterion for Sander's project was that women sex workers must be over the age of 18, British citizens, and self described as voluntary participants in sex work. Sanders also interviewed non-sex worker professionals, such as madams and brothel staff. Women ranged in educational attainment and employment skills: 34 out of 45 had few job skills and left school at age 16; however 11 out of 45 had some or completed college and skill degrees (nursing, hairdressing) and of these 8 had left mainstream employment for the greater flexibility offered in sex work. Describing her sample, Sanders notes:

Unlike the typical patterns of prostitutes' histories that are reported in the literature, the participants I have based this set of arguments on were not scarred by abuse, violence by clients, financial exploitation from male partners or recurring patterns of arrest. They tended to define themselves as 'career girls' or 'working girls', expressing entrepreneurial attitudes and business acumen. (Sanders, 2005a, p.324).

Here Sanders was likely offering a direct response to earlier work by Farley (1998) and other anti-prostitution feminists who argue that sex work is intrinsically traumatizing, exploitative, and a form of abuse by definition.

Sanders argues that emotional labor constitutes both an effective business strategy for gaining and maintaining clientele, as well as a strategy for self preservation while performing the intimate interactions required by sex work. First, women create a working persona, a 'working girl' character with a different name, life history, and personality that differs from the 'real self' the worker reserves for personal life. This working persona performs the "prostitute role" by engaging in deep acting, a form of emotional labor.' Other strategies described by Sanders included the use of condoms as symbolic barriers between the worker and her client, providing emotional distance in the moments when maintaining personal boundaries becomes most challenging. Thus condoms are not only tools which prevent unintended pregnancy and infection with sexually transmitted disease, they prevent "...the client entering their minds, stealing their thoughts and affecting their personal relationships" (Sanders, 2002, pp.564). Also, women created "bodily exclusion zones", reserving certain sexual acts or body parts for private life only (for example, refusing to kiss a client, or allow a client to perform oral sex on them), or by engaging in only domination / fetish services which sexually satisfy the client without engaging in penetrative sex.

Later work by Sanders (2004, 2005b, 2005c) elaborated on additional strategies utilized by female sex workers (all of whom worked indoors) to emotionally manage self-presentation to the client while working to maintain a coherent sense of self outside of work. In her 2004 work, Sanders explores the use of humor by sex workers to build

alliance between workers, maintain distance between the self and the client (especially when making jokes of which the client was unaware), and maintaining the ‘appropriate’ and desirable emotional presentation of a ‘happy hooker.’ Sanders’ 2005a work, *It’s just acting: Sex workers’ strategies for capitalizing on sexuality* coalesces her earlier work on emotion management as a business strategy employed to create the most marketable personae in order to attract the desired clientele while maintaining personal boundaries in the process.

In her 2005 piece, Sanders also responds to Brewis and Linstead’s (2000a, 2000b) and others’ assertion that sex work requires the ‘consumption’ of the female body. Rather than singling out sex work as uniquely requiring of women’s sexuality in the workplace, Sanders places prostitution on a continuum of sexualized service work performed by women. She asserts that while female sex workers operate within a gendered, hetero-centric profession, they also work to manipulate male sexuality for their own profit. Sanders’ posits that equating prostitution with force and victimization overly simplifies the realities of sex work:

“Theory that locates power and influence only with male customers or the wider structures that determine economic relations leaves female sex workers theoretically devoid of agency, responsibility and rationality (Sanders, 2005, p.336).”

Prostitution therefore can be seen as merely one example of a service profession (like waitressing, nursing, or being a flight attendant) that is gendered, and requires intimate interaction and displays of ‘appropriate’ appearance and emotions.

Although Sanders' research represents the most thorough research on the coping strategies of sex work since earlier work by Vanwesenbeeck (1994) and Chapkis (1997), her research findings have several limitations. First, although Sanders asserts that her participants were not the traumatized, victimized, drug addicted women most often described in other's research on sex work, her methodology did not include any standardized measures of psychological well-being which would have allowed her to make direct comparisons. The sample was small (although average size for qualitative work), and comprised of women who identified as voluntary sex workers and who were legal adults and British citizens. Thus, these women were likely to be doing well, as they shared some of the same characteristics (working indoors, similar level of education, citizens, etc) of Vanwesenbeeck's (1994) earlier sample which scored in the top of the range for well being. Additionally, Sanders gained access to brothels through outreach workers employed by the National Health Service, who provided outreach to the most established and organized brothels, and thus were less likely to reach informal networks of sex workers. It is difficult to know how the women in Sanders' sample may have differed from women who were not reached by the outreach workers who assisted Sanders in recruitment. The reliance on key informants and gate keepers to engage women working indoors precluded Sanders from reaching indoor workers on her own, although she was introduced to some sex workers through friend referrals by women who participated in her study. Sanders (2005b) reports that she faced initial challenges in recruiting women into her study, as an outsider without previously established contacts in the sex industry. Finally, the sample of women, while all indoor workers, were employed in a diverse variety of venues, such as brothels, saunas, escort agencies and

independently. The potential for significant differences in coping style and work satisfaction are alluded to in Sanders ethnographic research, but the limited number of participants who work in each venue type preclude in depth exploration of the impact of each venue on women's experience of the work. Vanwesenbeeck's earlier (1994) study had found significant differences in women's emotional adjustment by venue, but Sanders' study can neither confirm nor refute those findings. Finally, Sander's sample was majority white, limiting the generalizability of her findings to women of color and non-British born women.

Together, studies conducted by Sanders (2002, 2004, 2005) and Chapkis (1997) form a small qualitative body of literature that has explored sex work as a form of service industry work, akin to nursing or being a flight attendant. These studies have identified coping strategies utilized by indoor female sex workers to manage sex work related stigma as well as cope with the demands of performing emotional labor on the job. Along with the earlier research by Vanwesenbeeck (1994), this body of literature refutes the assertion of anti-prostitution feminists (Dworkin, 1997; Farley, Baral, Kiremire & Sezgin, 1998) who argue that all sex work constitutes a form of sexual victimization, and therefore inherently traumatizing.

Yet the stressors associated with sex work, even under the best of circumstances, may be considerable. Earlier research by Chapkis (1997), as well as Hochschild's (1983) original work on emotional labor, hinted at the potential for the performance of emotional labor to result in negative psychological adjustment or burnout as a result of sex workers' coping skills being pushed to the limit. Burnout, a work-related psychological syndrome characterized by feelings of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of

personal competence, has been identified as a potential consequence of performing service work which requires emotional labor, such as being a flight attendant or bill collector (Hochschild, 1983), bank or hospital employee (Wharton, 1993), or a sex worker (Chapkis, 1997; Sanders, 2005). In addition to the stressors that may be associated with the performance of emotional labor, a review of research on burnout (Maslach et al., 2001) indicates that contextual factors, such as number of clients/hours spent working, social support (or lack of) on the job, and the perception of autonomy / degree of control over one's working conditions may place workers at risk for burnout. The question remains whether sex work is uniquely stressful among service occupations (as Farley et al. assert), or if the emotional stress of performing sex work is comparable to other professions. To answer this question, Vanwesenbeeck's most recent research (2005) aimed to 1) investigate the rates of burnout among a diverse sample of sex workers, 2) compare these rates to two comparison groups- nurses and people in treatment for work related burnout, and 3), identify the factors associated with higher rates of burnout among sex workers.

Based on prior studies finding high levels of trauma and poor emotional adjustment among female sex workers (El-Bassel, Schilling, Irwin, Faruque, Gilbert, et al., 1997; Farley et al, 1998), Vanwesenbeeck hypothesized that sex workers would score higher on measures of burnout when compared to the professionals in the comparison groups. Further, based on previous research on burnout among a variety of workers (Maslach & Leiter, 1998) as well as her own study of sex workers in the Netherlands (1994), Vanwesenbeeck predicted that burnout would be associated with contextual factors, such as working circumstances and social support. Finally, Vanwesenbeeck predicted that for

sex workers, depersonalization would be found to be a protective factor, rather than a negative outcome. This hypothesis was based on the assertion by Cordes and Dougherty (1993) that for many workers, depersonalization could be a common coping strategy for drawing boundaries between one's self and one's work. This resonates with the qualitative findings presented by Chapkis (1997) and Sanders (2002, 2004, 2005a), who both found that sex workers developed many strategies for distancing one's self and maintaining 'professional boundaries' during work interactions.

The sample was comprised of 96 female sex workers, all of whom worked indoors. Women worked in a variety of sites, from windows (18.3%), to large clubs (30.1%), to smaller brothels (30.1%), as escorts (9.7%), and other (from home or other venues). Many of these women were independent sex workers, however some were trafficked migrants working for a third party (the specific percentages of independent workers and others were not specified). The sample was comprised of 61.5% native born Dutch women of Dutch ancestry, 16.7% native born Dutch women who were the children of non-Dutch parents, and 21.9% of women who had migrated to the Netherlands. The majority of the sample (60.5%) had attained "middle" levels of education, while 27% had "lower" levels and 12.5% had "higher" levels (unfortunately Vanwesenbeeck does not define what constitutes lower, middle, or higher educational attainment). All told, Vanwesenbeeck made a concerted effort to include as diverse a sample of female sex workers, in an effort to provide a counterpoint to prior research, which had focused on relatively narrow sub-groups of female sex workers, such as street based women who were frequently dealing with issues of violent family or home life, homelessness, substance abuse, and mental illness (Farley et al, 1998; Pheterson, 1990; Simons &

Whitbeck, 1991; Weitzer, 2005) or conversely, the majority white and indoor based sample of British born women described by Sanders (2002, 2004, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c).

Using a structured interview protocol, Vanwesenbeeck assessed burnout using a modified Dutch version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory, the Utrecht Burnout Scale for the Contractual Professions (UBOS-C) (Schaufeli & van Dierendonck, 2000). This scale measures three aspects of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal competence (See Appendix B for the complete measure). The interview also measured of psychosomatic symptoms (e.g. sleeplessness, headaches, lack of appetite, and anxiety), experiences of harassment and violence on the job in the previous year, perceptions of stigma and problems in personal life due to sex work related stigma (e.g., being rejected by a friend or loved one, demeaned, or subject to discriminatory treatment when accessing services), and motivations for entering sex work. Contextual factors which have previously been found to be associated with burnout (Maslach et al., 2001) were also assessed: support from management and colleagues, number of hours worked, number of clients seen per week, amount of money earned, and degree of control over interactions with clients.

Like Vanwesenbeeck's earlier research (1994), the findings of her 2005 study shed light on the complex web of personal and environmental factors which shape women's experience of sex work. Overall, sex workers' mean scores on two of the dimensions of burnout - emotional exhaustion ($M = 14.9$) and personal competence ($M = 27.5$) did not differ significantly from the female health care workers ($M = 15.3$ for emotional exhaustion and 27.4 for personal competence), and were much less severe than the patients in treatment for work related burnout ($M = 26.0$ for emotional exhaustion and

24.5 for personal competence). However, sex workers did score significantly higher ($M = 8.9$) than health care workers ($M = 6.8$) on depersonalization, but did not significantly differ from the scores of the patients in treatment for burnout ($M = 9.3$).

Sex workers' scores on stress symptoms were normally distributed, with a quarter of the sample experiencing them often, a quarter seldom/never, and the remainder of the sample in between. Almost one quarter of the sample reported having been the victim of violence in the past year, and 54% of the women had experienced work related stigma. In spite of these indicators of significant stress among some of the sex workers sampled, the majority of the women (70%) reported "hardly" or "almost never" used drugs.

Statistical regression showed which variables were associated with greater severity of burnout on the three factors. For emotional exhaustion, four out of 11 variables predicted the highest levels of variance (adjusted $R^2 = .53$): lack of social support by management, high rates of experienced stigma in private life and lack of personal support, lack of choice in working (i.e. being trafficked or forced into sex work), and negative work motivation (i.e., feeling that one had little choice in entering sex work, although they were not coerced by a third party). For depersonalization, four out of 12 variables again predicted the highest scores (adjusted $R^2 = .42$): violence on the job, lack of choice in working, degree of perceived control over sessions with clients, and the experience of stigma in one's personal life. Four out of 8 variables also explained the highest level of variance for burnout (adjusted $R^2 = .48$): professional working attitude, social support at work, older age, and working in a less structured, more informal working environment.

Overall, sex workers and health care workers exhibited comparable rates of burnout, with the exception of the higher score on depersonalization. While Vanwesenbeeck had

predicted that sex workers would be more likely to have higher scores of depersonalization, it did not appear that this was a healthy coping response as she had originally predicted. Depersonalization was associated with violence on the job, stigma, working in sex work against ones' choice, and feeling low perceived control over sessions with clients. The rates of stigma and violence reported in Vanwesenbeeck's study (2005) continue to reflect the marginalized position occupied by female sex workers, even in a state which has legalized sex work. However, the majority of the women who took part in this study reported that they entered the sex industry voluntarily. Further, most of the women sampled expressed high levels of control over interactions with client and enjoyed high rates of social support on the job from managers and colleagues. While the findings of this study suggest that sex work is not intrinsically detrimental to psychological well being, negative mental health outcomes among female sex workers emerged upon analysis of women's working circumstances and history of victimization.

While the studies cited above have been carried out mostly in European nations, a recent study of indoor sex workers in the New York metropolitan region conducted by the Sex Workers Project at the Urban Justice Center, a not-for-profit legal advocacy organization (Thukral, Ditmore, & Murphy, 2005) demonstrates that this group can be reached by researchers. This project not only sampled sex workers, it involved them in the research process from formulating questions for the interview protocol to providing feedback on study findings. Including sex workers in the research process not only helped to insure that the protocol was feasible, it also helped the research team to formulate questions that would be relevant to the participants and ideally, useful to the community

as a whole. Additionally, the participatory design of this research contributed to ‘community buy in’ for the project, which may have increased sex workers willingness to participate in the study. As earlier, unsuccessful efforts by Sanders (2004b) to recruit sex workers directly, without the benefit of pre-existing relationships to those in the community to be sampled remind us, socially marginalized, hidden groups such as indoor sex workers are frequently reluctant to engage with researchers- and for good reason, considering that the research has rarely proved beneficial to sex workers themselves.

Thukral et al’s (2005) study sampled an ethnically diverse group of sex workers, including women, men, and transgendered women, who worked in a variety of indoor venues ranging from private apartments to brothels to gang clubhouses, and included a number of individuals who advertised on the Internet (the researchers collapsed those who advertised in print and Internet media into one category, which comprised 48% of the total sample). Using a structured interview protocol, the research team assessed participants’ housing and financial resources, educational attainment, non-sex work employment, substance use, experiences with the criminal justice system, police, and clients (including harassment and violence) and access to needed services such as healthcare, legal representation, and public assistance.

As the work of Thukral and colleagues (2005) indicates, indoor sex workers may utilize a wide array of techniques for making contact with potential clients. Many of these require the involvement of a third party (such as a madam, escort agency, or pimp) who may exert varying levels of control over the sex workers’ working environment. However, this study also reached a group of indoor sex workers who have rarely been sampled in previous research: those who work independently, advertising their services in

a variety of print or broadband media, or who meet clients through referrals from other sex workers. One sub-group of these independently employed women, those who advertise on the Internet, constitutes a growing population who have yet to be sampled apart from other indoor sex workers.

The Present Study

As demonstrated in the literature reviewed above, there is evidence indicating that work venue plays a major role in shaping women's experience of sex work (Vanwesenbeeck, 1994, 2005). However, studies of 'female sex workers' continue to sample predominantly street based or impoverished women (Parsons, 2005; Vanwesenbeeck, 2001), and too often do not adequately acknowledge the limits to generalizability imposed by such samples (Pheterson, 1990; Weitzer, 2005). Indoor sex workers have been included in an increasing number of recent studies (Brewis & Linstead, 2000; Chapkis, 1997; Sanders, 2002; 2004; 2005a, 2005b, 2005c; Vanwesenbeeck, 1994; 2005); however these studies have been carried out in nations (with the partial exception of Chapkis' work in the Netherlands and the United States) where sex work is decriminalized or legally tolerated. While indoor sex workers in developed western nations undoubtedly share some degree of common experience, there are clear limits to generalizability presented when attempting to compare the working circumstances of women in Europe to indoor female sex workers who work in the United States, where sex work remains criminalized, further marginalizing an already marginal population (Lewis & Maticka-Tyndale, 2000). This legal context presents significant recruitment challenges to researchers who wish to sample indoor sex workers, who are not as publicly visible or accessible as their street based counterparts.

