

FEMALE ESCORT SERVICES:

A CASE STUDY

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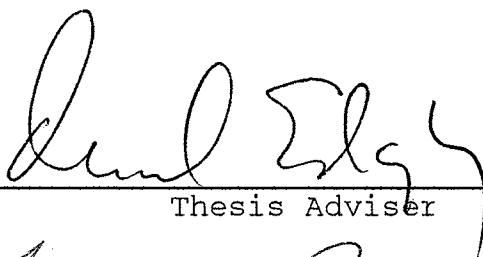
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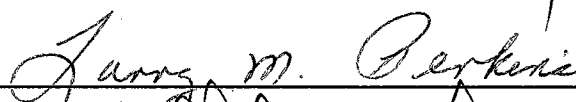
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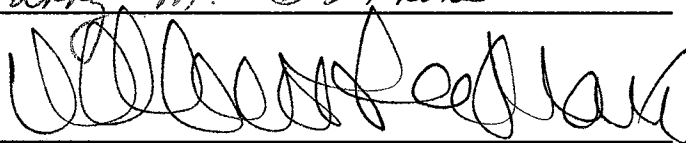
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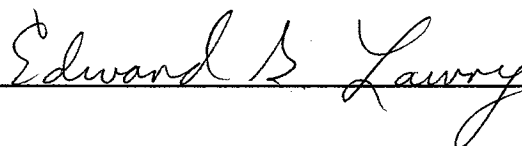
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Ultimately, the most appreciation goes to the sex workers who allowed me into their world. Without them this work would not exist.

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CHAPTER I

FEMALE ESCORT SERVICES:

AN INTRODUCTION

I am what I am, and what I am needs
no excuses. I deal my own deck, sometimes the ace,
sometimes the deuces. It's one life and there's no return
and no deposit. One life so it's time to open up the closet.
Life's not worth a damn till you can shout out
I am what I am

La Cage aux Folles

Prostitution interests both the public and the scholar. For as long as prostitutes (meretrixs) have worked -- and that is a long time -- people have wondered about their lives. Many people feel that they "know" about meretrixs, others only wonder. The following research will enlighten both groups.

I concentrated my research on one segment of prostitution, female escort service employees. (1) These individuals, despite the unusual nature of their world and work, offer us a microcosm of our own selves and sexuality. The problems and solutions involved in sustaining self in this group mirror those of others. For Peter Brook (1992) this reflective process is a Shakespearian mirror: "viewing the abnormal allows us to taste normality" (1992). In the

world of prostitution, the tenuous line between erotic reality and everyday reality (2) becomes an unavoidable part of daily life -- setting the stage for a fragile self.

Humans find themselves through interaction. As Brissett and Edgley wrote ". . . it [self] is attached to our doings" (1990, p. 114). Since we do a lot of different things, we have the potential to exhibit different selves. Charles Horton Cooley was among the earliest to recognize this aspect of the self: "A man may be regarded as the point of intersection of an indefinite number of circles representing social groups, having as many arcs passing through them as there are groups" (1964, p. 148).

My study focuses on the interactive participation of the actor(s). In the short term, as persons try to get through a day, we can begin to see the fragile nature of social reality. The processes that an actor uses to keep the act running smoothly provide information on how individuals go about "doing it," constructing self (3).

While exploring the social world of the escort worker I will focus on two main goals. First, this work will illustrate the fragile nature of human activity. Individuals can find themselves in tenuous situations at any moment. This rickety social stage is the foundation for the fragile self. As actors go through their daily interaction with others, they do not observe this fragility until the social situation is interrupted. Prostitutes lend themselves nicely to the study of such situations. Inherent

in their life-style is a higher probability of interaction breakdown during daily social interaction, especially with nonprostitutes.

