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# New Sociologies of Sex Work

*Edited by*

KATE HARDY

*University of Leeds, UK*

SARAH KINGSTON

*Leeds Metropolitan University, UK*

TEELA SANDERS

*University of Leeds, UK*

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## Notes on Contributors

**Lynzi Armstrong** is a PhD student in the Institute of Criminology at Victoria University of Wellington. Her research interests include prostitution law reform, feminist criminology, and sexual violence. She is currently completing a thesis on strategies to manage the risks of violence, amongst female street-based sex workers in New Zealand.

**Kath Browne** is a Senior Lecturer in Human Geography at the University of Brighton. She is the lead researcher in the *Count Me In Too* research project ([www.countmeintoo.co.uk](http://www.countmeintoo.co.uk)), which she has been working on since 2005. She co-wrote *Queer Spiritual Spaces* and has co-edited two key texts, *Queer Methods and Methodologies* and *Geographies of Sexualities: Theory, Practices and Politics*. She has written over 40 publications across a range of disciplines, using diverse formats. She is currently writing the *Count Me In Too* book with Leela Bakshi.

**Samantha Caslin** is a postgraduate research student at the University of Manchester where she is studying for a PhD in History. Having completed her undergraduate degree in History and Sociology from the University of Liverpool in 2006 she is very interested in conducting interdisciplinary research and exploring the historical dimensions to contemporary moral issues. Her PhD examines the influence of moral purity on Liverpool's streets during the early and mid-twentieth century and considers how cultural anxieties about prostitution have impacted upon women's use of public space. Sam's research interests extend into the areas of gender and sexuality, consumerism and social theory.

**Rachela Colosi** is a Lecturer in Social Policy at the University of Lincoln. Before joining the University of Lincoln, Rachela was a Lecturer in Youth Studies at Teesside University, where she worked for a year after completing her PhD in 2008. Before working in academia she worked as a lap-dancer and agency stripper, a set of experiences which has shaped her current academic interests. Rachela is author of *Dirty Dancing? An Ethnography of Lap-dancing*, based on her PhD, and is currently conducting a study about lap-dancing club customers. Her research interests are in the area of sex-work, particularly erotic dance. She is also interested in youth cultures and the night-time economy.

**Lynn Comella** is an Assistant Professor in the Women's Studies Department at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. She received her PhD in Communication from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst in 2004. Her research and teaching

interests include media and popular culture, sexuality studies, and consumer culture and citizenship, with a particular focus on sexual commerce and the adult industry. She has written extensively about the emergence of the women's market for sex toys and pornography, and is currently completing a book-length manuscript on the history and retail culture of feminist sex toy stores in the United States.

**Mark Cull** has worked in the voluntary sector for the past eight years. For Hove YMCA, in partnership with the University of Brighton, he researched the experiences and needs of homeless Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender young people in Brighton and Hove. More recently, he was employed as a Health Promotion Coordinator for the Terrence Higgins Trust, where he provided sexual health and HIV-related services to male sex workers, and took a strategic lead around the local male sex work industry. Mark is again working for the YMCA as the Right Here Project Leader, a young people's resilience building project to prevent mental health issues.

**Natalie Hammond** is in the final stages of her ESRC-funded PhD in the department of Sociological Studies at the University of Sheffield. Her doctoral thesis focuses on men who pay for sex. In exploring the commercial and non-commercial experiences of men who engage in sexual commerce through the lens of sexuality and relationships, men's attraction towards and involvement in commercial sex is located in part of the broader landscape of male heterosexualities. Her research interests are in the areas of men and masculinities; heterosexuality; and the wider aspects of the commercial sex industry.

**Kate Hardy** is a researcher in the School of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Leeds. She is currently working on an ESRC project 'The Regulatory Dance', which is investigating the rise of lap dancing in the night time economy, particularly focusing on labour conditions in the industry. Her PhD thesis is entitled 'Proletaria de la vida: sex worker organising in Argentina', which explores strategies for sex worker resistance and union organization. She has published pieces in *International Labour and Working Class*, *Journal of International Development*, *The Guardian* and *Developments* and presented papers at conferences on labour, geography and sexualities. Her research interests include informal, irregular and 'atypical' labour, ethical and responsible methodologies, feminism, gender, agency and resistance.

**Phil Hubbard** is Professor in Urban Social Geography. He has published widely on geographies of commercial sex and is author of the forthcoming text *Cities and Sexualities*.

**Suzanne Jenkins** is an independent social researcher. Her main research interests are in the legal regulation of off-street sex work. Suzanne's PhD research, completed at Keele University in 2009, was entitled 'Beyond gender: an examination of

exploitation in sex work'. This was an empirical study which built upon feminist theories of prostitution by comparing the experiences of female prostitutes with male and transgendered escort sex workers. Suzanne is also interested in research methodology, especially in the context of hard-to-reach populations and sensitive topic matters. Most recently, she has contributed to various research projects on topics such as male circumcision, the history and purpose of birth registration and conscientious objection in public life. She is a member of the Keele Gender, Sexuality and Law Research Group and the AHRC Research Centre for Law, Gender and Sexuality at the University of Kent.