The advent of Internet technology has allowed sex workers a new venue through which to reach potential clients (Koken et al, 2004; Sanders, 2005b) - one that offers the possibility of removing the need for third party involvement. It is likely that independently employed, Internet advertising female sex workers differ from their street based, brothel based, or even agency based counterparts. Women who advertise for their services, screen their own clients, set their own fees and retain the profits may exert a much higher degree of control over their working circumstances than women who work through a third party. At the same time, very little is known about the potential racial, ethnic, and class diversity of Internet-based sex workers. The growth of escort advertising sites which feature profiles of sex workers with photographs, hyperlinks and ad text for a monthly fee (such as www.eros.com) as well as sites which offer an advertising venue free of charge (such as www.craigslist.org) indicate a potential economic and social hierarchy of sex workers who advertise online. The rapid growth of the Internet as a venue for sex workers, and specifically independent sex workers, has been noted (Sanders, 2004b; Thukral et al, 2005). Additionally, earlier research on male sex workers who advertise on the Internet (Koken et al, 2004; Parsons, Koken & Bimbi, 2004) indicates that this technological tool offers unique advantages to independent sex workers beyond print media advertisements which were common prior to Internet technology. This dissertation will expand on previous studies of sex work, which have often failed to distinguish between women who work independently (without the intervention of a third party) and those who work within brothels, escort agencies, or other structures which exert control over the working conditions of sex workers while retaining a portion of the women's earnings.

Study Aims

The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences of female Internet based sex workers who work independently and identify the ways in which they cope with the demands of the work. The present study utilizes a mixed methods approach, including a participatory research component similar to that used by Thukral and her colleagues (2005).

The specific aims are: 1) To identify the strategies utilized by independent Internet-based female sex workers to cope with the demands of performing emotional and sexual labor; 2) To identify the strategies utilized by these women to manage the impact of work-related stigma on their personal lives; 3) To compare the strategy types with those reported in previous studies of indoor sex workers (Chapkis, 1997; Sanders, 2005) in order to assess the ways in which working independently via the Internet shapes the experience of sex work; 4) To identify potential differences in coping strategies described by white women, women of color and immigrant women; and 5) To assess the relationship between women's coping strategies, demographic characteristics, and burnout.

Following the work of Chapkis (1997), Sanders (2002, 2004, 2005), and my own previous research on male Internet sex workers (Koken et al, 2004), I hypothesize that women in the proposed study will employ emotion work strategies similar to those described by Chapkis (1997) and Sanders (2005), such as the creation and management of a 'working identity' and the use of information management techniques such as those originally described by Goffman (1963) to minimize the impact of stigma. I also predict that among this highly specific group, levels of burnout will be lower than those reported

by Vanwesenbeeck (2005), as all the women in the proposed sample will have a greater degree of control over their working circumstances (when compared with brothel based women). Additionally, the proposed study aims to identify the personal characteristics of women who cope well and express satisfaction in their work, or conversely; those who suffer from burnout and feel unhappy in their work. It is hypothesized that women will differ significantly from samples of street based and general samples of 'indoor' workers, and will be highly diverse in their experiences of sex work.

Chapter 2:

Method

Phase I: Elicitation Research

Sex workers and sex worker advocates were consulted in the formative stages of the research to assess the feasibility of the research protocol as well as the relevance of the research questions to women who work as independent Internet advertising sex workers. During Phase I, key members of the sex work community were consulted as the study protocol was developed. Drawing on previously established contacts within the community, I emailed information about the study to five sex worker organizations (described below) who then forwarded the email on internal listservs, reaching an unknown number of recipients. Because it is impossible to know the number of individuals who received this initial email via listserv, I am unable to calculate the percentage of individuals who responded. I shared the interview protocol, survey measures, and IRB approved study description with nine individuals who responded to the initial email describing the project. In an effort to gather feedback from a diverse array of sex workers, advocates, and activists, I reached out to individuals who are active within the New York, national and international sex work community. These key informants included members of PONY (Prostitutes of New York), a sex work advocacy group, a member of the NWSP (Network of Sex Work Projects), an international group of sex work advocates and researchers, staff and volunteers from the Urban Justice Center's Sex Work Project, an advocacy and research group which provides services to sex workers in need of legal assistance, the Desiree Alliance, a group of researchers, sex workers, and advocates, and volunteers from \$pread Magazine, a magazine by sex

workers for sex workers which is staffed by a diverse group including sex workers of all genders who come together across many different sex work venues. The perspectives represented by these informants encompassed the domains of academia, law, policy, human rights, feminism, and sex work practitioners. These key informants provided feedback on the relevance of the study to the population, acceptability of the protocol, and feasibility of the methodology and recruitment.

The feedback from the nine community informants was overwhelmingly supportive and encompassed four domains: 1) appreciation of the sex work positive approach, 2) suggestions to explore sex worker's relationships with each other, both in person and online, 3) suggestions to measure drug use and other venues (i.e. street, agency, etc) where women may have previously worked, and 4) questions about how the Internet has shaped their experience of sex work. Members of the community expressed an eagerness to support the research and the majority of feedback suggested small changes to the study protocol; I received no emails discouraging me from undertaking the research project or suggesting substantial changes to the study protocol. One sex work advocate wrote:

I want to say thank you for embarking on such important and useful research that will play up people's strengths and coping mechanisms rather than focusing on the 'worst of the worst' of scenarios in sw [sex work]. I think this will really help others to get into the heads of sex workers who are trying to really make it work for their lives in such a hostile environment.

A PONY member advised that I explore the role of social support from other sex workers:

After a first read-through of the materials you sent me, the big thing that jumped out at me was that I think you should develop the line of questioning about relationships with other escorts, particularly through the internet. Not all relationships with colleagues will be with people who are in the same city or with people who the escort has met in person, and I think that other escorts are not only a great resource, but a big part of a support system that may have an effect on job satisfaction and burn-out.

A volunteer from \$pread magazine asserted the importance of measuring substance use:

In the paper survey, I do actually think it would be a good idea to put a few questions about drug and alcohol use into the survey, not because I subscribe to the stereotype that all sex workers use drugs/alcohol, but because I believe it is a really common way that people in general cope with difficult situations, be it as an escort, a grad student, or a 9-5er :)

The value in exploring past experience with non-Internet sex work venues was raised by some informants:

Will you know if anyone has previously worked as a street worker, prior to beginning his/her work as an escort? Perhaps if there's any questions asking if there's any difference between the way one handles difficult situations as a street worker as compared to an escort? However, I'm not exactly sure if you'll have enough of a former street worker sample to assess this, but it's an interesting question nonetheless.

Another common theme was the importance of the Internet itself, not only as a venue to meet clients but as a resource for working practices and support from escorts around the country:

It might be useful to ask questions about online media and social networking, like blog reading and writing... as well as the use of message boards and social networking sites like MySpace, both to attract clientele and to form community with other escorts. There are a lot of methods beyond traditional online advertising that escorts use to interact with their clients and colleagues.

After consulting with these informants, the following revisions to the study protocol were made: 1) Questions about drug use were added to the computer survey. As this step needed to pass through the IRB prior to inclusion in the study protocol, data collection was already underway when the drug use questions were incorporated into the survey. 2) The interview questions were amended to explore relationships with other sex workers, online or in person. 3) Prior experience with other sex work venues was added as a probe in the interview protocol. And 4) interview probes were inserted to compare women's experience with the Internet to other venues where they had worked, as well as their perceptions of how the Internet shaped their working experience. During the period in which I received feedback from community members and refined the study protocol, the pilot phase of the study was implemented.

Phase II: Pilot Study

In order to pilot the study protocol and assess the effectiveness of the interview protocol in addressing the study aims, a small pilot study was conducted before the implementation of the full study. Five women were recruited during the pilot phase and

completed the initial study protocol as outlined below. During the pilot phase it became clear that some potential study participants found the need to meet in person for the interview a barrier to participation. In order to allow women to participate in the study “remotely” a revised protocol was created that included interviews on the telephone and the computer survey was made available online through the website Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com). A PayPal account was opened so that remote participants could receive payment for their time in completing the phone interview and the computer based survey. These protocol revisions necessitated a second amendment to the IRB (following the first one to add questions about drug use). The “remote” protocol was therefore not offered to participants until January of 2008. As no major revisions to the interview and survey were made following the pilot, the pilot data is included in the final analysis.

Phase III: Initiation of Full Study

Sample and Recruitment

A nonprobabilistic, purposive sampling strategy was used to recruit participants into this study. The target sample size for the proposed study was initially 60 women, however it became clear during the data collection process that interview themes were beginning to reach saturation, with no new major themes emerging (theoretical saturation). Thus the target sample size was revised to 30 women who met study criteria. A growing body of literature on sample size in qualitative research posits that a sample of 20-30 individuals is sufficient to insure that both major themes as well as variety are obtained in phenomenological research (Creswell, 1998; Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006; Morse, 1994).

Recruitment techniques aimed to recruit an ethnically diverse sample. To be eligible for the study, women had to be at least 18 years of age (self reported), fluent in English, self-report having worked as an Internet advertising escort or sex worker in the 30 days prior to screening, and must make contact with the majority of their clients independently, without the intervention of a third party. For the purposes of this study, an ‘independent’ female escort was operationally defined as a self-identified woman who places advertisements for her escort services on websites, screens her own clientele, and keeps the entirety of the fees she collects from clients, with the exception of any fees she must pay to place advertisement of various websites. In other words, women who work primarily for escort agencies or madams, who generally take 50% or more of escort’s hourly rates, were not eligible for the proposed study. According to key informants, many women occasionally rely on client referrals through a ‘Madame’ or an escort agency during times when business is slow; for this reason women were not excluded if they earned a minor portion of their income through third party referrals. None of the women who ultimately participated reported earning more than a small portion of their earnings through agency or other third party contacts.

Recruitment

Women were invited to take part in the research project through a variety of outreach efforts. I began the recruitment process by reaching out to previously established contacts with key informants and community members. An email was sent to PONY members describing the research project and inviting participation as well as feedback about the study itself. Although this initial email did not result in any study volunteers, it was successful in raising awareness among women in the community about the project and

generated useful feedback regarding the project, as well as a significant amount of support and encouragement. An advertisement was placed in \$pread magazine, which resulted in two study volunteers, and also helped to raise awareness about the study and increase community 'buy-in'. The advertisement in \$pread read:

Got skills? Not everyone has what it takes to work successfully as an Internet escort. A researcher would like to interview you about how you make the most out of your business. Please take part in a research project that aims to recognize the strength and skills that escorts use to manage their work and personal life. You will be paid for your participation in a one-time interview, do NOT need to give your real name, and will not be asked any questions about childhood abuse or violence. For more information about this study, please contact Juline Koken by email at: jkoken@chestnyc.org, or call her at: (212) 206-7919, ext 254.

In order to reach beyond the limits of my social network within the sex worker community, and in order to ensure the diversity of the sample, I also directly emailed potential participants who advertised on escort websites. This was the primary method of recruitment into the project. Beginning in September of 2007, I sent personalized emails to women using the email addresses they posted on their Internet advertisements. The email read:

Hi (name featured in advertisement), I am a researcher conducting a study about the skills that escorts use to manage their business and personal life. I hope you don't mind me emailing you directly- this is the only email I will send to you. If you are interested in taking part in a research project that aims to recognize the strength and skills that escorts use to be successful in their work, please email me

back or call me for more information. You will be paid for your participation in a one-time interview, do NOT need to give your real name, and will not be asked any questions about childhood abuse or violence. My email is:

jkoken@chestnyc.org, and my phone number is: (212) 206-7919, ext 254. If you choose not to respond to this email, I will not attempt to contact you again. Thank you, Juline Koken

Between September 2007 and February of 2008, 570 individual emails were sent to potential study volunteers. Of these, 21 emails were returned due to invalid or inactive email accounts. Of the 549 emails that were not returned, 92 resulted in responses (a response rate of 16.75%). Seven women wrote back to decline participation in the project. One woman wrote to volunteer for the project, but reported having retired from escorting several months before; she was therefore ineligible for participation. Thirteen women wrote back with questions about the project but did not schedule an interview; some of these women requested to be contacted at a later date or requested contact should a phone version of the interview become available. When the remote version of the study protocol became available in January 2008, these women were re-contacted. However, none of the women who were re-contacted participated in the project.

In spite of efforts during the recruitment process to ‘oversample’ women of color (mainly by emailing *only* women of color when the white women in the sample began to outnumber women of color), the sample skewed white, due to fewer women of color featuring an email in their advertisement, as well as a lower response rate from women of color. Some white participants referred friends into the study who were also white. A notice about the project was also posted on a sex worker support website by a community

member who was in favor of the research project, and this resulted in raising awareness about the project. Some study volunteers who were contacted directly by me through their advertisements reported having heard about the project on this website. Over the course of recruitment, 39 of the 549 women who were emailed volunteered to participate and scheduled appointments, resulting in a response rate of 7.10%. However, 11 of these did not follow through with the appointment and did not participate in the project. With the two additional women who volunteered for the project after seeing the advertisement in *\$pread* magazine, the total sample reached 30.

Procedure

Once women agreed to participate in the research, an interview was scheduled at a time of their choosing. Women were offered the option of completing the interview at the research center where I am employed, the Center for HIV/AIDS Educational Studies and Training (CHEST), or at a private office at Hunter College, or at their home or hotel room. When the later addition of phone interviews and online surveys was added, this option was offered as well. Twenty-eight interviews were conducted in person, and two by telephone.

Measures

After providing informed consent, women completed a semi-structured, open-ended interview consisting of questions regarding 1) their working environment and ways of making contact with clients, 2) feelings about work (satisfaction/dissatisfaction), 3) strategies for marketing one's services and interacting with clients, 4) emotion management techniques for providing clients with a pleasurable interaction, 5) information management techniques regarding the disclosure of sex work to friends,

romantic partners, and family, 6) ways in which women access social support from other sex workers, friends, and family, 7) how women perceive sex work related stigma, 8) perceptions of how their age, skin color, body shape, and other individual characteristics impact their interactions with clients, and 9) ways in which women work to minimize their exposure to sex work related stigma. See Appendix A for the complete interview guide.

After completing the interview, women completed a brief questionnaire (Appendix B) using Audio Computer Assisted Self Interviewing (ACASI) software on a computer at the research center, on a portable laptop computer, or online using Survey Monkey, an Internet site that hosts surveys. The questionnaire included the Utrecht Burn-Out Scale for the Contractual professions (UBOS-C) (Schaufeli & van Dierendonck, 1995) a modified version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001) and further modified by Vanwesenbeeck in her study of burnout among sex workers in the Netherlands (Vanwesenbeeck, 2005). The UBOS-C, which is divided into three subscales assessing emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal competence, was chosen in order to allow direct comparisons between Vanwesenbeeck's sample and the present sample. The UBOS-C has two fewer items than the Maslach Burnout Inventory; these were deleted due to poor psychometric properties (Schaufeli & Van Dierendonck, 1993). The modified UBOS-C used by Vanwesenbeeck (2005) had alpha coefficients of .90 for emotional exhaustion, .59 for depersonalization, and .70 for personal competence. In this sample, the alpha coefficients were even better: .89 for emotional exhaustion; .75 for depersonalization; and .84 for personal competence.

Data from standardized measures were analyzed using SPSS 14.0. In order to explore levels of burnout within the sample, each subscale was divided into high, moderate, and low burnout scores, as recommended by Maslach and colleagues (1996). The present study utilized cut off scores delineated by Hayter (2000), who measured burnout among a group of nurses. A sum total for each of the subscales was calculated for each case, and these scores were then recoded into a category as high burnout (3), moderate burnout (2), or low burnout (1). The cut off points specified by Hayter for the emotional exhaustion subscale were 0-16 for low burnout, 17-26 for moderate burnout and 27-48 for high burnout. Examining the frequency distribution of burnout scores for emotional exhaustion in the present sample, the range was 1-35, whereas the potential range of the scale is 1- 48, indicating the distribution was skewed towards low burnout. Reflecting this, in my sample over half of the women (60%) were classified in the low burnout category according to Haytor's scoring algorithm. Another 25% were classified in my sample as mid-level burnout according to Haytor's algorithm and 10% of the sample was classified as high burnout having scores of 28 or more. Although this distribution does not divide the sample into tertials, it does reflect the actual distribution of the scale, and accurately captures the phenomenon of high burnout.

The survey also assessed demographic characteristics (age, race/ethnicity, and place of birth, educational attainment, sexual identity, and relationship status) as well as other factors which may impact women's experience of sex work, such as number of clients per week, types of sexual and erotic services offered, and condom use with clients and personal partners. Women's access to needed services such as health care, housing, counseling and legal advocacy was also assessed.

Participants were compensated \$100 for their time and participation. Funding was provided through the Center for HIV/ AIDS Educational Studies and Training. All procedures were approved by the Institutional Review Board of the Graduate Center as well as Hunter College of the City University of New York. Any identifying information was removed during transcription of the interviews.