A number of groups share this proclivity for social instability and could have illustrated the fragile self. No group of social actors is immune to the processes described in this research. Observing prostitutes as they interact among themselves and with others directs the second goal: to open up a part of the social world that has remained largely unknown. This goal will be accomplished by listening to sex workers as they tell their stories (4). We all share the fragility of social interaction, although some situations are more shaky than others. Due to any number of factors; stigmatization, fear, disgust, jealousy, groups differ in their level of tolerance toward others sharing the social arena. Goffman pointed out that ". . . if a particular person or group of society seems to have a unique character of its own, it is because its standard set of human-nature elements is pitched and combined in a particular way" (1967, p. 45).

Often negative feelings can be lessened with understanding. Understanding prostitutes at their level of interaction is central to achieving my goals. Our understanding of prostitutes is limited for several reasons. First, the illegality of sex work necessitates that prostitutes restrict knowledge of their activities, as do the mafia, motorcycle gangs, and other groups outside the socially defined legal system. Second, prostitution is a

nocturnal activity. The world occupied by sex workers is temporally reversed, prostitutes sleep during the day and work at night. Finally, sex workers are professionally and emotionally close to each other, and fully understand that betrayal could lead to dire consequences.

Further, my research centers on the secretive aspects of prostitution. Few researchers have been able to gain the trust of such secretive groups as female escort workers. In the few attempts made to study escort services most researchers have had to make substitutions for areas that were inaccessible. Tanice G. Foltz (1979) was hampered by the barriers set up by the owner of the escort service. The most serious of such barriers was the inaccessibility of the working girls at the escort service she studied. Foltz admitted that "the inaccessibility to the women employed in Sue's escort service led me to interview other women, most of whom worked in local massage parlors, another emergent sex for money scene" (1979, p. 111).

The difficulty involved in studying groups such as prostitutes has created gaps in our collective body of knowledge. This lack of research has left us with little grounded information with which to formulate opinions concerning prostitutes. For example, Parenti (1990) believed that an overreliance on images received through the media resulted in the perpetuation of stereotypes. He refers to the ". . . fictional things" seen on "the big and little screen" as "the make-believe media; they make us believe" (Parenti 1992, p. 1). Like Parenti, Erik Barnouw

concluded that "popular entertainment is basically propaganda for the status quo" (1973, p. 80). Furthermore, sociologist Hal Himmelstein supports both positions by stating that television is "one of our society's principal repositories of [conventional] ideology" (1984, p. 19). The availability of ethnographies will increase our understanding of "human groups" (Blumer 1969). The ethnographic data contained in this work should provide scholars with another source for comprehending the social self, sexuality, and prostitution.

Methodology

This study explores the daily life of sex workers as they move between two stages. First, I examine the sex worker's everyday world to reflect their interpretation of the situation. To interpret, sex workers analyze the unintended results of behavior, and remake the situation as required. Second, I examine the public arena. Public reaction to overt behavior is essential to both prostitutes and scholars when attempting to understand impressions received by the audience. In turn, such understandings affect future social interaction.

My work has an ethnomethodological basis: it finds everyday life interesting, including both its trivial and its profound characteristics. These two aspects combine in a precarious balance within the actor's circumstances.

Although it shares theoretical interests, my research does not share the methodology of ethnomethodology. Unlike

some ethnomethodologists, I do not purposefully disrupt interaction. There are enough instances of unintended interaction disrupts to provide empirical data for study. It is within these serindipitous breakdowns that I find the ethnomethodology of everyday self throughout my observation of female escort services.

Triangulation. This study will use triangulation (Denzin 1989) to explore the fragile self. As Lincoln and Guba describe this method, it is ". . . as though a fisherman were to use multiple nets, each of which had a complement of holes, but placed together so that the holes in one net were covered by intact portions of other nets" (1985, p. 306). Denzin (1989) describes four types of triangulation: data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and methodological triangulation. The exploratory nature of this work prohibits the use of data triangulation, which use dissimilar comparison groups to seek out a common thread in a subject. This tactic is not fruitful until a thorough understanding of the subject is accomplished. Investigator triangulation is not possible due to budgetary restrictions. The trust established by myself within the escort service did not extend to additional researchers, who lacked such rapport. Theory triangulation is inapplicable to research whose goal is to understand social interaction, not prove theory. The main goal of theory triangulation is to strengthen theory by attacking it with multiple data sources; the theory must be true if it can stand up to

multiple applications. Such a positivistic stance is of little use to this qualitative study.