**Sarah Kingston** is a researcher affiliated with Leeds Metropolitan University. She also works as an associate lecturer for the Open University and teaches at Leeds University. Sarah is Co-founder and Coordinator of the Sex Work Research Postgraduate Conference. She recently completed her PhD at Leeds University in 2009 in which she explored community perceptions of prostitution. She is currently undertaking research into young people's perceptions of religion, funded by the ESRC and EHRC in conjunction with colleagues from Leeds Metropolitan University, Brunel University and Middlesex University. Sarah is also a member of the UKNSWP. Her recent publications include 'Demonizing desire: Men who buy sex and prostitution policy', Research for *Sex Work Journal* and is currently working on publishing from her PhD.

**Megan Rivers-Moore** is a postdoctoral fellow at the Women and Gender Studies Institute, University of Toronto, and a research fellow at the Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales, Universidad de Costa Rica.

**Erin Sanders** is a Research Fellow in the Social Policy Research Centre at Middlesex University in London. Her ESRC-funded PhD research was conducted at the University Nottingham in the School of Sociology and Social Policy. This ethnographic study explored western women's interactions with sexualized tourist spaces in Thailand.

**Teela Sanders** is a Reader in Sociology in the School of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Leeds. Sitting on the borders of criminology and sociology, Teela explores the inter-relationship between human sexuality and socio-legal structures. She has published on the indoor sex markets, *Sex Work: A Risky Business* (Willan, 2005); *Paying for Pleasure: Men Who Buy Sex* (Willan, 2008) and was principal author for the path-breaking textbook *Prostitution: Sex Work, Policy and Politics* with Maggie O'Neill and Jane Pitcher (Sage, 2009). She is currently working on an ESRC funded project, *The Regulatory Dance: Investigating the Structural Integration of Sexual Consumption into the Night Time Economy*.

**Romarc Thiévent** is a final year PhD candidate at the Institute of Geography of the University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland. In his PhD entitled 'Circulatory migration: the case of cabaret dancers', he analyses the trajectories and the logics of circulation of foreign strippers who come to work in Switzerland. Broadly, his research interests bear on circular migration, the gendered aspects of mobility, sex work and the spatial dimensions of asylum policies.

**Maria Törnqvist** received her PhD in Sociology from Stockholm University, Sweden. She is currently conducting research on tango tourism in Buenos Aires. She has also published on Swedish gender equality politics in *Könspolitik på gränsen (Gender Politics at the Border)* (2006) and has published a prize winning teaching book in feminist theory, *Feministisk teori i rörliga bilder (Feminist Theory in Motion)*, with Katharina Tollin in 2005. For the 2006 academic year she was a visiting scholar at the Sociology department at UC Berkeley, and from Fall 2007 she has been a postdoctoral fellow at GEXcel (Centre for Gender Excellence) Örebro University and Stockholm University, Sweden.

**Mary Whowell** completed her PhD on the practice, performance and regulation of male sex work at Loughborough University in August 2009. Following this, she moved to Simon Fraser University in Vancouver to pursue a post-doctoral project, funded by a prestigious Commonwealth Scholarship, on the regulation of adult entertainment through licensing and municipal by-law in 13 cities across Canada. Mary has experience as a volunteer outreach worker, and has delivered harm minimization services to male and female sex workers, operating in both on and off street environments in the UK and Canada. She is a member of the UK Network of Sex Work Projects, and has publications in *Geoforum* and the *Journal of Law and Society*. In September 2010 she will join the School of Arts and Social Sciences at Northumbria University as a Lecturer in Criminology

## Chapter 12

# 'Just get pissed and enjoy yourself': Understanding Lap-dancing as 'Anti-work'

Rachela Colosi

... I was standing by the DJ booth with Danny (a barman) watching the other dancers work the floor. It was a Saturday night and approaching midnight. On this particular evening I had pushed the 'researcher' part of me to the back of my mind and been seduced by the 'dancer' in me. I decided to have a few drinks (or at least, looking back, perhaps a few too many). Danny and I were drinking bottles of Corona, cautiously, as Gerard (manager) would not have been happy seeing one of the dancer's glugging lager from a bottle! Another dancer, Davina, had been instrumental in my slip into 'dancer mode', and in my pursuit of inebriation which inevitably followed. She had been encouraging me all night, insisting: 'just get pissed and enjoy yourself; you only live once!' How could I refuse; it is perhaps difficult to explain unless you are in the presence of other dancers in a lap-dancing club environment. Davina was always having fun at work, laughing with the girls, chatting to the customers and getting drunk. For her like many of the other girls, coming to work was not about 'working' ridiculously hard, it was about so much more...<sup>1</sup> (Field Diary: June 2004)