Data Analysis

The development of a qualitative codebook and subsequent coding of the interview data followed a modified form of team-driven analysis described by MacQueen and colleagues (MacQueen, McLellan, Kay, & Milstein, 1998). Team driven qualitative analysis expands the potential range of interpretations of data through the addition of others' perspectives. Clearly, the inclusion of a sex work community advocate in the coding team enriched the possible range of views on interview themes. Additionally, the development of the codebook and subsequent team based coding help to ensure the reliability and validity of the codes (MacQueen et al, 1998). The coding team was comprised of the PI and two additional trained coders, one of whom was a member of the sex work advocacy community; the other coder was a volunteer research assistant. The coding process followed a number of steps:

- 1) The first five pilot interviews were transcribed and reviewed by the coding team in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the preliminary interview protocol in eliciting the intended themes outlined in the study aims. Each member of the coding team individually reviewed the five transcripts and created a brief written report which assessed the interview data for a) fit with study aims, b) perceived acceptability of the interview protocol to the participant, and c) unexpected themes which arise from the interviews and

indicate the need for inclusion of additional questions to the interview protocol. The transcripts were also read through to assess the degree to which participants offered narratives about their experiences with minimal probing, an indication of the clarity and acceptability of the interview protocol as well as the interviewer's skill in building rapport with participants. The coding team then met to review and compare the reports they have created according to the criteria outlined above.

2) Following the review of the interview protocol, I drafted an initial codebook of 'structural' codes (MacQueen et al, 1998) guided by the study aims: information management techniques, the creation of work identity, emotion work, feelings and attitudes towards work, and statements regarding satisfaction/dissatisfaction and perceived control over interactions with clients. As recommended by MacQueen and colleagues (1998), the codebook included a definition for each code, inclusion and exclusion criteria for the code, and an example of text that would be appropriate for this code. The team began a series of weekly meetings following the creation of this initial codebook. The team members applied the structural codes to the same initial transcript and met to review the results. Discrepancies between team member's coding reports were resolved through discussion and collaborative revision of code definitions as necessary. A revised draft of the codebook was then created.

The coding team met a total of seven times before finalizing the codebook, and coded a total of ten interviews through consensus. These ten interviews were selected to provide a wide variety of participant perspectives during the development of the codes. The 30 interview transcripts were then loaded into an NVIVO project file, and the codes which had been applied to the 10 consensually coded interviews were applied in NVIVO.

I then coded the remaining 20 transcripts using the final structural codebook developed by the coding team.

The third coding stage took place after analyses of the burnout scale. The three levels of burnout (high, moderate and low) for the emotional exhaustion subscale provided a guideline for the third stage of coding, in which interview transcripts were organized into groups according to burnout level and, sub-themes within the initial structural codes were identified. These ‘meta themes’ will be illustrated in the results section through the use of selected quotes which exemplify each theme.

Chapter 3:

Results

Participant Characteristics

The sample was diverse in terms of country of birth, age and body type, and less so for ethnicity (see Table 1 for demographics). The sample had a high educational attainment: 23.3% were currently enrolled in a college or graduate school, and over one third had a bachelor degree or higher. Nearly all in the sample (90%, $n = 27$) had at least some college. The women ranged in age from 21 to 57 (all ages were self reported), with a mean age of 33.9.

Reported income was high as well: 40% of the women ($n = 12$) chose “\$75,000 or more” per year, the highest option listed in the income response items; 63% ($n = 19$) reported earning \$50,000 and above. One woman refused to answer this question. The mode rate for escorting services among white women was \$500.00 per hour, while women of color reported a mode rate of \$400.00 per hour, although this difference did not reach significance. However, no woman of color reported a rate above \$500 per hour, while one-third of the white women reported rates above \$500 an hour, ranging up to \$1,000 per hour.

The majority of the women self identified as heterosexual (63.3%, $n = 19$), 30% ($n = 9$) identified as bisexual, the two transgender women identified as “queer” and “other.” The sample were mainly single (63%, $n = 19$), although one third (33.3%, $n = 10$) reported having a male partner (none reported having a female main partner). One woman (3%) reported being legally married, but was separated from her husband.

All but one of the women in the sample reported having been tested for HIV. Of the women who reported being tested, all reported receiving an HIV negative result, except for one woman who refused to answer this question. The average number of clients women estimated seeing on a typical week ranged from 1 to 30, with a mean of 5.9. Condom use for intercourse with clients was reported as “100% of the time, no exceptions” by a majority of the sample ($n = 23$, 76.7%); a smaller number reported using condoms for intercourse “usually, with few exceptions” ($n = 6$, 20%). One woman (3%) reported “sometimes” using a condom for intercourse, and this response was inconsistent with her interview transcript, raising the possibility of respondent error. Rates of condom use for oral sex with clients were lower and more variable, with more than one third of the sample ($n = 11$, 36.7%) reporting using a condom for oral sex “100% of the time, no exceptions”. Six women (20%) reported using condoms for oral sex “usually, with few exceptions”, three women (10%) “sometimes” using a condom for oral sex, and one third ($n = 10$, 33.3%) “almost never.”

Burnout

Inter-correlations found that emotional exhaustion and depersonalization were highly positively correlated ($r = .53$, $p < .01$). Personal competence was negatively correlated with depersonalization ($r = -.615$, $p < .01$) and not related to emotional exhaustion. In order to test the hypothesis that sex workers in this sample would score lower on burnout than those sampled in Vanwesenbeeck’s (2005) study due to higher levels of autonomy on the job, an independent samples t-test was conducted for each of the three subscales. None of the tests was significant (emotional exhaustion [$M = 16.87$ v. 14.9 ; $F(1, 28) = 0.004$, $p = .952$]; depersonalization [$M = 7.1$ v. 8.9 ; $F(1, 28) = 1.254$, $p = .272$]; and

personal competence [$M = 29.03$ v. 27.5 ; $F(1, 28) = 2.564$, $p = .121$]). Next, burnout levels were compared for white women and women of color. Women of color scored significantly higher on each subscale: emotional exhaustion [$M = 14.42$ v. 22.56 ; $F(1, 28) = .072$, $p = .02$]; depersonalization [$M = 4.95$ v. 12.11 ; $F(1, 28) = .773$, $p = .000$]; and personal competence [$M = 30.67$ v. 25.22 ; $F(1, 28) = .332$, $p = .05$]. In fact, five of the seven women who met criteria for “high burnout” on the emotional exhaustion scale were women of color. Overall, while the majority of women in the sample scored low or moderate on the burnout measures, it appears that race plays a significant role in women’s level of burnout. An independent t-test was conducted to check differences in burnout by rate per hour (less than or greater than \$400 per hour); none were significant: emotional exhaustion [$M = 17.25$ v. 16.61 ; $F(1, 28) = .034$, $p = .855$], depersonalization [$M = 8.42$ v. 6.22 ; $F(1, 28) = 1.254$, $p = .272$] and personal competence [$M = 26.58$ v. 30.67 ; $F(1, 28) = 2.564$, $p = .121$].

Interview Themes

The interview data yielded a rich array of experiences and perspectives on the personal meaning of sex work. The interview results will be reported here clustered into narrative themes, and variations within each theme will be explored as these relate to women’s scores on the burnout subscales. Broadly, the qualitative themes encompassed the perceived benefits of working independently, emotion management at work, disclosure, the experience of stigma, and race and the experience of racism. The personal competence subscale was not found to correlate with emotional exhaustion or depersonalization subscales, reflecting some other construct. Scores on the emotional exhaustion subscale were utilized as the primary indicator of burnout, for two reasons.

First, this subscale has been found to be the strongest indicator of burnout this in previous research on service industry workers (Hayter, 2000) and is related most closely to the experience of emotional labor. Second, the scores on the emotional exhaustion subscale guided the qualitative analyses following the initial “structural coding” which was applied by the coding team. However, at times scores on the depersonalization and personal competence scales are referenced, particularly when women scored high or low in burnout across all subscales or when the score related to a particular theme described in the quote.

In the presentation of findings, quotes from women’s narratives here will be accompanied by their ID number, race, age, and amount charged per hour. This information contextualizes women’s experiences with demographic and economic factors that shape their experience. Table Five presents an overview of the main qualitative themes organized by burnout level on the emotional exhaustion subscale.

Perception of Autonomy in Independent Escorting

The decision to target a highly specific population for this study – independent female escorts – was guided by the assumption that such women would experience greater perceived control over their work than women employed through third parties such as escort agencies, madams, and brothels. This assumption was borne out by interview narratives regarding the differences between independent escorting and working for others. Working independently is in itself not a coping strategy per se, nor were narratives regarding the perceived benefits of working independently associated with higher or lower levels of burnout. However, it is important to consider women’s

perception of on the job autonomy before exploring their coping strategies for dealing with work related stigma and the demands of the work.

The main benefits of working independently related to greater profit as well as having increased control over working conditions. Many of the women reported previous experiences working with an escort agency prior to transitioning to independent escorting out of a desire to improve their working experiences:

Usually they [escort agencies] take a 50/50 split . . . sometimes they try to make you work when you don't want to work . . . You don't know who you're going to. They tell you his name, they tell you all the information, but ultimately you don't get to speak to the client before you get to them. So you don't know what they're like. They could be someone who you normally would not have made an appointment with. I've had few bad situations with that [as an independent].

[P007, WH, age 28, \$1,000]

In addition to the reduced profit associated with splitting fees with third parties, many women resented not being able to select their own clients. One woman who had worked at a brothel described her feelings about the working conditions there:

But there's still this competitiveness in that environment. If somebody came in and said "can I choose?" then you all stood up like a piece of meat to have somebody come in and say "yeah, I want her." [P012, WH, age 36, \$500]

Many women emphasized that the profit motives of escort agencies reduced their concern for women's well being. In this way working for an escort agency was viewed as being risky:

I found out very quickly that the agency really did not care about me as a human being. They just cared about the money that was coming in and whatever happened to me is whatever happened to me. [P023, WH, age 53, \$350]

Other women who had not previously working with third parties expressed a view of agencies as at best, unnecessary and at worst, exploitative. One summarized the benefits of working independently this way:

I've not worked with an agency. . . . I don't want to give somebody half the money I make. And I take much better care of myself than any escort [agency] would, because I've had some really close friends work for escort agencies and they were absolutely miserable. [Q: Tell me more about that – how is independent different?] Everything is in my hands. I pick who I feel I can get along with in person and feel safe with. I screen them myself, and I get to keep all the money. I pick my prices: I lower them when I really need the money or if I like the guy, or I raise them if I feel like I can get away with it or if the guy has a lot of money . . . I call the shots all the time. [P024, API/WH, age 35, \$150]

As these quotes illustrate, the ability to “call the shots” and keep all of one’s profits were primary in women’s motivations for working independently. The perception of having increased control on the job by working independently than through a third party was pervasive throughout the sample, independent of women’s level of burnout.

Emotion Management on the Job

The task of managing emotions in service of providing the client with a seemingly authentic emotional and erotic experience (what Elizabeth Bernstein [2007] terms “bounded authenticity”) is an essential part of working as an escort. Emotion

management encompasses everything from creating a ‘working identity’, as originally described by Sanders (2005), as well as surface or deep acting (Chapkis, 1997, Hochschild, 1983) while engaging with clients. These emotion management strategies place a demand on sex worker’s resources. For women low in burnout, the sense of satisfaction in performing this service successfully for clients was highly rewarding; some women felt so much pleasure in providing the service that the ‘labor’ nearly disappears from their narrative. For women who experienced burnout, however, the energy needed to perform emotional and erotic labor was experienced as highly draining of personal reserves and frequently produced dissonance with their “true” emotions. The narrative themes which emerged from the coding of high and low burnout transcripts explored the range of experiences providing emotional labor and highlight the different coping styles of women low and high in emotional exhaustion.

Women low in emotional exhaustion frequently emphasized the pleasurable aspects of socializing with clients. Although these interactions were expressly framed as work, it was work that left women feeling satisfied, recharged, or at the very least, untroubled.

The reason why I do this is because it’s easy mentally. Very easy. A little conversation, you have about 20 min, let’s say it’s an hour session, a little conversation [and then] 15, 20 minutes where you don’t talk where you’re in the action so mentally it’s very easy and then goodbye, you know? So if it’s gonna be on my mind, I’m don’t wanna have to think about that client a little too much because there’s too many emails or- then uh then it defeats the purpose of why I’m doing this. . . I prefer having a sore bottom than a sore head. [P002, WH, age 34, \$600]

This woman's experience of working as "easy" may be a result of her careful screening and selection of clients that minimizes the amount of energy spent on clients who are time wasters or emotionally or sexually demanding in some way. This could be conceptualized as a form of anticipatory coping, whereby the women anticipate the potential stressor of working with an annoying client and turn such clients away.

The art of advertising to attract desirable clientele also emerged as a major theme among women who were low in emotional exhaustion. These women worked to attract clientele they would find easiest to work with, and thus increase the likelihood of optimal experiences on the job:

What I've learned over the years especially in working independently is that the absolute best way to market yourself is to try to find as many like-minded people to attract to you as you can. You know, don't try and market yourself to the people that aren't on the same page as you, or have different likes and all of that. You know, the more real that you can be, the more that you can put of yourself out there as a person, with still maintain certain boundaries about your personal life, um that is going to encourage like-minded people, better chemistry, better repeat clients, and all of that . . . And then you enjoy your work. [P021, WH, age 40, \$400]

The ability to successfully screen out unpleasant clients, or choose to let go of clients who are experienced as unpleasant may be thought of as a way of keeping emotional "money in the bank." These women draw on their experiences in sex work to anticipate potentially stressful situations and combine approach coping strategies (advertising to

attract the “right” kind of client) with avoidance coping strategies (refusing certain clients), being highly selective about their clientele.

Surface Acting, Burnout, and Emotional Dissonance

Emotional dissonance, the experience of perceiving one’s “true” emotions as conflicting with one’s behavior, is a source of distress for sex workers who feel their work is conflict with their personal values or that their true feelings about clients are highly discrepant with those they must display to clients in session. The phenomenon of emotional dissonance has been found to make a significant contribution to predicting burnout among workers performing emotional labor (Zapf, Siefert, Schmutte, Mertini & Holz, 2001). Women who were medium to high in emotional exhaustion were often required to engage in surface acting: feigning emotions, such as pleasure, for the benefit of the client while attempting to hide one’s true negative feelings. The performance of surface acting is a coping strategy necessitated by feelings of emotional dissonance, and may be a source of stress in itself when women perceive the unpleasant aspects of sex work as unavoidable.

In contrast to the approach coping strategies outlined by women low in emotional exhaustion, women high in burnout who reported experiencing emotional dissonance about their work spent as little energy as possible creating their advertisement and ‘working self’ as a way of distancing themselves from the work. This could be thought of as a form of avoidance focused coping, whereby women work to minimize their exposure to work related stress by rushing through work and work related tasks. For these women, advertising, screening clients, and ultimately the session itself were unpleasant tasks and a means to an end:

I guess I'm more just a mainstream, general type of thing. I have not created, you know, kind of a personae per se, you know. Uh I'm not so into it where I, you know, make it—I probably should. I'm a bad business woman as far as that goes because I don't like the business and I kind of do it because I have to. I am kind of trapped. And so I don't really take that time to create a persona to, you know to really go all out. I just kind of do it half-heartedly. . . So, I don't know. Eighty-five percent [of clients] I guess I have to say I just, you know, you're a blue collar schmuck that just can't—I can't hold a conversation, can't speak, can't, you know, it's just like, Hi. How are you? What do you do?" "Computers." I'm like, "Oh, okay. What of those? Okay. Computers. Alright. Well, come over here." It's just like, "Do it and get the hell out of my face." [P020, WH, age 52, \$200]

For this woman, feeling “trapped” in sex work left her unmotivated to invest personal resources in her business. This participant reported being deeply religious and experienced sex work as in conflict with her own moral values, placing her in a state of emotional dissonance. Although she had been working in sex work for more than a decade, she had resisted developing a “sex worker identity” and coped with the work by minimizing her involvement with it (avoidance coping) and detaching her emotions during the experience as much as possible (emotion focused coping).