The most useful type of triangulation for my study is methodological triangulation. (5) Denzin's (1989) concern with methodological triangulation focuses on two distinct types. The first type, "within-method" triangulation, uses multiple types of the same methodology. For example, using three or four different survey instruments on any one population.

The second type, "between-method" or "across-method," assumes ". . . that the flaws in one method are often the strengths of another; and by combining methods, observers can achieve the best of each while overcoming their unique deficiencies" (Denzin 1985, p. 244).

Between- or across-method triangulation in this project will allow the reader to view prostitutes as a subculture of the dominant society. Therefore, I use methodological triangulation to "combine theories and methods carefully and purposefully with the intention of adding breadth or depth to our analysis, but not for the purpose of pursuing 'objective' truth" (Fielding and Fielding 1986, p. 33). Further, by appreciating the fragile nature of this group, readers may also see their own.

As used in this project, triangulation will consist of three methodological strategies: participant observation, retrospective participant observation, existing literature (especially historical accounts).

Methods. The first method used is participant observation. Fieldwork provides a "realist tale" (Denzin 1989). Description derived from observation of female escort employees will focus on strategic locales for intensive analysis, a method suggested by Marcus (1986). A focus on the inner workings of escort services, and on prostitution in general, provides an understanding of the fragile nature inherent to a social self in general.

I spent twelve months observing one escort agency through short intensive field studies during the summer of 1990. While in the field I wanted to be as unobtrusive as possible, to become a part of the escorts' everyday social world. This was not difficult since the owner of the escort service under study is a relative of mine. My time in the field was spent sharing meals with the women, working through escort's personal and professional problems, and spending leisure time with the women. My intention was to document instances of breakdowns during social interaction that threatened the sex worker's self. More important, I watched carefully the processes used by individuals to reconstruct the self once it had been torn apart.

I conducted a series of follow-up interviews between August 1990 and May 1991, in telephone conversations with the owner of the agency, Ann (all names are pseudonyms). Additional follow-ups occurred during visits with Ann during holidays and weekends. Included during the fieldwork were some unstructured questions, used to explore further the

interactions observed during the field study. Additionally, I used a short written questionnaire to obtain demographic data. The results of the questionnaire are found in Appendix A.

I did not keep extensive field notes during my stay with the escort agency. Observations and impression gathered during my visits were consolidated at the end of each session in the field. I chose to proceed with my research in this manner for two reasons. First, I felt that this method would be less obtrusive. The use of a taping device, or the action of writing notes during interaction, would always remind the escorts that I was conducting research. Second, the ever present possibility of legal intervention was of concern. Although concerned with my personal legal involvement, I was more concerned with the use of my field notes against the escorts in court.

In the field I had a significant advantage over others researching prostitution because this study is not hindered by the imputation of research logic upon that of the subjects. Because the owner of the escort service is a relative, I have enjoyed a rapport that most researchers labor many years to nurture. Thus, the problems associated with "crossed logics" will be avoided.(6) For this reason I chose the escort service as a case study for my discussion of the fragile social self.

Along with the benefits of rapport, the ability to take another's role, there are potential disadvantages. One such disadvantage is excessive rapport. Denzin cautions

researchers never to "take themselves and their own actions for granted, or too seriously" (1989, p. 119). To do so could set up a researcher for the ever present danger of being taken in by a group with which the researcher too closely identifies.

To avoid excessive rapport the researcher needs a "profound sense of self-cynicism" (Denzin 1989, p. 119). Denzin believes that self cynicism is a way to avoid being taken in, deceived, or lied to by subjects. My close relations with the subjects of this project will help alleviate some of Denzin's concerns. Yet my close familiarity did create a problem. I needed to guard against thinking that I fully understand all aspects of the process observed.