### Introduction

Lap-dancing clubs are part of a global industry. 'Gentlemen's clubs', as they are increasingly known, are becoming a central feature of the night-time economy across much of the United Kingdom (hereafter, UK) (Chatterton and Hollands 2003), although there has been some disagreement about the numbers of clubs currently in the UK.<sup>2</sup> The lap-dancing industry was estimated, in part due to the rapid expansion of chains such as 'Spearmint Rhino' and 'For Your Eyes Only', to be worth in the region of £300 million in the early 2000s (Jones et al. 2003). However, this industry is still in its infancy in the UK, as the first club of its kind

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1 All observational and interview data presented in this chapter was recorded between November 2003 and February 2006. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identities of those involved.

2 Claims made by groups such as 'Object' and the 'Fawcett Society' suggest there are in the region of 300 lap-dancing clubs in the UK. This however, is disputed by the 'Lap-dancing Association' who argue the figures are much lower.

did not open until the mid 1990s (Jones et al. 2003), while the industry in United States (US) and Canada evolved in the 1980s (Egan 2006a).

Despite the fact that these venues are increasingly viable places of employment within the night-time leisure economy, lap-dancing is still very much stigmatized (Colosi 2010b forthcoming). It is acknowledged as risqué (Hanna 2003) and 'deviant' (Carey et al. 1974, Forsythe and Deshotels 1998a) and continues to be morally judged (Scott 1996). Therefore this occupation is seen as distinct from many other modes of work. General definitions of 'work' are diverse and do not necessarily refer to paid employment. However, for the purpose of this chapter, I draw on Grint's (2005: 10) definition of work as the opposite of leisure and 'something we have to do, something we may prefer not to do and something we tend to get paid for'. 'Leisure', like work, despite having various definitions (Furnam 1990), is defined here as the experience, enjoyment and personal autonomy which can be experienced in any situation (Shaw 1985). In this sense, the concept of leisure focuses on the 'fun' dancers engage in whilst at work. Having fun in the work place is often discussed in relation to the use of humour (see Linstead 1985, Taylor and Bain 2003, Sanders 2004). However, the fun engaged with in the lap-dancing club often goes beyond the use of humour and involves leisure activities that might be associated with a night out, including drinking alcohol and taking drugs making it quite distinctive (see Colosi 2010b forthcoming). This is not to suggest that those in more mainstream work places such as office environments, for example, never consume alcohol or drugs in the work-place to experience pleasure. However, it is perhaps more unusual in these settings and therefore unlikely to become part of the workers' communal rituals, as can be seen in the lap-dancing club. Such patterns of behaviour are what additionally identify lap-dancing as a distinct mode of work.

Furthermore lap-dancing can be described as a form 'anti-work'. 'Anti-work', as well as being tied with the ritualistic pursuit of fun, is also described as 'anti' on the basis that dancers frequently make attempts to resist management and the work rules they are given. Having fun is not the only reason why dancers continue to dance, but it plays an important role in their resistance as workers. This chapter will explore how having fun takes priority in the lap-dancing club, fuelling motivation, helping build social relationships, improving dancer status, and also how it plays an important role in dancer resistance, helping to shape lap-dancing as a form of 'anti-work'.

### **Dancing, Working and Resisting**

Erotic dance, thus far, has attracted significant attention from academics and practitioners in the US and Canada where the industry is more prolific. Conversely there has been very little material produced about European and UK lap-dancing markets (for exceptions see Bott 2006, and Bindel 2004). The strip club literature produced in the US and Canada, which first emerged in the late 1960s,

has traditionally explored broad areas such as dancer motivation, exploitation/empowerment, the stigma associated with erotic dance, and dancer-customer interactions. Emerging from these wider themes, research has focused on specific areas concerned with the impact of dancing on the dancers' lives (Wesely 2002, Deshotels and Forsythe 2005, Barton 2006); dancer identities (Rambo-Ronai 1992, Reid et al. 1994, Wesely 2003); 'counterfeit intimacy' (Boles and Garbin 1974b, Enck and Preston 1988, Pasko 2002); dancer interaction strategies (Rambo-Ronai and Ellis 1989, Pasko 2002); customer and dancer relations (Frank 2002, Egan 2006a); working conditions (Holsopple 1998, Maticka-Tyndale et al. 1999 and 2000, Lewis et al. 2005); the emotional labour of dancing (Frank 1998, Barton 2007); gender-power relations (Wood 2000, Wesely 2002, Murphy 2003, Bott 2006); customer and dancer typologies<sup>3</sup> (Brewster 2003, Enck and Preston 1988, Ericson and Tewksbury 2000, Montemurro et al. 2003) and stigma management strategies (Thompson and Harred 1992 and 2003, Bradley 2007).