Women who scored high in emotional exhaustion were most likely to report such emotional dissonance, and this feeling was associated with a perception that a threat (such as an unpleasant client) could not be avoided entirely. Thus women experiencing emotional dissonance often described maladaptive coping strategies, such as drinking, for unpleasant work situations. This pattern can be seen in a narrative offered by one woman

who described herself as likely to continue seeing a particularly unpleasant client:

[Q: And so, if you go see him again, how might you handle the experience in a way, like, is there a way that you could improve the session you think? So that it would be easier for you?] That's a good question. I would have a drink first. [Q: How would that help?] It would loosen me up a bit. Because, that day, I guess I saw two clients that day? No, I saw one client that day. But he wore me out. And, I would have a drink. And I'll just concentrate on him more. I won't think about his place, I won't think about how he smells; I'll just talk to him more. [P028, AA, age 26, \$400]

In this woman's narrative, avoidance focused coping is aimed at blunting the negative aspects of work and enduring a difficult situation. She employs a cognitive coping strategy (avoiding negative thoughts about the client) and speculates that alcohol may assist her in deadening her own negative emotions. Consuming alcohol as a type of avoidance coping strategy was a recurring theme for women high in emotional exhaustion:

And definitely if I've had a drink of alcohol, it takes the edge off—the anesthesia, the little glow in it. It makes it a lot easier. And it makes it more fun. That's not something I want to keep. The drinking and drugging kind of go with the territory, but for me, alcohol would be the drug of choice simply because it's there. And if I've had a hard time with someone or just a stressful time where it was just more of the work out than I've anticipated, having a drink of alcohol—it's the anesthesia of taking away distress. I'm more inclined to smile after a stressful session if I've had a drink than if I've not. [P023, WH, age 53, \$350]

For women high in emotional exhaustion, even less unpleasant clients were experienced as draining:

So yeah, definitely it took a lot of me, like, I'm speaking with him and stuff, that's nice, but when he started to flirt with me and get intimate, I kind of got queasy, um, that's a problem that I have, um, I need to work on. But, I played it off, I always play it off. But that took a lot of emotional uh, energy. And then things started getting physical, and then my physical energy was being used as well. [P028, AA, 26 years old, 400\$]

This participant scored in the highest range for emotional exhaustion, raising the possibility that her coping strategies for managing the stress of working with clients are outpaced by the strain of performing the work. She was relatively new to the sex industry as well (had been working for less than three months); with time and greater experience on the job, it is possible that she may change her coping strategies for working with clients. Alternatively, the stress associated with this work may provide the impetus to move into other forms of labor.

Burnout also surfaced in some women's narratives regarding the energy needed to produce the expected emotional performance in sessions with clients. For women scoring high on emotional exhaustion, putting on this show was experienced as emotionally dissonant, necessitating a draining display of surface acting:

I guess that's what my acting technique comes in. Although uh, to be honest with you, lately, I haven't felt like being much of an actress. . . I mean the oohs and the ahs and pretending that, oh, yeah baby. That's so wonderful. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Ooh, yeah, mm-hmm. Okay. So, I mean practice, practice, practice. If

it's—for me the aphrodisiac is the money. [P023, WH, age 53, \$350]

In this narrative, the inspiration to perform is drawn from the financial incentive. This theme was common among narratives indicating a somewhat negative orientation to performing sex work, where money was seen as the *only* positive aspect of an otherwise distasteful experience. One woman who scored low on emotional exhaustion, but high on depersonalization put it like this:

I don't think about the client really at all. And then when I'm with the client I don't really focus on what I'm doing, I'm just thinkin' about, "ok how much longer? Do I have another client booked after this?" That's what I'm thinking. I'm countin' the money, I'm not really even thinking about the client. [P004, API, age 24, \$300].

This emotion focused coping strategy ('just think of the money') helps to focus thoughts on the incentives of the transaction with the client while shifting thoughts away from aspects of the interaction ('what I'm doing') that are less pleasurable, a form of avoidance coping. It is possible that this woman scored low on the emotional exhaustion subscale *because* she was successful in nearly editing out the client in her thoughts about work ("counting the money"). Conversely, her attitude toward clients displays a marked separation of emotions from work, which makes her high score on depersonalization understandable.

Clients with racist fantasies and negative perceptions of African-American women's worth were reported by each of the African-American women in the sample, and powerfully impacted African-American women's experience of escorting. The emotional dissonance caused by providing services to such men placed an extra burden

on the African-American escorts in this sample, who as a result engaged in avoidance coping strategies such as emotional disengagement:

One, one of the things which bothered me, and I had no idea, that a lot of white men have this black slave fantasy. And it kind of bothers me, but I just, I just try to separate my emotions from it and say, this is just a role play, this is just entertainment. It's not real life. Oh they just, uh – what do they expect? They display like need to say that they're – sometimes when they want me to call them their master – their white master. Or, um, well they, want, they want to be my slave. A lot of them have this big black goddess fantasy and they, they get very turned on despite being subjected to this black woman who's going to boss – a bossy black woman who's just gonna tell 'em where to go and uh, tell 'em what to do, and boss 'em around, be aggressive. . . I just go along with it but I, I'm not really into it so I like to – cause I just – it feels silly, I'm still new I feel silly when they ask me to do this but, I hear about these dominatrixes [sic] and they're making lots of money and they're not even, um, performing full service with the whole fantasy and I'd like to get into that. [P001, AA, 23 years old, \$400]

In this woman's experience, the financial and physical incentive (more money, less sexual contact) to provide a service which she personally felt uncomfortable with compelled her to engage in an emotion focused coping strategy. Because her own feelings about the man's fantasy (feeling 'bothered' or 'silly') and her desire to successfully sell this experience were dissonant, the effort required to convey a believable emotional display to the client caused the 'work' of emotional labor to consciously surface. The participant quoted above reported that working regularly

resulted in negative emotions and the need to take breaks from seeing clients:

It really depends on when I want to work because usually you work for a week, like you're really busy and then you just get so depressed you don't want to work the next week. Or you just get sick of, being touched. [P001, AA, 23 years old, \$400]

This statement hints at the burnout this woman experiences due to the negative emotions and experiences she faces on the job. Her scores on all three of the burnout subscales reflected the high level of burnout apparent in this narrative. As this woman's experiences indicate, client racism may have played a role in the high rates of burnout for the African-American women in this sample. It should be noted, however, that narratives from the Asian women who participated in this project did not mirror the experiences of African-American women's. While Asian women reported that men found their race appealing, few reported encountering clients with fantasies they found offensive or stereotypes about their ethnicity.

Deep Acting and Empathy: Producing Emotional Congruence

In contrast, women low in emotional exhaustion endeavored to invest their emotions in their work through *liking* their clients (approach coping), even dropping clients they felt unable to connect with (avoidance coping). These women were highly empathic, thus increasing the likelihood that interactions with clients would feel 'smooth' and relatively congruent with the women's own emotional reactions in session:

I had one guy from Turkey who was 24 and like has three apartments like in London, Paris, and New York and was really successful and he's my age, you know, and he's just like lonely because of his job and I empathize with him you

know so I try and relate to him and the most empathetic way, like the way a girlfriend would like I'm more, some clients are more empathetic, you know? Or you know, and I understand too, like being in a marriage a long time and wanting to stay in it for your kids but there hasn't been sex in a couple years, like I mean I empathize with that, too but I think it comes down to whether or not I like and respect the person, you know, as far as how I perceive them but I won't have sex with someone that I just despise like I've, I ended one relationship that was like um, he was just, I just I didn't like his politics, I didn't like the way, he was very patronizing to me I didn't like it so I just stopped seeing him, so. [P008, WH, age 23, \$1000]

This woman's narrative demonstrates the balance between providing an emotional service to the client (through empathizing) and protecting one's own sense of emotional integrity (by refusing clients whom she did not respect). Thus she utilizes both emotion focused coping as well as avoidance coping to minimize the potential for on the job stress. Her emphasis on emotional connection and liking of clients is in contrast with the emotional dissonance reported by women who had negative feelings about their work.

For women low in emotional exhaustion, work was framed as much more than selling sex, or even selling a "girl friend experience." One common theme that emerged across the narratives of women low in emotional exhaustion was sex work as an opportunity to positively impact the life of the client:

I think that—a lot of people think that we are in the business of selling sex. And I don't think we are. I think that the sex is a vehicle to get us into a place where a lot of healing and connection and love can be made. Um, you know, sex gives us

the opportunity, you know, to get them in the door or to make the connection.

Um, but it's not the reason that we're there and it's, um, you know, orgasms are great and everybody loves them but I mean, we can give these to ourselves. But what we can't give to ourselves is what they come here for. You know, it's the connections—the two souls, you know, coming together. It's just that little glimpse of heaven that everybody wants and it's so nice to know that someone can leave their busy day and take a little vacation for a few hours and go out and not have the road rage that they might have had, and then be nicer to their families, and feel like more of a man, and have more self confidence, and be more successful in their life. You know, because they are able to take a little bit of time for themselves. So, I mean, I get that. [P021, WH, age 40, \$400]

Here sex work can be “making love” or even “a little glimpse of heaven.” This participant (who scored low on all three burnout subscales) also described having frequent orgasms with clients, although she was careful to emphasize the emotional boundaries between working relationships and personal relationships (notably, she was one of the few women in the sample who was open with her boyfriend about her work). Her approach focused coping strategy – creating empathy in herself and aligning her own emotions with the performance of emotional labor – exemplifies the satisfaction that women low in emotional exhaustion drew from their work with clients.

From Empathy to Exhaustion: The Cost of Emotional Engagement

Some women experienced emotional exhaustion as a result of experiences with clients that were almost ‘too positive.’ These women found themselves crossing emotional boundaries with clients they liked, and suffering negative consequences when

a relationship with a client could not provide real emotional sustenance:

Well, I've learned the hard way that once I did fall in love—twice really—I fell in love with two particular gentlemen and after a while, a number of years, the one guy just kind of started to pull away from me and I—I was upset. And then, in case of the other guy, he got a brain tumor. But he wanted to keep having this e-mail relationship going and my heart was breaking and I wanted to be with him, I want to see him, I want—and I saw that finally, thank God, this cannot happen. This cannot happen. I have to take my heart, my emotions and say, okay, you're over here. Now, it's almost as though—I hate to say that I'm a psychologist or that I have to be the clinician, the technician, the whatever, the Barbie doll—or surrogate and then, this is work, my bed is my desk, okay? Goodbye. [P023, WH, age 53, \$350]

This woman recommits to a professionalization of her emotions and sexual labor (“this bed is my desk”) in order to preserve her own emotional health. This requires a conscious reframing of emotions from the personal to the professional; an emotion focused coping strategy that helps her to protect her “true” feelings which engaging in emotional labor. This strategy may also be conceptualized as a form of avoidance coping, as she works to avoid emotionally engaging with clients as a perceived threat to her emotional health.

Women often related feelings about their work that had changed over time. For some women currently experiencing higher levels of emotional exhaustion, work that had once been enjoyable and even rewarding had come to seem tiresome.

I don't really do a whole lot of mental preparation [for a session] to be honest. You know, like if I'm uncomfortable for some reason about going into it, I don't know I just, I just suck it up and do it, you know? (Laughs). . . Yeah, yeah. I used to have a lot more, I don't know if patience is the right word. I used to be a lot more open minded. Like I, I used to get a lot more satisfaction from providing great service for everybody no matter how old they were, how fat they were, I took a lot of pride in really like being the best, you know? Now I'm just kind of like "eh" (laughs) I don't get as much satisfaction out of that. [P005, WH, age 39, \$300]

This woman, who was currently enrolled in graduate school and hoping to transition out of sex work, had experienced a significant change in her feelings about sex work over the time she had worked in the industry. Although her attitude about the work itself was not markedly negative, other aspects of it had become increasingly wearying. She relied on avoidance focused coping strategies such as emotion suppression ("suck it up and go") when faced with an unpleasant work situation. For her and many other women who participated in the study, the need for keeping their involvement with sex work a secret added to the stress they experienced on the job.

Disclosure: The Emotional Impact of Openness or Secrecy

Social isolation was a common theme among the narratives of women who scored high on emotional exhaustion. The stigma associated with sex work shaped women's decisions regarding disclosure of their work to friends and in an effort to protect themselves from the judgments of outsiders, many women lost access to potential sources of social support. Ironically, the avoidance coping strategy they employed, keeping their work a secret in order to protect themselves from a loss of social status, resulted in a

maladaptive outcome: social isolation and loneliness.

Well I'm, I don't have any really, close friends right now. I've been distancing myself from people. . . I just, a lot of my energy has been focused on my work- that I don't want to, expose them to any baggage that I may have. And then, if anyone does find out [about escorting], I don't want- I'm just afraid of getting found out. By these folks because- a lot of people know that I'm very open minded sexually and stuff, but they don't know how open I am, so. I don't know how they're going to react. I guess I'm kind of afraid of how they're going to react, and then also, I honestly don't know. I guess I'm kind of ashamed of what I do, and I don't want them to know. [Q: What's shameful about it?] That I went to school, I went all the way up to grad school, and I have to do this work, and I can't even do what I went to school for. So it's not the sex work per se; it's that I can't get a job doing what I went to school for. For years. [P028, AA, age 26, \$400]

This woman's feelings of shame about her work were linked to a sense of having lost status or 'failed' as a highly educated woman aspiring to a prestigious career. Her strategy of avoiding the potential judgments of friends by not telling them about escorting may be framed as a form of avoidance coping. Unfortunately, she may have diminished the amount of social support she might have received from friends by keeping her work a secret- which may have contributed to her high burnout scores (she scored high on emotional exhaustion and personal competence and moderate on the depersonalization subscale).

In another woman's narrative, social isolation appeared to play a role in her attitude change towards her work:

I used to be a lot more high profile. Um, I have an ad on [website] uh you know a few photographs and then my face is kind of blurred out just enough so that people won't recognize me on the street. And just enough for you know to create plausible deniability (laughs). . . Um yeah it's pretty isolating. Um and when I moved, my friends in Phoenix knew I was pretty open about it and when I moved to New York like I moved to New York because you know I wanted to start uh, uh a career and I just kind of kept it quiet, you know? I just figured it was best to kind of keep it discreet so it doesn't pop up. And it ended up being very isolating. You know it's like it's hard to get close to people because people ask you questions about what you do for work and you know I, I'm not really good at lying. [P005, WH, age 39, \$300]

In this woman's earlier experience of sex work (in Phoenix), she had many friends in and out of the industry and was open about her work, thus receiving solid social support. However, a move to a new city and a decision to go 'into the closet' as a sex worker resulted in a loss of this support. Ironically, the decision to switch to a new 'non-disclosure' policy in her case was not due to personally negative attitudes about sex work, but rather a pragmatic choice aimed at protecting her aspiring non-sex work career path.

These narratives stand in striking contrast to the experiences related by another woman who scored in the lowest range of burnout on each of the subscales. For this woman, the act of 'coming out' as an escort to her friends and family marked the

beginning of a period of positive adjustment to sex work. This is especially notable as she had initially entered sex work out of financial desperation and had felt highly conflicted on an emotional and moral level about her involvement:

Well I'm out, I'm actually out everyone. Like all my friends know, my family knows yeah so I'm completely out with it. . . and talking about burnout, I think the biggest contributor to burnout is not having a support system. You know, that's where it is, that's where most of your conflict lies is that whole "oh am I gonna be judged? How's it gonna be if my mom finds out? How's it gonna be if my boyfriend finds out? Or is my best friend since kindergarten gonna disown me because now all of a sudden I'm doing this." [Q: All the consequences.] And all of that stress. I mean of course there's stress involved in the business regardless but when you couple that on top of everything else that there's no changing the other, certain other factors that are stressors in the business, you know? But when you can take out the variable of having a support system in place um I think that really is one of the biggest keys of reducing burnout for me. And that was when I stopped being conflicted about it, really. [P012, WH, age 36, \$500]

Although this woman initially entered with what could have been framed as a "negative orientation towards the work", one of the factors which can predict burnout (Vanwesenbeeck, 2005), she made the decision to be open with loved ones about her work and experienced increase social support as a result. Her approach coping strategy (coming out and seeking support) resulted in a relief from the stress associated with anticipated judgment from loved ones. This participant, who self-identified as feminist earlier in this narrative, explained some of her some of her initial resistance to the stigma

associated with prostitution as a reluctance to internalize or reinforce the “virgin / whore” sexual double standard. This woman also frequently “toured” (traveled to various cities to expand her client base) with close friends who were also escorts, thus surrounding herself with supportive others. Two of her friends later participated in the study and they were indeed “birds of a feather,” in terms of their feelings about their work. All three women scored in the lowest range on all of the burnout subscales, and their interview narratives reflect these positive feelings about their work. It is likely that these women formed friendships partly due to their shared positive perspective on sex work (a form of approach coping), which then resulted in ongoing reinforcement for their beliefs.

The stigma associated with prostitution was reflected in the myriad ways women imagined people would perceive them should they disclose. The desire to avoid being judged and labeled as a prostitute led many women to rely on avoidance coping, limiting the extent to which they would become intimate with people in their personal life:

I don't, I date but I don't like make a serious commitment 'cuz I don't think that's fair to someone because I'm not gonna tell them that I do this and I don't wanna lie to someone, you know what I mean? Like I can lie by omission a little bit but not straight up say that I'm monogamous with someone and be doing this on the side. I'm especially worried about women's judgment 'cuz I feel like, you know, there's a lot of, and I kind of struggle with this in myself, like it's like an easy way out or it's like, you know, oh you're selling yourself or you're a bad feminist or you're, or it's gross, you have diseases, you're, you know you're easy, whatever, like there's a million stereotypes, um, or that I'm tragic, or that I'm fucked up, or that I got raped when I was younger, like I don't want, like I don't feel like I come off as

someone who would do this and I don't want to be someone's stereotype and I don't really want someone, it's such a taboo thing I don't want someone like focusing on that when they meet me. . .I want people focusing on who I am without having this big thing, like "oh she's an escort." You know? [P008, WH, age 23, \$1000]

Fear of being labeled converges with this woman's own uncertainty over the meaning of her involvement in sex work. The imagined reactions of others should they find out she is working in sex work prevent her from disclosing; this limits her access to potential sources of social support. This participant scored low on the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization subscales (she scored moderate on the personal competence subscale), however, implying that she had developed relatively effective strategies for coping with the demands of keeping her work secret from most people in her life. In this case, she reported that she had two resources for support when she wanted to talk about her work: her therapist, and a close friend who had briefly worked as an escort as well. This strategy is akin to what Goffman labeled "covering" in his seminal work on stigma (1963).