Actors will readily offer up vocabulary of motives: some will excuse, others will justify. One group might reconstruct problematic interaction, others might not. The social self is located in the interactions we find ourselves in, and in the interactions caused by others. An examination of the interactive processes will expose the fragile self.

I start my exploration where Mead (1946) began, with the observable actions of individuals. In the quest for understanding, as actors construct and interpret reality, the processes of language become crucial components. But beyond these, it is important to study the organism-in-environment. I explore how the individuals manipulate their environment, particularly through language,

as well as less obvious, often nonlinual forms. As Blumer (1979) suggested, an understanding of interpretations and an individuals acting on such interpretations is crucial to an analysis of a sociological self.(7)

Interrelationship is at the center of Perinbanayagam's (1985) analysis of self. Perinbanayagam believes that understanding can only take place within linguistic/ symbolic categories. Individuals grow up in groups using a language. Conceptions of self will align only within the limitations of language, a set of common responses. The more symbolically oriented among us would assert that language is our freedom. As creative individuals, humans use language not only to define freedom but to create freedom.

Giddens agrees. He sees language as a "structure," (8) and asserts that "language is not 'possessed' by any particular speaker, but can be conceptualized only as characteristic of a community of speakers; it can be conceived of as an abstract set of rules which are not mechanically applied, but are employed in a generative mode by speakers who are members of the language community" (1976, p. 104). Through the formalized uses of language, people create and -- more important -- recreate social life. Giddens believes that humans are competent language users who follow linguistic rules.

The second methodology used in this research is retrospective participant observation. Martin Bulmer (1982)

describes it as follows:

As a total participant in this role, the observer was completely immersed in the setting which he or she was studying, but had not yet developed a research interest in it. No deception of those studied was involved, no breach of informed consent occurred, since no scientific study was in view at the time the study was carried out. (p. 255)

Personal experiences gathered before an individual receives formal training in sociology provide data that should not be overlooked. These "recollected experience" (Bulmer 1982) provide yet another source in the quest for understanding our social world.

Personal exposure to this group of women precedes my formal education in sociology. Since the owner of the escort service is related to me, I observed different aspects of this profession throughout my youth. My collected memories and impressions of prostitution enable me to use a retrospective participant component, which serves as a filter through which to see sex workers.

Supplementing the data gathered from the field, I make liberal use of public archival records (Webb et al. 1966). Inclusion of a historical component motivates the use of this third branch of triangulation. Prostitution is not a modern phenomenon; it has been a part of social history for many centuries. Social groups have shared histories that can be uncovered by historians. Scholars should use this resource to understand the present within the context of the past. Denzin (1989) referred to this process as an "inner history" that reflects events occurring before the contemporary work.

The literature on sex workers' long history provides a wealth of useful data. I use this material to provide a history of sex workers vis-a-vis my field research. Throughout my work, when appropriate, I begin my discussion with a historical context. Following this treatment of the past I discuss what I have observed in the present. We cannot understand who we are unless we understand who we have been. Only after we see who sex workers were can we understand who they are today. Augmenting the historical treatment, my field research provides insights concerning sex work today.

The Research Setting

I was not a stranger to the research setting, a large urban city in the south. My familiarity with the city allowed me to locate Ann's neighborhood with little trouble. It was mid-afternoon when I found myself driving down tree-lined residential streets. Ann's neighborhood is like many other middle-class suburban areas. An occasional wave of the hand from elderly individuals sitting on porches greeted me as I drove down the streets. This unlikely location -- not what one would envision as typical locale for an escort service -- exemplifies the contradictions often associated with stereotypes.

Although it appeared stable, the neighborhood showed signs of change. The area had experienced a large encroachment of industrial complexes and service centers. The growth of the metropolitan area surrounding Ann's

neighborhood has created environmental catalysts for change. As is typical of what early urban sociologists (Park, Burgess, and McKenzie 1925) observed, succession occurred as a community grew, in turn altering the physical environment. Similar processes are evident in Ann's neighborhood. Predominantly consisting of retirees, the neighborhood also contained younger families. Many lawns were scattered with toys and bicycles. The operation of Ann's escort service in this area was further evidence of the transformation occurring there.