Within these themes there has been some acknowledgement of the pleasurable experiences women derive from lap-dancing (Bell et al. 1998, Egan 2006a). Although these pleasurable experiences are often related to performance, there is little emphasis placed on the pleasures derived from some of the dominant processes of socialization between dancers through engaging with social rituals, as discussed in this chapter. Discussions which relate to the pleasures gained from dancing also emphasize how dancers are able to negotiate some control in their workplace (see Wood 2000, Pasko 2002, Spivey 2005), in particular through creating their own informal codes of conduct (see Price 2000). It is argued, for instance, that dancers are able to influence their regulation through a process of informal training. Workers teach one another how to dance whilst on-the-job and in doing so make new dancers familiar with the special code of ethics by which they work (Price 2000). Egan (2006b) develops discussions around resistance further and contends that dancers use music to resist management and customers. Egan argues that through music selection during stage performances dancers enact a 'lyrical form of protest in their jobs' (2006b: 201). She argues that managers are disturbed by some of the messages produced by certain types of rap music used, which attacks white, middle-class culture (Egan 2006b). Meanwhile, Spivey (2005) contends that workers utilize front and backstage resistance strategies involving individual and collective techniques mainly directed at customers. These techniques vary but the common objective is to distance the dancer from the customer and de-sexualize her body.

Workplace resistance can never be absolute, but 'employees will constantly find ways of evading and subverting managerial organization and direction at work' (Ackroyd and Thompson 1999: 47; see also Hodson 1995, Martinez Lucio and Stewart 1997, Mulholland 2004, Roscigno et al. 2004). In other workplaces beyond lap dancing, worker resistance has been shown to take the form of gossip;

<sup>3</sup> This only gives examples of the most common sub-themes to emerge from the general body of literature.



confrontation; resignation; toleration; theft; sabotage; noncooperation; collective action; formal complaints; use of law and violence (Tucker 1993). The use of humour, particularly satire and teasing directed at managers and team leaders is also argued to play an important role (see Collinson 1988, Linstead 1985, Rodrigues and Collinson 1995, Taylor and Bain 2003). According to Taylor and Bain 'taking the piss' (2003: 1496) for example, involved workers sometimes viciously gossiping about team leaders and making their behaviour the topic of a joke. Furthermore, Holmes and Marra (2002) suggest that humour helps shape workplace culture not only by resisting management, but also in developing solidarity between workers. This occurs when worker 'alliances develop organically when workers identify with one another, and acting together they collude, collaborate and co-operate over challenges to management practice' (Mullholland 2004: 710).

In what follows I argue that lap-dancing is a form of 'anti-work' in which dancers prioritize having fun. Firstly I will argue that the pursuit of fun is central to dancer motivation, both in terms of their initial entry and continued participation as lap-dancers. Secondly, the main ways in which fun is practiced through engagement in social rituals will also be explored. Thirdly, the social rituals through which fun is practiced is argued to represent a form of anti-work. Finally, I will argue that dancers maintain collective forms of resistance and self-regulation by ensuring all dancers adhere to an ethos of fun and anti-work.

## Research Background

This chapter is based on an ethnographic study about the relationships between lap-dancers and the occupational culture with which they engaged in a UK chain-operated lap-dancing club named as 'Starlets'. Data was generated through extensive participant observation over approximately a two year period,<sup>4</sup> along with a small number of unstructured interviews conducted with lap-dancers. The fieldwork was carried out whilst I worked as a lap-dancer and was therefore actively engaged as a member of the 'culture' being observed. Prior to initiating this study I had been a lap-dancer in Starlets for almost two years. Further discussion of the complexities of my positionality can be found elsewhere (Colosi 2010b forthcoming).

### *Starlets*

Starlets was a medium-sized lap-dancing club situated on the fringe of a busy northern city centre. It was regulated and had a similar physical appearance to other UK-based chain-operated lap-dancing clubs (see Colosi 2010b forthcoming). The club had two floors on which the dancers interacted with customers, offered

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<sup>4</sup> Observations were predominantly conducted inside 'Starlets', although a number of observations were made outside of this setting whilst both socializing and living with dancers.



private dances and performed stage shows. Other significant areas of the club included the dancers' changing room and managers' office. As is usual in most clubs there was a décor which aimed to bring about an atmosphere of sensuality. The use of colours such as rich crimsons and gold set off by soft lighting helped to create what has been described as a landscape of desire (Liepe-Levinson 2002). At the time of this ethnography the club operated a strict 'topless only' policy, which was a limit placed upon the extent of nakedness by the local authority licensing board<sup>5</sup> who issued the establishment's license.<sup>6</sup> The club was operated by two main (male) managers, and, as well as dancers other occupational roles in Starlets included security staff, waitresses, bar staff, DJs, receptionists and hosts.<sup>7</sup> The number of dancers working at this venue per night was variable, and depended upon factors such as day of the week and time of year, but could be as few as 10 and as many as 35 dancers. Many of the dancers had worked in other lap-dancing clubs or as agency strippers<sup>8</sup> prior to working in Starlets. Others had no or minimal experience of the stripping industry. Dancers were expected to perform regular stage shows and generated their earnings from lap-dances (private dances) and sit-downs.<sup>9</sup> Each dancer paid commission (also known as a 'house fee') to the club managers to conduct business on the premises. The amount of commission paid to the club varied and frequently changed over the time fieldwork was conducted, but on average dancers paid between £40 and £80 per shift.