Many women engaged in skillful 'information management techniques' similar to those originally described by Goffman (1963). These women were neither 'completely out' nor 'completely closeted' regarding their involvement with sex work, but instead made selective judgments about with whom they would share information, when to disclose this information, and how to 'spin' their involvement with sex work. This "middle road" strategy of disclosure was a common strategy emerging from this sample, as it allows women to access social support from trusted insiders (Goffman's "wise"),

while minimizing the potential for loss of status that might come with a more open disclosure policy.

You know I have what I call my “normal friends.” [Q: Your normal friends?

What do you mean by that?] The ones that don’t even understand the whole concept of being an escort. I don’t talk about it with them. They have no idea and I don’t plan on telling them only because I know what they’re like. [P006, API, age 30, \$500]

This woman, who had one friend also in the sex industry she was open with, describes feeling that some friends shouldn’t be told because of the possibility of their judgments. Her choice of the word “normal” aptly captures the divisions created in her mind regarding her stigmatized identity, i.e. “people who are not sex workers are normal” and by implication “I’m not normal.” However, she did not rule out the possibility of disclosing within the context of an important personal relationship, even after relating an experience of being rejected by a boyfriend after she disclosed being an escort to him:

I would still handle it the way I did. I’m not gonna change my views or change the way I am even like, you know, one thing my ex told me was “the next person you are going to be with, you should never tell them.” My girlfriend was like “maybe you should, it’s better they don’t know.” And I am like NO! They should know as this is who I am. This is part of my life. You can’t just like forget about it. If they want to be with me, they have to accept me for all that I am. So I don’t feel that I have to lie about it. [P006, API, age 30, \$500]

Although this woman chose to avoid disclosing being an escort to most of her friends, she still took the risk to disclose in a relationship that she felt was serious. In this way she

works to minimize her exposure to stigma and rejection through avoidance coping, although she remains willing to take the risk of disclosure in important situations. Her comment that “If they want to be with me, they have to accept me for all that I am” indicates a level of self acceptance regarding her involvement in sex work. However, she scored high on the emotional exhaustion subscale and medium on the depersonalization subscale, indicating that stress relating to her work, and possibly to her experiences with disclosure and non-disclosure, were taking a toll on her emotional health.

Women’s fears regarding the potential judgments and loss of social status that may follow disclosure of their involvement in sex work were founded in social reality. For women who did disclose being an escort, negative reactions from those told were frequent. In an effort to maintain relationships that were potentially threatened by the disclosure of their stigmatized behavior, some women reported ‘coming out’ and then going ‘back into the closet’ after disclosing sex work:

Um, who does know? Another girl that does this, um, my boyfriend knew, but now he thinks I’ve stopped. I met my boyfriend when I was, um, doing this. Which at first when weren’t dating seriously. He was okay with it because he uh, he had no feelings for me, so. So now I unfortunately lie about it. It’s been hard and it’s been easy because, it’s easy because, who do you think, I mean to me, any guys that would want to date me, if they know that I have done this before, they would never want to have anything to do with me, but to him- But, to me that was a stigma on my head, you know? Because if I’ve been used and abused, who would want me? . . . That was my idea of how, so to me that, this wonderful guy would, who knew I was doing this and didn’t think I was the worst piece of uh,

shit on the earth and thought it was already wonderful. Because you can be yourself and it can be. . . I think about that all the time because, because to me it's more important, you know what we have is very important, very beautiful and you never know about the future, but I can't let something so trivial, so little bother him. Although I make a lot of money and it's important, it's not in the grand scheme of things, it's not important. My job is not that important. [P002, WH, age 34, \$600]

This woman's experience illustrates the dilemma faced by many of the women who participated in the study. Her statement reflects ambivalence about the cost / benefit of being honest with her partner, and her perceptions of the stereotypes about women who engage in sex work. She values that he accepts her knowing that she 'used to' do sex work, but when the relationship became significant she felt the need to go "back in the closet" to protect it. This information management technique was surprisingly common across the sample, as women described receiving negative reactions to their disclosure and a desire to maintain relationships with people who were not accepting of sex work.

Stigma and Stigma Resistance

The narratives regarding disclosure in this sample ranged from stories of social isolation and secrecy to ones of coming out and gaining acceptance, with many variations between. Regardless of women's individual strategies for managing disclosure, the stigma attached to engaging in prostitution was a central theme. Some women felt that social perceptions of their gender, race, and economic status led them to be labeled as a prostitute even when they didn't reveal this information to people. One woman expressed a desire to use her earnings from escorting to purchase luxury items, but felt that because

of her race and gender doing this would effectively “out” her in public:

And I want to get a fur coat, this winter . . . But I have my, I- it might be too obvious. [Q: What would be too obvious?] Come on, like I’m walking down Lexington Avenue in like a ten thousand dollar fur coat. . . But still, people just walk up to me and say “oh hey you want a date or something?” Because I’m African American and, and I guess it’s a very wealthy area. Maybe that’s why. Or maybe I’m just being paranoid. [P001, AA age 23, \$400]

It is impossible to know whether or not this woman’s perception of being labeled a prostitute in public areas was accurate or the product of ‘paranoia.’ Many of the women in this sample who scored high on the emotional exhaustion subscale, such as the woman quoted above, expressed strong concerns that their involvement in sex work had marked them for life. One woman who had described her desire to leave sex work related a fear that no matter what job she moved into after escorting, her past history as a sex worker would follow her:

It’s—it is a worry but it’s a concern, and it’s a very real concern, and it’s a reality. It’s part of what—it’s part of the package. It’s part of what goes on with it. And sometimes when I think of getting another job, I think, well, then, listen. You’re not going to be running for President of the United States. Maybe it would be easier just to get a bartending job and say, yes, so? Big deal? Because, I mean, let’s say being a bartender, not that that’s good, bad or I think criteria of my moral character, let’s say, would be far less under scrutiny than let’s say if I wanted to work as um, I don’t—at a law firm. . . It will come back. [P023, WH, age 53, \$350]

Like many previous studies of female sex workers (see Vanwesenbeeck, 2001) the majority of women who participated in this project stated that money was their primary motivation for entering sex work; some women even felt economically coerced into the business. Unfortunately many of these women felt the stigma which marked them would limit their options in the “straight” world. As a result, they worked to protect themselves from sex work related stigma by keeping escorting a secret. Unfortunately, this avoidance coping strategy had the unintended personal consequence of increasing their social isolation.

Many women expressed a desire to fight the stigma associated with sex work, yet viewed the personal costs associated with coming out as too high. For many, having the label “prostitute” attached to one’s identity blotted out nearly all other personal characteristics, resulting in a distorted image of themselves in the eyes of others:

[Q: So that is one of the more difficult aspects of your work it sounds like, not being able to share what’s going on with your close friends.] Yeah, or even just being yourself. Like my whole desire in my life and what I am trying to do is completely be myself and be open. But I think, I could if I would be a great crusader and if I was fearless and all that but what I have learned is that people do judge things very harshly they don’t understand and it will have far more negative impact on me than a positive one I think to go and start telling people. . . I mean I have some friends that I think would not judge me sort of theoretically; unless you do this I don’t think you really understand, you still look at it from outside of the perspective and you forget that these are two real people. . . These are real people doing real stuff, people don’t think that way they just like sleazy guys and she’s

sleeping with them for the money. She's a whore and she doesn't, she could make an honest living and she is being used. [P017, WH, age 30, \$1000]

This participant, who scored in the lowest range of burnout on all three subscales, expressed high satisfaction with her work but sadness that she could not share her experiences with people in her personal life. The choice to maintain secrecy in order to protect one's self from the loss of status that might come with disclosing their involvement in sex work may come not only at a personal cost (social isolation and internal conflict about lying to loved ones) but has a potential social impact as well. The act of "passing" (Goffman, 1963) as a non-sex worker may allow stereotypes about sex workers to persist, as women who do not fit these stereotypes do not reveal themselves as members of the stigmatized group. Bluntly put, maintaining secrecy in some ways contributes to maintaining the status quo.

Resisting the stigma associated with sex work begins with an internal re-framing of the work. Reimagining the meaning of sex work away from deviancy is the beginning of taking pride in sex work:

I never felt like "Oh my God I'm ashamed that I'm doing this for a living." If anything I was like "It sucks I get treated this way." You know? I don't think that there's anything shameful about it. I do think it's kind of cool. And at the very least, I'm not ashamed of what I do. I, I make an honest living and, and I always treat people honestly. I tell them specifically what they're going to get. I don't cheat them. I don't try to rob them you know? . . . I give them what I sell them, a, a really good experience plus the pleasure of my company. [P014, WH, age 45, \$180]

This woman articulated feelings of pride about her work, her body, and her ability to use sex work to help stabilize her life financially. She was open with friends and loved ones (approach coping) about her involvement in the industry and even went so far as to work under her real name. However, she scored in the “medium” range on all three burnout subscales, a surprising finding. During the interview, she related the multiple ways in which she lived with stigmas, both concealable and visible, which shaped her daily life. She was obese, and in spite of her “fat pride” she was often faced with negative attitudes about her body size. She had been diagnosed with borderline personality disorder, and expressed that following her diagnosis she felt the label of mental illness impacted the way doctors, therapists, and social service providers treated her. She reported that her mental illness had been so acute at one point that she had become homeless, and was now living in subsidized housing. For her, sex work was an effective way to supplement her meager income from disability; she also expressed feeling affirmed by the positive attention from clients who valued her appearance and did not view her primarily as a ‘disabled’ or ‘pathological’ person. However, her moderate scores on all three of the burnout subscales indicate that in some way the level of stress that she experienced on the job was not completely ameliorated by her pride in her work.

Throughout women’s narratives regarding stigma and sex work, beliefs about the meaning of sex work’s criminalized legal status surfaced. A variety of feelings concerning the legal status of sex work were expressed by the women in this study. Women who scored low in burnout across the subscales and expressed pride and satisfaction in their work, however, were the most explicit and articulate regarding their ideas about how the laws should change:

Yeah, you know, that's the only struggle is I would love to shout it from the rooftops. You know, I'm not looking for this profession to be legalized. Just decriminalized. I don't want to, you know, have my file and fingerprints down at the police station because I'm a registered sex worker. I don't want to have the Health Department knocking on my doors to make sure my sheets are clean and that my, you know, my condom supply is fresh. And I don't want to be forced to go to the doctor and get—have my health records made public for everybody. You know, I don't want to have a license number. I mean, I know all these because I am a licensed massage therapist. So what I want, first of all I want the hearts of the people to change. You know, because that's the stigma—you know if the people were to say, hey, sex is fine. We, you know—doing what you want with your own body as a woman is, you know, is your business.” And then, why would people support, putting in their money on to chasing us down—and trying to make us into criminals. I feel like we're witches being, you know, burned at the stake. [P021, WH, age 40, \$500]

This woman draws a direct connection between the marginalized legal status of sex work and the marginalized social status of sex workers. In her own personal life, she described being open about her work with nearly everyone (boyfriend, friends, etc) except for her parents. Her approach and emotion focused coping strategies to fight stigma was located in her personal reframing of the work (described earlier as “two souls coming together”) and was extended into the way she lived her life, open about her job. For her, fighting the stigma associated with sex work was a personal battle that needed to be fought before significant changes in the status of sex workers could be enacted on a social and legal

level.

Race and Racism

Women of color, and particularly African American women, topped the list for women scoring high on emotional exhaustion in this sample. This may be related to the higher levels of surface acting necessitated by emotional dissonance, as described earlier. However, negative experiences related to race and racism was not limited to their work with clients. Many of their negative experiences related to broader experiences with racism and discrimination in the industry, as well as experiences with the police:

My goal is. . .that I am retiring everything on Dec. 31st as I should be working full time with my college and studies whatever. And I am so over it [escorting] and I think it's mainly because I am afraid to take new clients on because of the whole police situation. . .It's not the fact that I am spending the night in jail. It just makes me sick. Like I feel like molested . . . they [police] are so sneaky sometimes you know and they ask you the most rude things and they treat you like garbage. Oh my god. And at first they treat you like garbage when they first arrest you they have someone shit talk, like why don't you get a job, you shouldn't do this. You know, they pass such judgmental comments. . .And then it's like I myself don't feel so much glamorous any more. [P011, AA, age 23, \$250]

By planning for retirement and developing other aspects of her business (this participant had a website featuring webcam shows for paying subscribers), this woman is using a proactive coping strategy to work towards reducing her burnout. While her quote above did not explicitly mention race, she and other African American women in the sample

described more confrontations with police, and more negative experiences with police, than other women. The woman quoted above related that she had been arrested for prostitution and related offenses five times, and reported that she felt women of color were targeted for arrest.

African American women also reported specific experiences of racial discrimination within sex work, such as being rejected by escort agencies because of their race:

But not all of them [escort agencies] wanted me, because I was black. So that shortened my options . . . I aimed for the ones that got the most attention, and a lot of them didn't want black women. . . One gave me a chance, and I was with them for a few months. I'm still with them, but I'm not relying on them anymore. One never contacted me back. And the women on their website looked kind of skanky anyway. Um, so I wasn't really sure if I wanted to meet with them. . . So with the agency that I ended up working with, um, you know, guys wouldn't want me. I'm assuming it was because I was a person of color, because that's what they told me on the phone. But, when I struck out as an independent, like, even little ads on the side from sideware, I would get calls. With my picture. My same picture. So I know it's not because I'm black. I got calls all the time on my phone. So I don't really know what the deal is with agencies. I'm just so confused. [P028, AA, age 26, \$400]

The majority of women in this sample, regardless of their own ethnicity, agreed that there was a racial hierarchy within sex work, one that devalued women of color.

Well in this business that's a fact. The white girls are, the popularity of girls if you want to talk ethnicity, white girls go first, second is uh, maybe equal, second I

think it's, I know Montreal, maybe it's different in NY, but uh second is Latina, third is Asian and fourth, last, bottom, black, unfortunately. I think the darker you are, the least busy you are. [P002, WH, age 34, \$600]

The “all-American girl” image of a busty, blonde, blue-eyed woman was mentioned frequently in narratives as being the most in-demand qualities an escort could possess.

One such woman put it this way:

Oh I think it [being white] benefits it immensely because even black clients, I've only actually had one black client . . . midrange or upper range escort clients are so predictable, I've had very few that fall out of like the 35-55 white upper middle class male and I think yeah, it benefits my business immensely. Just from looking at women of color like their sites, they just don't charge as much because I'm guessing they can't get as much and it sucks. . .like I have a Korean plastic surgeon who like comes to see me a couple times a year and he's always like “oh you look like Nicole Kidman” or you know he names like every blonde starlet movie star and he's like, this is like a big dream to be with like a white big blonde, the fact that I'm blonde especially, um it's like this whole fantasy for him and it doesn't matter that I don't really look like them or that I'm not even, you know, I'm not that skinny, or it's just like I'm this whole idea based on my race and my features. [P008, WH, age 23, \$1000]

Although being White and blonde was viewed by many as the ‘ideal look’, many women emphasized that women of color were also viewed as highly attractive and desirable by white clients. However, women of color were literally de-valued in comparison to white women, even if they were more physically attractive (i.e. younger, slimmer, bustier, etc):

I think unfortunately white women are more desirable, in certain socioeconomic groups. I know that just from looking through site, websites, I know that Brazilian women who come here charge a much lower rate even though they are more attractive and that's apparently the most desirable thing in the business. And I am from far the most physically attractive escort on line, I am fairly attractive and I have certain height certain body weight and skin type, I am white and you know that means I can earn more money. [P017, WH, age 30, \$1000]

For these women, being perceived as "all American beauties" lent them a sizeable advantage in their business. It may be that women of color are viewed as "exotic" but, even if they meet high standards of physical beauty, worth less than women who appear to be from mainstream white America.

The value of being white extended beyond client notions of attractiveness. The women in this sample reported serving a clientele of mainly white, upper middle class men. For white women in this sample, being able to sell clients an image of themselves as class peers may have given them an advantage over women of color, whom clients may assume do not come from a similar class background:

I think the fact that I have an middle upper class white upbringing, you know it's easy to relate to someone coming from a similar background to you which I think is another, I mean, maybe another reason why like women of color don't get as much business like because people don't, I would like the client would look at that and think that maybe like they couldn't relate to them as well or something, I don't know. It's kind of like, yeah like, I don't know, maybe their interpretation of like they would assume that they wouldn't have had a similar background and

they wouldn't have anything in common, I don't know, I'm just guessing. . . So I try and, like I sort of turn on the WASP and become like my parents. Like I talk about sailing and the market (laughs). [P002, WH, age 23, \$1000].