Thinking I was in the wrong neighborhood, I searched for the address that Ann gave me during our telephone conversation. Continuing down the street I become aware of a house possibly belonging to Ann. Discarded pieces of furniture scattered about the front lawn set this house apart from the neighbors. A Lincoln Town car parked in the driveway was atypical for this neighborhood, furthering my conviction that this was the correct house.

Ann welcomed me and explained why the furniture was in the yard. "Oh, I set that stuff out to be picked up. We bought new stuff and, well, the city workers won't pick it up. They say that it is not their job to haul off large items, or tree cuttings." Since city workers had refused to pick up the items, they remained strewn about the front yard.

Noticing the attention that my arrival had caused Ann quickly added, "don't pay attention to them [the neighbors]. They have been complaining about too much activity, you know, traffic in and out." Ann has tried to

keep the traffic in and out of the house to a minimum. She understands that such behavior is a sure sign to the neighbors of something out of the ordinary.

In this neighborhood any such attempts are probably futile because any traffic might be viewed as unusual. People visiting Ann are also subject to suspicion due to the vehicles they drive. It is commonplace to see expensive sport cars, luxury cars, and an occasional Harley-Davidson motorcycle parked at Ann's house. These are in stark contrast to the four-door sedans and station wagons parked in front of most houses in the neighborhood.

Turning from the neighbors, Ann focused on her proudest possession -- her house. Her pride became apparent when Ann offered to show me around the house. Entering through the wrought iron reinforced front door one finds the living room. Very modest and neat, this room was most often used by Ann when she needed to get away from the noise and hustle of everyday life. Furnished with contemporary furniture, this area did create a secure atmosphere. The first thing I noticed was a large oversized chair in the corner to my left. Nestled next to the chair was a small table supporting a reading lamp, surrounded by three or four books topically ranging from mysteries to erotic fiction.

Opposite the chair an oversized couch extended the length of one wall. When Ann's thoughts turn to more private affairs, she comes here. Adding to the atmosphere that Ann wished to create, a grandfather clock flooded this space with a deep rhythmic beat, punctuated by chimes on the

hour and half-hour. A coffee table and small color television rounded out the furnishings in the living room.

A short hall led to the section of the house containing the three bedrooms. The first, belonging to Ann's ten year old daughter, was very neat. This room was decorated in a fashion typical for a young girl. Every available space contained stuffed animals and Barbie dolls. This very feminine room was always kept tidy.

Ann next showed me the spare bedroom. Friends or employees needing a place to stay often occupied this room. Many times a women being abused by her husband or boyfriend found shelter in this room. Other times it had been home to young girls new to town needing a place to stay, whether she worked for Ann or not. During my research this room was occupied by the phone girl working for Ann.

This "spare" room was furnished in a manner often reserved for master bedrooms. The high quality of the pieces found in this area reflected a high level of materialism. Often this room was furnished by the occupant rather than by Ann. The furniture I saw during my visit belonged to one of Ann's employees, Cathy.

Continuing to the end of the hall, we came to Ann's room. Except for the den and Ann's room, the house was immaculate. Ann's bedroom was often in disarray. As with the den, Ann's room functions as her business office. Multiple phone extensions allow Ann to monitor calls while in the den or her bedroom. On one occasion when I was

visiting, Ann handled a labor dispute between two workers and paid the weeks payroll, all from her bed.

Ann's bedroom was decorated in an ultra-contemporary style. Light entering through matching silver mini-blinds reflected off the deep black-lacquered hardwood furniture. A large water bed with a matching black-lacquered headboard dominates the room. Strategically placed on the headboard within easy reach were two important items to Ann's business, a plexi glass and neon telephone and a thirty-eight caliber pistol.