### For Love of Fun, Not Just Money

As well as citing money as an important motivational factor, early 'motivation' literature tended to favour pathological explanations for women's involvement in stripping, signifying it as a result of their 'deviancy' (see for example Skipper and McCaghy 1970, Boles and Garbin 1974a, Carey et al. 1974). What has remained consistent is the contention that women's involvement in stripping is predominantly financially motivated (see for example Forsythe and Deshotels 1998a, Barton 2006). With the exception of Forsythe and Deshotels (1998a), this explanation seems to have been taken at face value by most researchers who are

5 This has since changed with dancers based at 'Starlets' now able to offer customers both topless and fully nude private dances.

6 In England and Wales lap-dancing clubs, as of April 2010, were re-licensed as 'Sexual Entertainment Establishments'. This is outlined in the Policing and Crime Act 2009. Prior to this lap-dancing club were regulated under the Licensing Act 2003.

7 Hosts were employed to show customers to seats as they entered the club.

8 This refers to women who find work through a stripping agency and are hired out as strippers to perform nude and semi nude stage shows in pubs, night clubs and social clubs. Furthermore, these workers may also be hired as 'strip-o-grams' for private parties.

9 This refers to when a customer pays for the company of a dancer for 30 minutes or more; customers would be charged at an hourly rate.

unaware, or do not acknowledge the ways in which this account is at odds with the actual actions and behaviour of these women in the lap-dancing club environment, but also by the fact that these workers sometimes offer more than one reason for lap-dancing (see Colosi 2010b forthcoming). Indeed, there is a wider literature on work motivation which stresses that economic considerations are often wrongly assumed to be paramount in determining people's work choices, and that moral beliefs or the pursuit of pleasure are often more important considerations (Duncan and Edwards 1999, Bradley et al. 2000, Dunn 2010a and 2010b forthcoming).

Forsythe and Deshotels (1998a) argue that choosing to be a dancer and continuing to work in the stripping industry is perhaps more complex than it would first appear, without clearly offering an alternative set of explanations and yet they still conclude that money is a dominant motivation. I argue here that although, as established by earlier studies, there was an indication that the financial reward of dancing was important in explaining dancers' entry and continued participation in this job, many of the women who participated in this ethnography appeared to be equally, if not more, motivated by the excitement and fun associated with stripping than the financial reward. I have argued elsewhere that entry routes into dancing and continued participation are complex, as dancer motivation is tied with practical reasons, such as making money, but simultaneously connected with more emotionally driven reasons such as experiencing pleasure through having fun (see Colosi 2010b forthcoming).

It is perhaps this complexity that sometimes made it difficult for dancers to articulate their own motivation for dancing. As Karen, a dancer, stated 'I don't think it's straightforward, as in "I need money, I need a job". It's hard to put your finger on'. Furthermore, although Ruby, a dancer, stated that the money was her motivation for lap-dancing, on a number of separate occasions she said that 'the money isn't enough to keep me here'. Despite the emotional as well as physical labour lap-dancing involves (Barton 2007) workers stressed the intense pleasure they gained both from dancing and from social interaction with the other dancers. Nelly summed up how working at Starlets could be positively experienced: 'Like being on a night out but getting fuck loads of money'.

Forsythe and Deshotels (1998a) suggest that at times erotic dancers appeared to be more concerned by the social relationships they shared with other dancers than the 'work' they were expected to engage with. For instance, it is pointed out that on leaving this job, dancers 'reported that they missed the membership groups and participating in the subculture of dancers. Many dancers attempt to leave the occupation only to return after a short hiatus' (Forsythe and Deshotels 1998a: 90). Forsythe and Deshotels (1998a) do not elaborate much further. However, this was corroborated in my own research as membership and camaraderie between the dancers working in Starlets also appeared to draw women back after a period of short retirement (see Colosi 2010b forthcoming).