This woman was raised in a class privileged home, and thus possessed cultural capital that lent her common ground with upper middle class white clients. At the same time, client beliefs about her cultural capital are likely influenced by her appearance.

In contrast, a highly educated African American woman in the sample described an experience with an agency where she was marketed to clients in a racially stereotyped way:

There was this woman that I was working for who was trying to start up her own agency. Yeah, so I was happy for her, but the way she marketed me, it was on Craig's list, it was for free- I could have done that myself- but the way she marketed me was like, kind of like a knucklehead. And- Well, I'm saying that jokingly, but it's true- like, in the ad, she was saying, like, describing me as someone who likes to be spanked, as this bad girl, and um, she would put like spelling errors, and it was just kind of like low, like low grade stuff. And so the quality of guys who would like call for me, um, I would end up going to their place, and they would think I was a cop. More than once. Or, on the phone, they would be talking to me, and they would be like, "are you white?" No! I'm just, educated [laughs]. And I would be turned away, because people would think I was a cop. . . because of the way I carry myself, and I speak. [P028, AA, age 26, \$400]

In this woman's experience, she was marketed to clients on the basis of racist imagery, and these clients were then disappointed when the woman failed to embody the "knucklehead bad girl" they had called for. Later, after leaving this agency and going independent, she worked to create an advertisement that would counter racist stereotypes about her intelligence and social class:

I wrote a poem. I wanted to be special. I wanted them to know that they were getting someone intelligent, not a knucklehead. Yeah, I can't pull it off. I can't pull off the knucklehead type. I talk too much. And people would just know, like, 'listen, you're smart' [laughs]. So I'd like people to know right off the bat the kind of person they are going to talk to. That they're going to communicate with. So I wrote a poem and I wanted to be a little bit different than the rest of the ads, um, I like that poem. [laughs]. [P028, AA, age 26, \$400]

In this narrative the woman draws on her education and cultural sophistication to send a message to clients that she is not a "knucklehead," and thus appeal to clients seeking the company of an intelligent woman. However, she still struggled to charge a rate that for white women was the standard (\$500). She and other African American women related experiences where they had struggled to raise their rate above \$400 per hour:

Yeah I uh, I advertised at 500 and I get a lot of inquiries and people – a lot of people say, oh that's too expensive, like, what's wrong with you? But then I look at the other girls – my friend, she's like blond hair, green eyes, she's beautiful and she won't talk to you unless you have like \$800 or \$700 for her. But I think it's a little different for African American escorts. They have to charge less, maybe because they're less desirable or, I don't know. So I try not to think about that but

I, I think, I mean if there's a, and an equally attractive white girl I think she would get more, cause. I think they're perceived with a higher standard or perception.

[P001, AA, age 26, \$400]

This woman, who in many ways resembled the 'ideal' physical type for a sex worker (young, slender, large breasts), was confronted with client's notions of African American women's worth as less than that of white women's.

The narratives which emerged from this sample describing the racial hierarchy and devaluation of women of color in the sex industry correlate directly with the significant differences in the rates women in this sample were able to charge. No African American women in this sample reported rates higher than \$400 per hour, and although the Asian women were able to command up to \$500 per hour, only white women reported fees of \$600 per hour and above. Additionally, while many white women reported having a multiple hour minimum to meet with clients (they would only see clients who invested in two hours or more per session), only one woman of color had a multiple hour minimum. This woman, who was of Indian ancestry, described her ethnicity and cultural heritage as valued by her clients:

My clients are very niche market based on my ethnicity. So I market my ethnicity to my clients and everything that comes with that. I'm a very rare one in that, at my level with what I do, I think I'm the only one with my ethnic background, the way I am. Because it is different, and it's not your brown haired white girl or your blonde haired white girls which are a dime a dozen. So because it's so unique. It's funny because predominantly my clients fall into one of two ranges. Either they're from my own ethnic background, and they're wanting to do something

risqué but they want to play it safe and they feel like cultural familiarity with somebody like me, so you either have men from my own ethnic background or you have white men who are playing into the exotic location of women from my background. Often times after they make a deposit and they have a conversation on the phone, the first thing they'll say is 'oh you don't have an accent' you know? [P013, SA, age 30, \$500]

This woman was highly aware of her unique position as an elite escort of color, capitalizing on her value as “ethnically exotic” in a way that contrasts the experiences related by the other dark skinned women in the sample. At the same time, although this woman was at the top of the pay scale for women of color in this sample (charging \$500 per hour, with a three hour minimum required), she was still not commanding the fees associated with other elite white escorts in the sample, charging \$800 to \$1000 per hour. The lower rates charged by women of color in this sample may result in working with a higher client load, increasing the potential for burnout. Additionally, the racist attitudes women confronted in clients and escort agencies likely impact their attitudes towards their work and result in a higher rate of emotional dissonance and negative experiences on the job, another risk factor for burnout. This may explain why women of color were significantly more likely to suffer from burnout on all three subscales in this sample than white women.

Chapter 4:

Discussion

The diversity of experience represented in this sample defies easy reduction into tropes of these women as “happy hookers” or “traumatized victims.” The distribution of scores on the burnout scale clearly indicates that, as predicted, sex work is not *inherently* burnout-inducing. This finding lends support to Vanwesenbeeck’s (2005) previous research on burnout among sex workers, which found them to score comparably to workers in other fields requiring a high level of emotional labor, such as nursing.

The sample described in the present study constitutes one of the first to be comprised solely of independent female escorts who advertise on the Internet, and the only study to measure burnout. The purpose of restricting the sample to only independent women was to explore the ways in which women’s strategies for selecting clientele and managing their own fees impact their experience of the work. Even among this highly specific group of sex workers, it is clear that factors such as race, social class, and personal orientation towards sex work had a powerful influence on women’s experiences and feelings about the work and ways of managing its demands.

Coping

The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of female Internet based sex workers who work independently and identify the ways in which they cope with the demands of the work. It was found that women used both approach and avoidance coping strategies to manage the demands of performing emotional labor on the job. Women low in burnout drew on approach strategies such as their ability to empathize with clients, worked to like their clients, and cognitively framed their work in positive terms, as one

that “heals” or “gives pleasure.” These emotion focused coping strategies were associated with women who found their work to be enjoyable and personally satisfying. Women low in burnout also used both approach and avoidance coping strategies to avoid negative experiences on the job; primarily by carefully marketing their services to appeal to specific clientele (an approach strategy) and by turning away clients who they didn’t feel able to connect with (an avoidance strategy).

Women high in burnout primarily used emotion and avoidance coping strategies to minimize the stresses of their work, and perceived the stressors associated with their work as mainly unavoidable. As a result, they primarily coped through the use of avoidance focused coping such as managing thoughts during interactions with clients (separating themselves from their emotions and focusing on the money) and rushing through or minimizing the amount of time and mental energy expended on sex work. A few women described managing emotions on the job to focus away from negative aspects of unpleasant clients and working to identify their better aspects. Some women were aided in their efforts to emotionally disengage on the job by using alcohol as an avoidance coping strategy aimed at blunting the negative emotions they experienced while working. Finally, some women high in burnout used a proactive coping strategy of taking frequent breaks from work or planning to leave the industry completely. It is likely that this last group will ultimately fare better as they work to find ways of avoiding the negative aspects of performing sex work – including leaving the work entirely.

This was markedly different from women low in burnout, who consistently described more effective coping strategies aimed at avoiding negative situations, such as refusing to meet with unpleasant clients (anticipatory coping) and ending relationships with such

clients (avoidance coping). Women low in burnout also used approach strategies such as advertising to attract a preferred clientele and developing friendships with other like-minded escorts. Women who were able to surround themselves with strong social support, either from other escorts, or, less often, from loved ones outside of the sex industry, were most likely to score low in burnout and appeared to have developed highly successful strategies for managing the emotional demands of sex work as well as the potential cost of the stigma associated with being a sex worker.

Emotion Management Strategies

It was hypothesized that women in this study would utilize emotion management strategies and form a “working identity” similar to those described by Chapkis (1997) and Sanders (2002, 2004, 2005) and my own previous research on male escorts (Koken et al, 2004). This hypothesis was only partly supported by the interview data. Women low in burnout emphasized drawing on their “real selves” during interactions with clients rather than composing a working identity that was significantly different from their own. However, the use of “deep acting” (Chapkis, 1997; Hochschild, 1983), which could be thought of as a form of approach coping, was found to be a significant tool implemented by women low in burnout, primarily through the production of empathy for the client.

In a recent analysis of the experience of middle class female sex workers (Bernstein, 2007a, b, c), Elizabeth Bernstein posits that changes in the global market economy have led to a shift in the commodification of intimate life as well. This shift has led to a demand for “bounded authenticity”, seemingly authentic emotional (and often sexual) experiences which are “...subjectively normalized for sex workers and clients alike” (Bernstein, 2007b, p. 7). This new emphasis on engaging the sex worker’s own needs,

feelings and desires represents a shift away from the prior model of the “prostitute role” described by Sanders (2002, 2004, 2005) towards one that prioritizes inserting the sex worker’s “real self” into her interactions with clients. In the present study, the emphasis on “genuineness” and the “real me” emerged primarily from the narratives of women very low in emotional exhaustion and depersonalization.

Other women in the sample who scored moderately or high on the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization subscales were more likely to describe avoidance coping strategies such as creating a “prostitute role” or distancing one’s self from the physical and emotional entanglements of the work. These women were most likely to report experiencing emotional dissonance on the job and needing to engage in surface acting as a result. Theirs was the most strained of performances, and the least emotionally authentic. The pressure to perform placed a great deal of stress on women high in emotional exhaustion, and thus “surface acting” as a coping strategy was seen primarily among highly burned out women.

For women high in burnout, the use of a working identity was mixed. Some women avoided investing personal energy into creating a “working self” out of a desire to minimize their investment in sex work; others worked to market their services in a way that reflected their authentic selves (i.e. “cultured” “educated”) yet encountered difficulty in doing so. African American women in this sample were most likely to report significant barriers as they worked to market their services in a way that mirrored their ‘true self’ but encountered clients who were seeking a sex worker who would fit more stereotyped images of black women’s sexuality. In this case, market demand conflicted with women’s sense of their “true self” and placed the African American women in the

position of performing services they felt were dissonant with their values or struggling to locate and maintain a base of clientele that did not denigrate their sense of self.

Stigma Management

Goffman's (1963) information management techniques were found to have retained their usefulness in the sample presented here. Working in sex work is a concealable stigma that women managed by engaging in by "coming out", passing or covering. Regardless of level of burnout, the majority of the women in this sample told very few people about their work, and these selected confidants were most often other sex workers. Many women chose to "pass" completely, telling no one of their work, even other sex workers. For those who disclosed to non-sex worker friends and loved ones, "going back into the closet" was a common stigma avoidance technique for trying to maintain or repair relationships that were endangered by the revelation of women's involvement in such a stigmatized activity. Some women in the sample did engage in approach coping, sharing their work fairly openly with friends, boyfriends and family members; without exception these women scored lowest in burnout across all three subscales. However, women who lived this openly were in the minority in this sample.

Women's experience of being stigmatized in this sample extends beyond the information management techniques they used to minimize their exposure to other people's judgments about their involvement in sex work. Women described wrestling with the meaning of their participation in sex work, and offered a wide variety of interpretive frames. These cognitive frames can be thought of as "orientation to the work", a factor which is associated with risk of burnout (Maslach, 2001; Vanwesenbeeck, 2005). Women high in burnout were likely to report a negative orientation to the work,

ranging from framing sex work as “morally shameful” to sex work as beneath women’s intelligence, skills, and talents. This negative orientation to sex work causes emotional dissonance as women continue to engage in the work.

However, having a more positive orientation to sex work was not always associated with low burnout scores; several women argued that sex work was not shameful, yet they were highly cognizant of the negative stereotypes about sex workers. Many of these women chose to remain fairly “closeted” as sex workers, not out of any personal negative feelings about their work, but to protect themselves from the loss of status that can accompany being identified as a member of a stigmatized group (Goffman, 1963). Unfortunately, protecting one’s self from stigma by avoidance coping (non-disclosure) can lead to loneliness and social isolation, and thus could be considered a maladaptive form of coping. Unsurprisingly, women with a highly positive orientation towards their work (“sex work is healing”) were most likely to be open with loved ones about their work (a form of approach coping), and thus also enjoyed access to greater social support. For these women, resisting stigma began with an intrapsychic reframing of the meaning of sex work and was followed by disclosure of their work and seeking relationships with ‘the wise’, nonjudgmental individuals. It is difficult to say if this strategy, while clearly adaptive, could benefit all sex workers. Given the powerful social stigma against sex work the potential consequences of coming out may be quite damaging.

Burnout

It was predicted that burnout levels in this sample of independent sex workers would be lower than those uncovered by Vanwesenbeeck (2005) in her multi-venue sample, but this hypothesis was not supported. Women’s levels of burnout across all three subscales

did not differ significantly from those found in Vanwesenbeeck's (2005) study.

Unfortunately, Vanwesenbeeck did not disaggregate her sample by venue, making direct comparisons between samples difficult. Future studies of burnout among sex workers would benefit from reporting scores by venue, race / ethnicity, and other factors which play a powerful role in shaping women's experience of sex work.

Although the women who participated in this study were selected on the basis of working independently and thus able to exercise a significant amount of control over their working environment, it is possible that structural differences between the working environment in the United States and that of the Netherlands may increase American sex worker's vulnerability to burnout, despite greater autonomy in their working conditions. The laws criminalizing prostitution were a source of stress for the women who participated in this study, even those who hadn't had direct encounters with police. The threat of being arrested increased women's sense of marginality ("we're criminals") and frequently contributed to a heightened concern for secrecy and security. This need to keep sex work a secret led many women to feel socially isolated, a factor which contributes to the risk of becoming burned out. Considering the low level of burnout found in the sample overall, it appears that the strategy of selective disclosure to other escorts and trusted loved ones proved to be an effective coping method for accessing social support while minimizing their exposure to sex work related stigma.

Other potential factors which may contribute to the similarity in scores between the present sample and Vanwesenbeeck's (2005) include sociocultural factors which are distinct to the United States. The social climate of the Netherlands is well known for its comparative tolerance of sex work and sexual matters generally, as well as its more

progressive stance on feminist issues (Chapkis, 1997; Vanwesenbeeck, 1993, 2005). The United States is markedly more conservative in its approach to sexual behavior outside the bounds of heterosexual marriage (Klein, 2006), leading to a climate of intolerance for prostitution (Ditmore, 2008; Pheterson, 1989). The narratives on stigma which emerged were striking in their consistency: the women who participated in this study were highly aware of the stigma associated with their participation in sex work and few wanted to risk openly identifying as sex workers. This impacted not only their access to social support, but also was a theme commonly reported by those who expressed a desire to exit the sex industry entirely, citing weariness with the stress of leading a double life. It is possible that the greater stigma associated with prostitution in the US may have counteracted or overshadowed some of the potential benefits that were expected to emerge among independent escorts in comparison to the women in Vanwesenbeeck's (2005) study who worked in a variety of venues (including brothels and women who reported working involuntarily). It is possible that were a direct comparison between independent sex workers in the Netherlands and those in the US would find higher levels of burnout among the US based women, in spite of the similarity in their degree of autonomy on the job.

Race and Racism

The experience of burnout was not limited to a specific demographic within the present sample; however, it is striking that all of the women of color in this sample (9 out of 30) scored in the medium to high range of the three burnout subscales, and scored significantly higher than white women. It would be overly simplistic to argue that race was the sole factor responsible for women's burnout, and the data do not allow for causal

conclusions. However, there was a near unanimous agreement on the racial hierarchy within escorting that placed white women at the top and women of color at the bottom. The apparent ‘glass ceiling’ seen in women of color’s fees (i.e., none of the women of color charged more than \$500 per hour, whereas white women were able to command up to \$1,000 per hour) adds evidence to this argument. African American women in particular reported negative experiences with clients when they confronted racist perspectives on their intelligence, sexuality and the worth of their services. It is likely that the experience of being marginalized within an already marginalized group contributed to the elevated rates of burnout among the women of color in this sample.

It is difficult to ascertain how racial and ethnic marginalization may have impacted levels of burnout in Vanwesenbeeck’s (2005) study of sex workers in the Netherlands, as her analyses did not report differences in burnout by ethnicity. Her sample was 61.5% Netherlands born Dutch, 16.7% Netherlands born with non-Dutch parents, and 21.9% non-Netherlands born women. A recent report released by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) (European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, 2007) notes with concern a growing ‘backlash’ in the Netherlands against ethnic Dutch and recent immigrants, particularly those of African and Turkish origin. Political debates on the role of ethnic minorities in Dutch culture have been heated at times violent. While the historic and cultural differences between ethnic stratification in the Netherlands and the United States should not be overlooked, it is possible that sex workers of color in the Netherlands may confront racism from clients and discriminatory practices within the sex industry, which may impact their levels of burnout and overall

well-being. This would be an excellent area of future research, as racism within the sex industry has received scant attention in the published literature.