Passing through the kitchen, we retreated to the rear of the house toward the den. The kitchen area was all business, with few extras. The only unusual item there was a bottled water dispenser. Ann is somewhat paranoid about local drinking water and insists on bottled water. As it turned out, this item was extremely popular. The water cooler was the first place visited by most visitors to Ann's house. In an almost ritualistic manner, one by one, each visitor would stop by the water cooler and fill a glass before coming to the den.

Most everyday activities occurred in the den. The rest of the house remained somewhat untouched. The overall condition of the house thus remained well kept. Ann had a second bathroom added onto the area adjacent to the den. This space belonged to the women employed by the service. The main bathroom was off-limits to all but Ann, her daughter, and Ann's personal guest. Overall, Ann kept a very organized house.

Ann seemed especially delighted by the security system she had installed. The full-house security system was Ann's first level of defense, her dogs and pistol the second and third. She took special joy in knowing that the very same police that try to shut her down also protect the escort service. With a wry smile she added, "They get here very quickly. On a few occasions when it [the security system] was set off accidentally I was surprised at how fast they got here."

The Employees. The agency employed nine women, only seven of whom were sex workers. Of the other two, one was a phone girl responsible for monitoring the nightly operations, while the other owned the agency. The ages of the nine women range from twenty to thirty-three years.

Ann preferred to hire married women or single mothers. She favored such workers because she believed that they were more trustworthy. Exceptions were Cathy and Eve who are both unmarried and childless (see table A for personal background information).

I met most of the workers during the first evening of my fieldwork, as they reported in at Ann's house for work. The business day began sometime between one and five in the afternoon. Cathy, the phone girl, was first to stir, signaling the start of the day. At the time of my study she was also living in Ann's spare bedroom. Cathy was a startling figure: she stood about 5'6'' and weighed close to 200 pounds. Sporting a somewhat husky voice and appearance

her features were rough. Cathy's outgoing and uninhibited personality diminishes the intimidating impression she first projects, so that she makes friends easily.

At about 6:30 P.M. Kim entered the house through the front door, stopping to get a glass of water at the water cooler before joining us in the den. Not expected to come in so early, she took everyone by surprise. Ann told me that Kim usually did not come in until about two or three in the morning. Kim talked a while with Ann and Cathy before retiring to the bathroom to prepare for work.

Kim was in her late twenties. Tall and somewhat thin. Her brown hair was shoulder length. Listening to her talk I could detect a slight Texas drawl in her speech. Overall, she was not unattractive.

Pam came in to work soon after Kim. She was an African American in her late twenties. Her main job at the service was that of second phone girl. Ann's escort service had two phone lines; Cathy handled one while Pam worked the second line. Pam was one of two African American women who work for Ann. Having very light skin tone, Pam was able to "pass." (9) This fact was very clear by the first topic of conversation that took place when she arrived. Pam made it clear to me that "yes, I'm black, so don't be making any nigger jokes." Obviously Pam had a very good sense of humor.

Eve entered the house at about nine in the evening. She came in quietly and sat down to watch the television. Eve's manner set her apart from the other women I had met. While

most the sex workers engaged in idle conversation, Eve passively watched television. After about an hour, the discussion among the women turned to my research project. At this time I realized I had not been introduced to Eve in the same way I had been to the others. The "book," as my research project was to become known, was always mentioned by Ann during each initial introduction, except for my introduction to Eve. After I noted this peculiar omission it became apparent that Ann and the other girls were noticeably cold toward Eve.

I began to notice other factors that set Eve apart from the other workers. She was a very attractive twenty year old with shoulder-length, bleached-blond hair. Of all the girls I met that night, Eve was by far the most attractive. Viewed by Ann as an asset to the business, Eve fit the requirements most requested by clients, young and blond. Yet, paradoxically, the traits that benefited Eve monetarily also distanced her from the other sex workers.

I met the girls described above early in the study. The following girls became known to me in subsequent meetings.