The spirit of 'anti-work', in having 'fun', which was observed amongst many of the dancers at Starlets is again further suggested by dancer Karen who explained to me 'you're going to work, having a laugh, having a good time, I'm not arsed if

I don't make any money ... just having a laugh, thinking I may as well just have a laugh'. It is important not to take Karen's statement completely at face value, after all, she did want to make money and it is doubtful she would have worked for free. However, what Karen was perhaps trying to stress is that having fun is an important part of her job that keeps her there. Importantly, the money earned in the lap-dancing club is not just about making enough to ensure survival; it also enables dancers to engage with a particular lifestyle and with the various social rituals that were witnessed in Starlets.

### Understanding Fun Through Social Rituals

To further understand the anti-work ethos and the type of fun had in Starlets, it is necessary to make sense of the 'social rituals' engaged in by the dancers. Dancers were intensely socialized into understanding the tacit rules of the club through their regular and active engagement with social rituals. Such rituals included drinking alcohol and sometimes taking recreational drugs (see also Boles and Garbin 1974b, Maticka-Tyndale et al. 2000, Montemurro 2001, Barton 2006, Bott 2006). At the beginning of a shift at Starlets, it was common for dancers to sit in groups in the main work areas, talking and drinking alcohol. Similarly, dancers who used drugs would enter the toilet cubicle at intervals during a shift, sometimes in groups of twos or threes, to take cocaine, ecstasy or amphetamine. The following field diary extract highlights a set of behaviours regularly observed amongst dancers on the main work floor:

...The doors of the club were about to open and most of the dancers were already on the main floor waiting for their vodka cranberries or white wine to start the night with. Every night dancers took advantage of the 'two drinks for a fiver' offer. Once served it was an opportunity, before customers arrived, for the dancers to sit around with one another and gossip about various events inside and outside the club...

This was a common scene and it was the regularity and the meaning behind these social activities that made them ritualistic. It was necessary to engage in these social rituals in order to be popular and respected in the lap-dancing club environment, something which is important for these workers. Acceptance and respect of other dancers were brought about by the dancers' tolerance of, and active engagement in, these social rituals. This helped improve relations between workers and ensured they were in synchronicity with the dominant anti-work ethic.

In Starlets there was a clear hierarchy of dancers which was produced, controlled and maintained by the dancers, not by management. This represented the workers' very own unofficial career structure. Other dancer hierarchies have been implicit in discussions of lap-dancers elsewhere (Price 2000, Barton 2006). The one identified in Starlets is more comparable to the subculture of taxi-

dancers identified by Cressey (1932) in which dancers were part of their unique 'social world' with their own rituals and code of conduct (see Colosi 2010a). The hierarchy identified in Starlets comprised of three status roles: 'new girl', 'transition' and 'old school'; with the 'new girl' possessing the least status and 'old school' carrying the highest level of status. The transition stage was a period in which a dancer was in the process of becoming established, though considered neither new nor acclaimed. Rather than just being defined by dancing skills and income generation, these statuses were marked by the respect of other dancers, personal autonomy and control within the club.

Developing relationships through the engagement with social rituals sometimes meant dancers would partake in activities they would not have ordinarily considered before working as dancers. Lisa, for example, described how her social behaviour changed after starting work at Starlets:

...When I first started I never ever touched anything [drugs]. And then just started taking it [cocaine] at work. Had a little bit of a dip where I'd like take it quite a lot at work ... It was a lot of things that started it. But mainly, I think coz [sic] I started hanging with Charley (dancer); she'd give us it for free. I think a lot of it starts coz they (dancer) want to be in this circle, in this gang. It's kinda [sic] like you smoke to be in the cool gang. That sort of thing...

This was not uncommon. Kat, for example, had never consumed alcohol let alone drugs before she started dancing. This changed as Kat gradually became immersed in some of the dominant patterns of social behaviour evident in Starlets. Kat's transformation is described in the following field diary extract:

Kat was known for having a good time and making the most of her freedom to drink. She was also known to regularly take cocaine at work. As I have noted before in previous field notes, Kat has changed from the unconfident and somewhat anti-social dancer when she started out here. She used to sit alone drinking coke but now she's never seen without a vodka cranberry out of her hand.

Although the focus here is on the use of alcohol, Kat regularly used cocaine, like many other dancers. Other popular drugs used by the dancers in Starlets included ephedrine,<sup>10</sup> amphetamine (speed) and ecstasy. The use of ephedrine was considered different from the other recreational drugs used and was regularly compared to caffeine supplements or energy drinks. Nelly, for instance, when on one occasion offered me an ephedrine tablet and assured me: 'It's just like Proplus.<sup>11</sup> It's not bad for you'. Dancers, perhaps because of the prolific and accepted use of drugs

<sup>10</sup> A drug used clinically for asthma, however it is taken recreationally for its stimulant effects. Recreational use of ephedrine is currently illegal in the UK.