Strengths and Limitations of the Present Sample

As stated in the introduction, research on sex work has been dominated by samples of street based women (Thukral et al, 2005; Vanwesenbeeck, 2001). Additionally, few studies to date have been conducted with samples composed of independent female sex workers, instead lumping together women working in a variety of indoor venues such as escort agencies, brothels, and massage parlors (for example, Thukral et al, 2005; Sanders, 2005; Vanwesenbeeck, 2005). Elizabeth Bernstein's recent work (Bernstein, 2007) is one of the few exceptions; her study examined the experiences of 15 "middle class" female sex workers who worked independently as masseurs and escorts. Bernstein (2007) argues that technological advances such as the spread of the Internet have made going independent increasingly accessible as an option to women in the sex industry. The sample presented here, composed entirely of independent, Internet based female sex workers not only contributes to the growing body of work on indoor sex workers, but along with Bernstein's (2007) work, may hint at changes to come in the sex industry.

Although this dissertation makes a contribution to the literature on sex work because of the under-researched population it focuses on, the sample size is small and limits the generalizability of the findings presented here. However, 30 interviews may provide a rich variety of possible themes for phenomenological and grounded theory research (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). Future research in this area may benefit from a larger and more diverse sample of women. At the same time, the findings presented here regarding women's need to maintain secrecy regarding their involvement in sex work may continue

to present a barrier to recruiting sex workers as research participants. Additionally, it is possible sex workers may view research on sex work as irrelevant to their needs and interests, reducing motivation to participate in such research.

Because of the study's intent, the sample was extremely homogenous, thus these findings should not be generalized to sex workers who work for third parties such as agencies, madams, brothels and pimps (although some of the women had experience working with third parties in the past). The women who participated in this study were all working voluntarily, although some felt economically coerced into sex work, and did not resemble samples of sex workers engaging in "survival sex" (sex for shelter, food or drugs) (Ditmore & Thukral, 2003). Although one of the women had prior experience living and working on the street, all of the participants had stable housing and a moderate or better income at the time of they were interviewed. None of the women reported working in order to earn money for drugs. For these reasons the findings presented here should not be generalized to samples of street-based sex workers. Moreover, the women in this study worked primarily in large urban cities such as New York (many toured to other major cities as well), and their experiences may be different than those of sex workers who work in smaller or less urban environments. Finally, the individuals in this project all identified as women, and their experiences should not be generalized to male sex workers, although there may be areas where their experiences find common ground.

The sample was majority white, over-representing the experiences of white and northern European women. However, in terms of ethnic representation, this was roughly comparable to the population of women advertising as independent escorts on www.eros.com, a major website where most of the participants for this project were

recruited. This was verified through an assessment of the profiles featured on www.eros.com “independents” section on January 3, 2008. On that day, which occurred within the recruitment period, 420 profiles were present on the “independent escorts New York” page. Each time this page is accessed, the profiles are randomly ordered. Therefore, it is possible to gain a random sub-sample of the profiles by logging on and viewing the first page of listings.

Of the 120 profiles that appeared when that website was accessed, 10 (8%) self identified as African American or Black. Seven of the 10 women featured an email address in their ad, meaning that three would not have been invited to participate in the study, due to a lack of means to email them. Although twenty-five of the profiles (21%) featured Asian women, five featured the same photo and listed an escort agency website as a contact, making it unlikely that the women advertised were independent escorts, and 12 others did not list an email contact. Thus, only eight of the women could have been sampled. Nineteen women (16%) out of the 120 identified as Latina, but only eight of these women listed an email contact. Five women (4%) who identified as “mixed race” and one woman identified as Middle Eastern did not list an email contact. In sum, white women made up half of the profiles listed on the first page and were more likely to feature an email contact (53%) than women of color.

The results from this assessment of the Eros website indicate that my recruitment strategy of emailing women limited the sample, particularly for women of color, who featured an email contact less often than white women. Asian profiles were also less likely to advertise independent women (in spite of being listed on the “independents” page) as indicated by their links to escort agency websites. It is unclear why Latina

women did not respond to my invitations to participate in the project; while one did initially volunteer to participate, she did not schedule an appointment.

Conclusions

The significant differences in burnout between white and women of color's rates, as well as the interview narratives indicate that the experience of sex work is powerfully shaped by women's race and cultural norms and stereotypes. Future research on the well-being of sex workers should more explicitly account for race and the role that racism may play in sex worker's experiences. The experiences of women of color in the sex industry have been under-represented in the majority of studies of indoor sex workers, including this one. Future research should explore the experiences of women of color working in the sex industry and their coping strategies for managing negative experiences on the job.

This study and several others (Thukral et al, 2005; Vanwesenbeeck, 2001) have focused on the experiences of sex workers and can only speculate about the behavior and attitudes of clients through second-hand accounts given by sex workers. Research that neglects the role of clients in the negotiation of sexual commerce effectively ignores half of the interaction, impacting what we know about safer sex norms and practices as well as the social nuances of the services desired and sold. While clients of sex workers constitute a "hidden population", and thus may be particularly challenging to recruit, the Internet has witnessed a burgeoning community of clients who communicate via message boards, blogs, and review databases to trade tips and stories about their experiences with sex workers (Bernstein, 2007b). These forums may provide a starting point to reaching out to this group. Some sex workers may also be willing to act as informal recruiters, or "seeds" and could distribute information about such research to their clients and

encourage them to participate, potentially even utilizing methodology such as Respondent Driven Sampling (Heckathorn, 1997).

The women who participated in this project were highly aware of the stigmatized nature of their work, and for some the perceived consequences of disclosing their work resulted in secrecy and social isolation. There is a growing body of evidence of the potential physical and mental health consequences associated with living with a concealable stigma (Frable et al, 1998; Link & Phelan, 2006; Meyer, 2003; Pachankis, 2007). Future research and social policy aimed at assessing and improving the health of women in the sex industry should aim to identify ways in which stigma surrounding sex work may be reduced and work with service providers such as health care workers and therapists to become more sensitive to the concerns of sex workers. Finally, sex workers themselves should be included in research and social policy on sex work in order to craft more relevant and effective programs and policies for sex workers.

The findings presented here on effective coping techniques for managing interactions with clients and the importance maintaining a base of social support may prove useful to sex workers themselves, and should be disseminated within the sex work community. Media outlets such as \$pread magazine, online sex worker advocacy groups, sex worker blogs, and listervs provide easily accessible formats for disseminating these findings to sex workers. The women who participated in this study were offered the chance to be contacted directly when the study results became available, and all but one asked to be notified. These women will be emailed with a brief, clearly written description of the findings and an invitation to write back with questions, comments, and suggestions for future research directions; they will also be encouraged to distribute the

findings among women in their social network. By disseminating these findings directly to the study participants, and through online and print media targeting sex workers, these findings may circulate widely among independent female sex workers.

Table 1.

<u>Demographic Characteristics</u>	<i>n</i>	%
<u>Race / Ethnicity¹</u>		
African American / Caribbean American	5	16.6%
Asian / South Asian	3	10%
White/European ²	21	70%
Multi-Racial	1	3.3%
<u>Country of Origin</u>		
United States	21	70%
Canada	3	10%
Australia	1	3.3%
Singapore	1	3.3%
Estonia	1	3.3%
Poland	1	3.3%
Sweden	1	3.3%
France	1	3.3%
Total	30	100%

¹There were no Latina women in the sample

²Non-Hispanic

Table 2.

<u>Educational Attainment</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
Ph.D., MA or other graduate degree	4	13.3%
Some Graduate School	3	10%
Bachelors Degree	5	16.6%
Associates Degree	1	3%
Some College	13	43.3%
Other degree / certificate	1	3%
High School or equivalent	2	6.6%
Less than High School	1	3%
Total	30	100%

Table 3.

Scores on Burnout Subscales	Possible Range	Actual Range	Mean	SD	Alpha
Emotional Exhaustion	0 - 48	1 - 35	16.87	9.149	.89
Depersonalization	0 - 24	0 - 22	7.10	5.281	.75
Personal Competence	0 - 42	13 - 42	29.03	7.025	.84

Table 4.

<u>Levels of Burnout</u> * (n = 30)	Low	Medium	High
Emotional Exhaustion	36.7%	40%	23.3%
	(n = 11)	(n = 12)	(n = 7)
Depersonalization	46.7%	40%	13.3%
	(n = 14)	(n = 12)	(n = 4)
Personal Competency**	33.3%	30%	36.7%
	(n = 10)	(n = 9)	(n = 11)

* Cut off scores delineated by Hayter (2000) were used to calculate levels of burnout.

** On all scales, a high score indicates a higher level of burnout.

Table 5.

Qualitative Themes by Emotional Exhaustion Level and Coping Style

Emotion Management

Low Burnout / Approach Coping

- Empathize with client desires
- Frame sex work as healing or helping
- Selection of clients on basis of 'like qualities'
- Draw on authentic self in session
- Satisfaction in providing pleasure

Low Burnout / Anticipatory Coping

- Screen out potentially negative clients

Low Burnout / Avoidance Coping

- Refuse to see unpleasant clients (once already acquainted)

High Burnout / Avoidance Coping

- Emotive dissonance with client desires
- Empathy fatigue
- Focus on money / emotional detachment
- Blunt negative emotions through alcohol and / or emotion work
- Distancing from work activities and role/ disidentification

High Burnout / Proactive Coping

- Plan to exit sex work

Disclosure

Low Burnout / Approach Coping

- “Coming out”
- Covering / selective disclosure (combination of approach / avoidance)

Low Burnout / Avoidance Coping

- Framing work as “private business” = secrecy

High Burnout / Avoidance Coping

- “Passing”
- Going “back into the closet”
- Avoiding intimate relationships
- Distancing from already established relationships
- Shame about work = secrecy
- Fear of disclosure consequences = secrecy
- Secrecy = Social isolation

Stigma

Low Burnout / Approach Coping

- Stigma resistance: Pride / reframing
- Stigma resistance: Stereotype disavowal

High Burnout / Avoidance Coping

- Stigma internalization: Shame
- Stigma leakage: Permanent mark on identity

Race*

Low Burnout

- Racial hierarchy: Benefit to self
- Racial exoticism: Uniqueness / Fetishization

High Burnout

- Racial hierarchy: Denigrates self
- Racial exoticism: Stereotyped role

* Coping strategies for managing stress associated with racism are included in the Emotion Management themes. Race was not a source of stress for all participants and thus was not always associated with “coping” per se.

Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Questions about Internet Advertising and Marketing

1. When did you first become aware of women working as escorts?
 - a. Internet websites where escorts advertise?
 - b. Other venues for sex work?
2. What led to your decision to become an escort?
 - a. (If not initially independent) what made you decide to strike out on your own as an escort?
 - b. To run an online advertisement for your services?
3. (For those with previous experience with agency, brothel, or street-based sex work) How does being an independent escort compare with your previous experiences?
4. How do clients contact you after seeing your advertisement? (i.e. by phone, email or instant messaging)
5. Tell me a little bit about your profile.
 - a. Why did you select the photos that you feature?
 - b. What do you hope to communicate to clients through your ad text?
 - c. Are there certain types of clients you hope to attract through framing your advertisement this way? What are they like?
6. Once a client has contacted you, how do you screen your client?
 - a. What are your criteria for an acceptable client?
 - b. What qualities will you not tolerate in a client?
7. Once you have decided to see a client, where does the session take place?

8. How do you calculate the fee to charge a client (i.e. by the hour, session rate, activities, etc)?

Questions about Satisfaction with Work and Client Interactions

9. How satisfied are you with your work in general?
10. How long have you been working as an escort?
11. What are the best things about working as an escort?
12. What are some of the difficult things about working as an escort?
13. What makes a good or bad client?
14. What kinds of relationships do you have with clients?
 - a. Do you have many repeat clients? What are they like?
 - b. How do you feel about your repeat clientele?
15. How do you think your race / ethnicity impact your work?
16. How does your age and body shape impact your work?
17. When you are with a client, what kind of experience do you try to provide for him or her?
18. When a client wants something that you don't wish to give him / her, how do you handle that?
19. How do you draw boundaries between work and personal relationships?
20. Can you tell me about the last time you met with a client?
 - a. How did you meet this client (new client, regular client?)
 - b. How did you prepare yourself to see this client?
 - c. What happened when you got to the client / client came to meet you?
 - d. What kinds of sexual activity did you do with this client?

- e. How did you handle the issue of safer sex?
- f. How did you wrap up the session?
- g. Would you like to see this client again?

Relationships with other Escorts

- 21. What is your relationship with other escorts?
 - a. Are you friends with any other escorts?
 - b. Are there ways that you communicate about safety issues with other escorts?
 - c. How do you share information about clients with other escorts?

Personal Relationships

- 21. Who in your life knows that you work as an escort?
 - a. Family?
 - b. Friends?
 - c. Romantic partners?
 - d. Others? (coworkers at other jobs, therapists, doctors, etc)
- 22. How do you decide whom to tell?
- 23. What do you tell people about your work?
 - a. [If in a romantic partnership with someone who knows about escorting]
What was your partner's reaction when you told them you were escorting?
 - b. How much information do you share with your partner about your work experiences?
 - c. How supportive is your partner of your work?

24. [If in a romantic relationship with a person who does not know about their escorting] How do you think your partner would react if you told them?

a. How do you keep your partner from learning about your work?

25. [If single and not dating anyone currently] How do you handle the issue of escorting when you meet someone you are interested in romantically?

a. Have you dated in the past while working as an escort? What was that like?

b. Did you disclose your work to that person? How?

Stigma

26. What are some of the stereotypes about escorts?

27. Before you started escorting, what were your thoughts about it?

28. What do you think people need to know about escorts?

Life Goals & wrap up

29. How long do you plan to continue escorting?

a. What other career plans do you have?

30. What have you learned from your experiences as an escort?

31. What do you think about the current legal status of escorting?

a. What kinds of changes would you like to see, if any?

32. What kinds of questions do you think I should have asked in this interview, but didn't?

Appendix B: Standardized Measures

Adapted Utrecht Burnout Scale for the Contractual Professions (Schaufeli & van Dierendonck, 1995) modified by Vanwesenbeeck (2005).

Please indicate, on a scale from zero to six, where zero equals never, and six equals daily, how much each of the following statements describes your feelings about your work.

Emotional Exhaustion (alpha = .90):

I feel mentally exhausted by my work

At the end of a working day, I feel empty

I feel tired when I get up and there's another working day ahead

Working the whole day with clients is a heavy burden for me

I feel "burned out" by my work

I feel frustrated with my job

I feel I make too much of an effort for my work

I am at the end of my rope

Depersonalization (alpha = .59):

I feel I treat some clients too impersonally

I feel I have become more indifferent towards people since I do this work

I worry that my work numbs me emotionally

I really don't care what happens to some of my clients

I feel clients blame me for their sexual problems

Personal Competence (alpha = .70):

I can easily empathize with my clients' feelings and wishes

I know well how to fulfill my clients' needs

I feel I influence other people's lives in a positive way through my work

I can easily create a relaxed atmosphere with my clients

Working with clients cheers me up

I have accomplished many valuable things with this work

In my work, I deal very calmly with emotional problems

Appendix C: Demographic Information

1. What month and year were you born? Month: ____ ____ Year: _____
2. Which racial/ethnic group do you belong to? *Check one.*
 - 1) Alaskan, Native American, American Indian
 - 2) Asian/Pacific Islander
 - 3) Black, Black of African Descent, African American
 - 4) Latino, Hispanic
 - 5) White, Caucasian—non Hispanic
 - 6) Other
 - 7) Mixed (*go to question 2b*)
- 2b. You have indicated that you are mixed race. Please indicate your race/ethnicity by checking all that apply.
 - 1) Alaskan Native African American, Black of African Descent
 - 2) American Indian
 - 3) Asian/Pacific Islander
 - 4) Black, Black of African Descent, African American
 - 5) Latino, Hispanic
 - 6) White, Caucasian—non Hispanic
 - 7) Other
3. Were you born outside of the United States?
 - 1) Yes (*go to question 3b*)
 - 2) No (*go to question 4*)
 - 3) Refuse to answer (*go to question 4*)

- 3b. Please list the nation where you were born: _____
4. Which best describes your current escorting status? (Time spent interacting with clients online, on the phone, in person, and time spent preparing to see a client)
- 1) Full time--- about 40 Hours per week
 - 2) Part-time---less than 40 hours per week
5. Which best describes your current (non-escorting) employment status?
- 1) Full-time—40 hours per week
 - 2) Part-time—less than 40 hours per week
 - 3) Permanent or temporary disabled and NOT working
 - 4) Permanent or temporary disabled BUT working off the books
 - 5) Unemployed—student
 - 6) Unemployed—other
6. Which best describes your total yearly personal income during the last year?
- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1) Less than \$10,000 | 5) \$40,000 to 49,999 |
| 2) \$10,000 to 19,999 | 6) \$50,000 to 74,999 |
| 3) \$20,000 to 29,999 | 7) \$75,000 or more |
| 4) \$30,000 to 39,999 | 8) Refuse to answer |
7. What is the highest level of education you have?
- | | |
|--|-------------------------|
| 1) Less than a high school degree | 2.) GED or H.S. Diploma |
| 3) Some college | 4) Bachelor's Degree |
| 5) Some graduate school | 5) Master's Degree |
| 6) Graduate degree (Ph.D./MD/JD, etc.) | |
| 7) Other certificate/degree program | 8) Refuse to answer |

8. Have you ever been tested for HIV?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No
- 3) Refuse to answer

9. If yes, what was the result of your last HIV test?

- 1) HIV Negative
- 2) HIV Positive
- 3) Did not return / wait to receive my result
- 4) Refuse to answer

10. Which best describes how you identify yourself?

- 1) Lesbian, Gay, queer, homosexual
- 2) Bisexual
- 3) Straight, heterosexual
- 4) Other
- 5) Refuse to answer

11. How do you define your current relationship status?

- 1) I am legally married
- 2) I have a partner/lover
- 3) I have a boyfriend/girlfriend
- 4) I am single (go to Question 12)
- 5) Refuse to Answer (go to Question 12)

12. How long have you and your primary partner/spouse been together? *If you and your partner have been together for less than a year, write "00" for the number of years below.*

Years: ____ ____ AND Months: ____ ____

13. Are you and your partner/spouse living together?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No
- 3) Refuse to answer

14. Do you have any children?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No (*go to Question 15*)
- 3) Refuse to answer (*go to Question 15*)

15. How many children do you have?

- 1) 1
- 2) 2
- 3) 3
- 4) 4 or more

16) Do you currently have health insurance?

- 1) Yes
- 2) No
- 3) Refuse to answer

17.) Where do you go to get medical care?

- 1) Private Doctor/Private Clinic

2) HMO

3) Public Health Clinic, county health clinic, public hospital

4) VA hospital or clinic

5) Other (please specify): _____

6) Refuse to answer

18.) When you see a doctor, do you tell him/her about escorting?

1) Yes

2) No

3) Refuse to answer

19.) Are you currently receiving any OTHER types of services other than medical care?

1.) Yes (go to Question 19)

2.) No (go to Question 20)

20.) What kind of services are you receiving? (Check all that apply.)

1.) Alcohol or drug treatment

2.) Housing or shelter

3.) Food Services (Open Hand, Food Bank, God's Love We Deliver, etc.)

4.) Case management

5.) Early Intervention Program

6.) One-to-One Psychological Counseling

7.) Support Groups (Specify: _____)

8.) Legal assistance (discrimination, wills, etc.)

9.) Financial assistance

10.) Practical support (bills, buddy program, help with cleaning, etc.)

11.) Other HIV or non-HIV related services (Specify: _____)

12.) Daycare

13.) Other research studies (Specify: _____)

21.) Why are you not receiving services? (Check all that apply.)

- 1.) I don't need any services at this time
- 2.) Didn't know that services existed
- 2.) Didn't know where to go for services
- 3.) Couldn't afford it (including no insurance)
- 4.) Worried about confidentiality
- 5.) Not convenient
- 6.) No transportation
- 7.) Not interested
- 8.) Services didn't fit my needs
- 9.) No services in my area
- 10.) Feel uncomfortable receiving services
- 11.) Other (Specify: _____)

22.) During a typical week, how many clients do you see? _____

23.) What kind of services might you offer a client during a session? Please check all that apply:

- Companionship (conversation, going out to dinner or other outings, etc)
- Affection (kissing, hugging, cuddling)
- Non-sexual Massage (no genital stimulation)
- Sensual massage (genital stimulation in addition to massage)

- oral sex (giving)
- oral sex (receiving)
- vaginal sex
- anal sex
- Other sex play (using fingers, toys, etc)
- Bondage & Domination (where you are the “mistress” or “top”)
- Submission (where you are the “bottom” or “slave”)
- Fantasy role play
- Fetish activities (i.e. spanking, foot worship, or other “kinky” activities)
- Other- please describe_____

24.) When performing oral sex on a client (giving him a blowjob), how often do you use a condom for this activity?

- Almost never
- sometimes
- usually, with few exceptions
- 100% of the time, no exceptions
- refuse to answer

25.) When having sex with a client (vaginal or anal), how often does the client wear a condom?

- Almost never
- sometimes
- usually, with few exceptions
- 100% of the time, no exceptions

References

- Abramovich, E. (2005). Childhood sexual abuse as a risk factor for subsequent involvement in sex work: A review of empirical findings. *Journal of Psychology and Human Sexuality*, 17, 131-146.
- Barry, K. (1995). *The Prostitution of Sexuality*. New York: New York University Press.
- Bimbi, D. S. (2007). Male prostitution: Pathology, paradigms, and progress in research. *The Journal of Homosexuality*, 53, 7 - 35.
- Bernstein, E. (2007a). Sex work for the middle classes. *Sexualities*, 10, 473 – 488.
- Bernstein, E. (2007b). *Temporarily Yours: Intimacy, Authenticity, and the Commerce of Sex*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bernstein, E. (2007c). Buying and selling the ‘girlfriend experience’: The social and subjective contours of market intimacy. In Padilla, M. B., Hirsch, J. S., Munoz-Laboy, M., Sember, R. E. & Parker, R. G. (Eds). *Love and Globalization: Transformations of Intimacy in the Contemporary World*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.
- Brewis, J. & Linstead, S. (2000a). ‘The worst thing is the screwing’ (1): Consumption and the management of identity in sex work. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 7, 84-97.
- Brewis, J. & Linstead, S. (2000b). ‘The worst thing is the screwing’ (2): Context and career in sex work. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 7, 168-180.
- Brooks, S. (2001). Exotic dancing and unionizing: The challenges of feminist and antiracist organizing at the Lusty Lady theater. In: Winddance, F. T. & Blee, K. M. (Eds.) *Feminism and Antiracism: International Struggles for Justice*. New

- York: New York University Press.
- Califia, P. (1988). *Macho Sluts*. Los Angeles: Alyson Books.
- Carver, C. S. (2006). Approach, avoidance, and the self-regulation of affect and action. *Motivation and Emotion*, 30, 105-110.
- Carver, C. S. (2007). Stress, coping and health. In: Friedman, H. S. & Cohen Silver, R. (Eds.) *Foundations of Health Psychology*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Chapkis, W. (1997). *Live Sex Acts: Women Performing Erotic Labor*. NY: Routledge.
- Cole, S. W., Kemeny, M. E., Taylor, S. E., & Visscher, B. R. (1996). Elevated physical health risk among gay men who conceal their homosexual identity. *Health Psychology*, 15, 243 – 251.
- Cordes, C. L., & Dougherty, T. W. (1993). A review and integration of research on job burnout. *Academy of Management Review*, 18, 621 - 656.
- Derogatis, L.R., Melisaratos, N. (1983). The brief symptom inventory: An introductory report. *Psychological Medicine*, 13, 595 - 605.
- Ditmore, M. H. (Ed.) (2006). *The Encyclopedia of Prostitution*. NY: Greenwood Press.
- Ditmore, M. H., & Thukral, J. (2003). *Revolving Door*. New York: Urban Justice Center.
- Doezema, J. (2002). Who gets to choose? Coercion, consent, and the UN Trafficking Protocol. *Gender & Development*, 10, 20 - 27.
- Dworkin, A. (1997). Prostitution and male supremacy. In *Life and Death*, pp. 139-151. New York: Free Press.
- El-Bassel, N., Schilling, R. F., Irwin, K. L., Faruque, S., Gilbert, L., Von Bargen, J. et al. (1997). Sex trading and psychological distress among women recruited from the streets of Harlem. *American Journal of Public Health*, 87, 66 – 70.

- Farley, M., Baral, I., Kiremire, M., & Sezgin, U. (1998). Prostitution in five countries: Violence and post-traumatic stress disorder. *Feminism and Psychology*, 8, 415 - 426.
- Fawkes, J. (2005). Sex working feminists and the politics of exclusion. *Social Alternatives*, 24, 22 – 23.
- Frable, D. E. S., Platt, L., & Hoey, S. (1998). Concealable stigmas and positive self perceptions: Feeling better around similar others. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74, 909- 922.
- Freudenberger, H. J. (1975). The staff burnout syndrome in alternative institutions. *Psychotherapeutic Theory, Research and Practice*, 12, 72 – 83.
- Goffman, E. (1959). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Doubleday Anchor.
- Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
- Harding, S. G. (1991). *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?: Thinking from Women's Lives*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Hayter, M. (2000). Utilizing the Maslach Burnout Inventory in HIV/AIDS specialist nurses. *Primary Health Care Research and Development*, 1, 243 – 253.
- Heckathorn, D. D. (1997). Respondent-Driven Sampling: A new approach to the study of hidden populations. *Social Problems*, 44, 174 – 199.
- Hochschild, A. R. (1983). *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Huebner, D. M., Davis, M. C., Nemeroff, C. J., & Aiken, L. S. (2002). The impact of

- internalized homophobia on HIV preventative interventions. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 30, 327 – 347.
- Kempadoo, K. (1999). Slavery or Work? Reconceptualizing Third World Prostitution. *positions*, 7, 225-238.
- Koken, J. A. (in press). The meaning of the whore: How feminist theories on prostitution shape research on sex work. In Ditmore, M., Levy, A. & Willman – Navarro, A. (Eds.). *Sex Work Matters: Beyond Divides*. Cambridge Scholars Press.
- Koken, J. A. (2006). Internet Prostitution. In Ditmore, M. (Ed.) *The Encyclopedia of Prostitution*. Haworth Press, NY.
- Koken, J. A. (2006). Pathology and Prostitution. In Ditmore, M. (Ed.) *The Encyclopedia of Prostitution*. Haworth Press, NY.
- Koken, J. A., Bimbi, D. S., Parsons, J. T. & Halkitis, P. N. (2004). The experience of stigma in the lives of gay and bisexual male Internet escorts. *The Journal of Psychology and Human Sexuality*, 16, 13 – 32.
- Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, Appraisal, and Coping*. Springer Publishing Company, NY.
- Leigh, C. (1997). Inventing sex work. In Nagle, J. (Ed.) *Whores and Other Feminists*. NY: Routledge.
- Lenth, R. V. (2006). Java Applets for Power and Sample Size [Computer software]. Retrieved May 21, 2007, from <http://www.stat.uiowa.edu/~rlenth/Power>.
- Lewis, J. & Maticka-Tyndale, E. (2000). Methodological challenges conducting research

related to sex work. From: *Escort Services in a Border Town: Transmission Dynamics of STDs Within and Between Communities*. Report issued by: Division of STD Prevention and Control, Laboratory Centres for Disease Control, Health Canada.

Link, B. G., & Phelan, J. (2006). Stigma and its public health implications. *Lancet*, 367, 528 - 529

MacQueen, K. M., McLellan, E., Kay, K., & Milstein, B. (1998). Codebook development for team-based qualitative analysis. *Cultural Anthropology Methods Journal*, 10, 31- 36.

Maslach, C. (1976). Burned-out. *Human Behavior*, 5, 16 – 22.

Maslach, C., Jackson, S. E. & Leiter, M. P. (1996). Maslach Burnout Inventory (3rd ed.). Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press.

Maslach, C., Schaufeli, W. B., Leiter, M. P. (2001). Job burnout. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52, 397 – 422.

Meyer, I. H. (2003). Prejudice, social stress, and mental health in lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations: Conceptual issues and research evidence. *Psychological Bulletin*, 129, 674 – 697.

Pachankis, J. E. (2007). The psychological implications of concealing a stigma: A cognitive-affective-behavioral model. *Psychological Bulletin*, 133, 328 – 345.

Parsons, J. T. (2005). Researching the world's oldest profession: Introduction. *Journal of Psychology and Human Sexuality*, 17, 1-3.

Parsons, J. T., Halkitis, P. N., Wolitski, R. J., Gomez, C. A., and the Seropositive Urban Men's Study Team (2003). Correlates of sexual risk behaviors among HIV-

- positive men who have sex with men. *AIDS Education and Prevention*, 15, 383 – 400.
- Parsons, J. T., Koken, J. A., & Bimbi, D. S. (2004). The use of the Internet by gay and bisexual male escorts: Sex workers as sex educators. *AIDS Care*, 10, 1021 – 1035.
- Pateman, C. (1988). *The Sexual Contract*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Pheterson, G. (Ed.) (1989). *A Vindication of the Rights of Whores*. Seattle: Seal Press
- Pheterson, G. (1990). The category “prostitute” in social scientific inquiry. *Journal of Sex Research*, 27, 397- 407.
- Roberts, Nickie (1992). *Whores in History: Prostitution in Western Society*. London: Harper Collins.
- Sanders, T. (2002). The condom as a psychological barrier: Female sex workers and emotional management. *Feminism & Psychology*, 12, 561-566.
- Sanders, T. (2004). Controllable laughter: Managing sex work through humour. *Sociology*, 38, 273-291.
- Sanders, T. (2005a). It’s just acting: Sex workers’ strategies for capitalizing on sexuality. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 12, 319-342.
- Sanders, T. (2005b). Researching the online sex work community. In C. Hine (ed.) *Virtual Methods in Social Research on the Internet*, pp. 66 -79. Oxford: Berg.
- Sanders, T. (2005c). *Sex Work: A Risky Business*. Devon: Willan Publishing.
- Schaufeli, W. B., & Van Dierendonck, D., (1993). The construct validity of two burnout measures. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 14, 631 – 647.
- Schaufeli, W. B., & Van Dierendonck, D., (1995). A cautionary note about the cross-national and clinical validity of cut-off points for the Maslach Burnout Inventory.

Psychological Reports, 76, 1083 – 1090.

Scoular, J. (2004). The 'subject' of prostitution: Interpreting the discursive, symbolic and material position of sex/work in feminist theory. *Feminist Theory*, 5, 343-355.

Shehan, D. A., LaLota, M., Johnson, D. F., Celentano, D. D., Koblin, B. A., Torian, L. V., & Thiede, H. (2003). HIV/STD risks in young men who have sex with men who do not disclose their sexual orientation- six U.S. cities, 1994 – 2000.

Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, 52, 80 – 84.

Siegel, K., & Scrimshaw, E. (2002). The perceived benefits of religious and spiritual coping among older adults living with HIV/AIDS. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 41, 91 – 102.

Simons, R. L., & Whitbeck, L. B. (1991). Sexual abuse as a precursor to prostitution and victimization among adolescent and adult homeless women. *Journal of Family Issues*, 12, 361- 379.

Sprinkle, A. (1998). *Post-Porn Modernist: My 25 Years as a Multimedia Whore*. San Francisco: Cleis Press.

Starks, H. & Trinidad, S. B. (2007). Choose your method: A comparison of phenomenology, discourse analysis, and grounded theory. *Qualitative Health Research*, 17, 1372 – 1380.

Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory, procedure and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Thukral, J. & Ditmore, M. (2003). *Revolving door: An analysis of street-based prostitution in New York City*. Report issued by the Sex Workers Project at the New York: Urban Justice Center. <http://www.urbanjustice.org/sexworkersproject>.

- Thukral, J., Ditmore, M. & Murphy, A. (2005). *Behind closed doors: An analysis of indoor sex work in New York City*. New York: Urban Justice Center.
<http://www.urbanjustice.org/sexworkersproject>.
- Unger, R. K. (1998). Positive marginality: Antecedents and consequences. *Journal of Adult Development*, 5, 163 – 170.
- Unger, R. K. (2000). Outsiders inside: Positive marginality and social change. *Journal of Social Issues*, 56, 163 – 179.
- Vanwesenbeeck, I. (1994). *Prostitutes' Well Being and Risk*. Amsterdam: V University Press.
- Vanwesenbeeck, I. (2001). Another decade of social scientific work on sex work: A review of research, 1990 – 2000. *Annual Review of Sex Research*, 12, 242-289.
- Vanwesenbeeck, I. (2005). Burnout among indoor female sex workers. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 34, 627 – 639.
- Weitzer, R. (2005). Flawed theory and method in studies of prostitution. *Violence Against Women*, 11, 934-949.
- Wharton, A. S. (1993). The affective consequences of service work: Managing emotions on the job. *Work and Occupations*, 20, 205- 232.
- Zapf, D., Siefert, C., Schmutte, B., Mertini, H., & Holz, M. (2001). Emotion work and job stressors and their effects on burnout. *Psychology and Health*, 16, 527 – 545.