<sup>11</sup> Non-prescription fatigue relief caffeine tablets.

in Starlets, were desensitized to these activities. This in some ways also mirrors a wider process of drug normalization in which the use of certain drugs is argued to have become socially accepted (Parker et al. 1998). Dancers would sometimes openly use drugs in communal areas such as the changing room, or casually offer them to fellow workers. On a number of occasions I was also offered cocaine. On one occasion three dancers casually divided up three lines of cocaine on the dressing room counter. After they left, I asked Stacey, another dancer who was sitting near me what she thought about it. She simply shrugged and smiled, explaining to me, 'it's not the first time I've seen that and it won't be the last'.

Rather than interpreting the social rituals described as a process of socialization and hedonistic pursuit, some researchers have pointed to the use of drugs and alcohol as being part of an effort to numb the 'emotional toll of stripping' and stigma neutralization (Barton 2007, Maticka-Tyndale et al. 2000). Drugs and alcohol are indeed used by lap-dancers as a coping strategy for emotional stresses and strains brought about by their job (see Colosi 2010b forthcoming); yet beyond this, dancers also engage in these activities in the pursuit of pleasure and in order to enhance the social experience of lap-dancing. Unlike in more mainstream occupations, the use of alcohol whilst on duty is considered acceptable and even encouraged. The consumption of drugs and alcohol within the industry is indicative of the difference between how fun is both manifested and experienced in lap dancing compared to that identified in more mainstream office-based workplaces (see Holmes and Marra 2002, Taylor and Bain 2003).

### Resistance, Regulation and Hierarchy

Although lap-dancers are governed by the 'house rules'<sup>12</sup> of the club, which were created by managers and owners, dancers also developed and maintained their own 'tacit rules'. This has been identified in other lap-dancing clubs (see Rambo-Ronai and Ellis 1989, Price 2000) and in other modes of work (see Holmes 2000, Taylor and Bain 2003). In Starlets the tacit rules were not as straightforward as the formal house rules and not presented as a list of 'dos and don'ts'. Each status role was subject to a different code of conduct directing their behaviour. For instance, new girls were likely to be chastised by co-workers for making physical contact with a customer during a private dance. However, this type of conduct was more acceptable and tended to be overlooked when carried out by an old school dancer (see Colosi 2010b forthcoming). Beyond dancer conduct, the tacit rules enabled dancers to manipulate and override some of the club's powers as articulated through the house rules. For example, informal rules provided them with the means to use drugs, consume alcohol to get intoxicated and transform their work experience into anti-work, as a form of resistance against discipline. Formal rules which prohibit the excessive use of alcohol and drugs are ignored and undermined

12 A list of rules governing the conduct of dancers and customers.

and prioritizing fun represents a protest against the management's emphasis on making money and maintaining control.

In Starlets although the tacit rules were not fixed and frequently changed in response to the input and influence of different dancers, one theme did remain consistent: personal autonomy. A desire for personal autonomy underpinned the tacit rules and therefore part of their self-regulation. In Starlets maintaining self-regulation required some negotiation between the workers and managers. Dancers, particularly those of high status, such as old school dancers, would sometimes employ various bargaining strategies. As Leanne suggests in the following extract, some dancers, despite their dislike of the managers, were willing to provide sexual favours in order to gain some control in the club:

...I sat at the bar and talked to Leanne as the day shift came to a close... We got into a conversation about Gerard [manager] and his relationships with other dancers. He'd dated a few dancers; Princess and a couple of European dancers who no longer worked... Leanne suggested that some dancers were quite happy to sleep with Gerard despite the widespread dislike of him. 'I've walked in on a couple of lasses shagging him in the office. I'm not mentioning any names, but all I'm saying is that they get away with stuff'...

Although dancers did at times have 'serious' relationships with managers, Leanne was quite clear during our conversation that more often than not the sexual relations between a dancer and a manager was, in her mind, usually related to a dancer's desire for power in the club. Other examples have included dancers using the supply of drugs such as cocaine. Linda, for example, told me how other dancers were known to slip managers wraps of cocaine in an attempt to keep the commission payment down. Although these actions might seem more about their own personal gain, these bargaining strategies inevitably have a roll-on effect and impact on the other dancers. As well as helping bring about dancer autonomy, these actions present managers as easy targets for manipulation and further reduce their image of professionalism, deepening the dancers' lack of respect for club 'authority' and the need to comply with house rules. The disrespect for managers was apparent in the regular verbal mockery directed at them by the dancers, often witnessed in the changing room (see also Taylor and Bain 2003), along with the display of nonchalance presented by dancers in the monthly meetings held by managers. Respect, instead of being directed at the managers at Starlets was turned inward, with dancers admiring the established old school workers more than the managers and club owners, in part due to their manipulation of them.

### **Spreading the Gospel of Anti-work**

Dancers at Starlets were keen to maintain the anti-work ethos that was articulated through the various social rituals. This was because maintaining commitment to



anti-work ultimately sustained collective practices of resistance. As suggested earlier, although income generation played an important role in the dancers' occupation, not just as a matter of survival, but also to ensure the maintenance of their leisure and lifestyle; it is the pursuit of fun and excitement in which dancers encouraged each other to participate. As indicated earlier, engaging with various social rituals was crucial in climbing the 'career ladder' of lap-dancing. There were consequences for those who continually distanced themselves from, refused to engage in, or outwardly opposed the social rituals. While those who accepted and complied with the anti-work ethic were rewarded with increased popularity and an elevated status in the dancer hierarchy. This did not mean that dancers had to drink alcohol and/or consume drugs, but it was necessary for those workers to accept this behaviour from others, and strive to have fun by socializing with other dancers. In order for resistance to be effective and to maintain self-regulation, it was important for other workers to be united and for a consensus about informal (tacit) rules and regulations to be accomplished (Mulholland 2004). It was therefore in a dancer's interests to adhere to these rules if she wanted to be accepted by her fellow workers.

The story of Kate, a new girl at Starlets, helps highlight how challenging the tacit rules, through non-adherence to the social rituals, can lead to ostracization. During Kate's limited time at Starlets, other dancers regularly complained about how she repeatedly breached tacit rules despite being corrected by her more experienced co-workers. Despite her new girl status, as well as making open contact with customers, Kate regularly consumed vast amounts of alcohol and or drugs such as amphetamine and ephedrine to the extent that she was often so intoxicated that she could barely speak or stand. Consequently her behaviour was reported to managers and she was quickly dismissed. Although the use of alcohol and drugs is accepted and encouraged in the pursuit of having fun, there are rules that govern exactly how these social rituals are practiced. For instance, the indiscrete use of drugs and heavy consumption of alcohol amongst new girls is seen as problematic. This indicates that there were limits for new workers. The widespread contempt for Kate was articulated by one of her colleagues Sally, who, in response to Kate's dismissal told her 'What do you expect, you fucking weirdo! Don't expect to get any sympathy from us'. Other dancers too, after failing to adhere to the tacit rules faced opposition from established old school dancers. Tiger, for example, isolated herself from other dancers, refusing to partake in communal social rituals. She explained to me: 'I'm not here to make friends. I'm here to make money'. In this way Tiger shunned the tacit rules and more widely the anti-work philosophy other dancers adopted. As well as causing resentment, this led to her being repeatedly taunted by some of the other dancers, some of whom directed verbal, and sometimes more physical forms of abuse at her. On one occasion, following a disagreement, a physical fight broke out between Tiger and Davina. Following this incident, Charley, an old school dancer, intentionally damaged some of Tiger's personal property, including a stereo and clothing, which had been stored in the changing room.

As well as weeding out non-conformists, dancers attempted to sustain their anti-work philosophy through their mentoring of new girls. High status dancers, for example, would often take it upon themselves to offer their mentorship to new starters. Price (2000) also acknowledges that established dancers mentor new workers, teaching them about the dancer code of conduct. In Starlets this involved guiding dancers through acceptable customer-dancer interaction and improving private dance and stage performances. However, more crucially they would be taught about the importance of social engagement with other dancers. In addition, in being made aware of the more negative relationships that could emerge between dancers, such as the ones shared by both Kate and Tiger with the other dancers, new girls soon learned the importance of building positive relationships with the existing dancers, by accepting and partaking in social rituals, putting them in tune with the anti-work ethos.

## Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how lap-dancers, to some extent, prioritize fun in the workplace not only to experience pleasure but also in order to resist management's rules and regulations. Furthermore, what is suggested is that despite claims that women's long-term engagement with lap-dancing is fundamentally motivated by money, the pursuit of pleasure through having fun was equally as important in Starlets. Processes of socialization evident amongst dancers were underpinned by their engagement in various social rituals. Tacit rules placed having fun as a lap-dancing priority and shaped the dominant anti-work ethos promoted amongst the dancers. Workers attempted to circulate this ethos amongst dancers, simultaneously increasing solidarity and ensuring subtle forms of resistance. Although in many ways lap-dancing conforms with other types of work it is nonetheless distinctive. This is evident by the availability of alcohol and use of drugs. The practice of fun and resistance is also different from that experienced in many other work environments. For instance, some of the wider work literature suggests that workers resist through the use of humour, however, this is distinct from the pursuit of fun as resistance outlined in Starlets, which goes beyond having a laugh. This is perhaps because the work-places under study are largely office-based (see Taylor and Bain 2003), where the social practices associated with the lap-dancing club are less common or simply impossible. Furthermore, in the lap-dancing literature, although dancer control and resistance are discussed, the role fun plays in this process, as described in this chapter, is absent. As such, this chapter therefore develops existing arguments about lap-dancing and integrates them with wider work place resistance by identifying numerous strategies of resistance in lap-dancing which are expressed through an ethic of 'anti work'.



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