Sandy, the other African American employed by Ann, had known Ann for several years before working for this escort service. Slender and somewhat short, she was very outgoing and personable. Of all the girls, Sandy was the most willing to talk openly about her work.

Stacy and Brooke, identical twins, had also known Ann for a number of years. It is somewhat unusual for a set of identical twins to work for the same agency. At times they

worked as a team, yet Ann assured me that such cases were rare. Stacy and Brooke are physically attractive. Approximately six feet tall, both are "well built." (10) Ann informed me "that client demand" necessitated the hiring of another blond escort worker. Having hired the twins, Ann talked Stacy into coloring her hair blond. It was somewhat disconcerting to see identical twins with different hair color. The tactic worked; Stacy now possessed two qualities in high demand -- she was well built and blond. As a result of both natural and unnatural qualities Stacy goes on more calls than her twin sister.

The Structure of Escort Services. One afternoon as Ann and I sat quietly in her living room, I asked her to discuss the structure of her escort service. Ann was very open concerning the nature of her work. Motioning toward the two phones in her den she began by stating that all calls are forwarded to her home. It is common for one agency to operate many phone lines. Found under the subject heading of "Escorts," advertisements placed in the Yellow Pages reflect different agency names. To attract attention, these advertisements sport sexually explicit and enticing names and slogan (see Appendix B).

Since the Yellow Pages will not print an advertisement without an address, the printed addresses displayed on advertisements for escort agencies are fictitious. Escort owners have used this phone company requirement to their advantage: agencies attract more clients by printing

addresses geographically scattered around a city. In an effort to obtain faster service most customers will call an agency near their own location. Therefore, Ann lists addresses nearby major hotels, convention centers, and airports.

Each of the advertisements indicates a different phone number. This strategy allows a city to look as if it "offers" a variety of escort services. In reality there is very little competition in the sex-for-hire business at the escort level. In the area where I conducted my fieldwork, there were 38 advertised escort agencies in the local Yellow Pages Directory. These agencies were controlled by just nine "promoters" (owners), each employing up to ten sex workers.

After receiving requests for escorts Ann sends women out on calls from a central location, her home. She explained to me that the worker was to charge a \$75 agency fee (\$100 if paid by credit card). Beyond the agency fee the worker was free to negotiate "her tip" (fee for sex). The worker keeps the tip while Ann receives the agency fee.

The process described differs very little from that of other escort services. Depending on the location of the service, the agency fee can range from \$50 to \$100, always with about 25% in additional charges for the use of a credit card. Escort agencies charge this additional fee due to the difficulty involved in servicing credit card charges.

Credit card companies routinely cancel accounts known to be escort agencies. Escort service charges often fall into

a pattern easily distinguishable from other businesses. A typical customer will purchase one hour of time from the escort agency, creating a string of identical charges that are hard to explain. Furthermore, market influences seem to control the "tip" received by the sex worker. This social price of sex, like the agency fee, will show up in a repetitive sequence of charges. Over time, the social price becomes well known to all of the individuals involved in sex-for-hire. The social price creates patterns that are empirically evident to all who are involved. Investigations are often triggered when a credit card company notices a string of charges for the same amount.

To avoid detection, escort agencies will charge an extra fee from which they pay 7%-15% to a "front company." Fronts are bogus merchant accounts set up with credit card companies. Front companies -- for example, florists, gift shops, restaurants -- process the credit invoices and send a check to the escort service, thereby effectively laundering the proceeds of prostitution. To avoid triggering an investigation, the fronts will collect credit invoices from numerous escort services. Combining the credit invoices allows the "front" to avoid suspicion by mixing the charge invoices of several escort services. Another benefit offered by the fronts is that they allow customers of escort services to receive receipts from legitimate businesses.

Next, Ann explained how she collected payment for services. Most clients pay for services with a credit

card. "Don't accept American Express," Ann was quick to warn, "they are too easy to reverse charges." She told me that American Express will routinely reverse charges with no questions asked. After being "burned" (not receiving funds) several times she, and most other services, stopped accepting payment through American Express cards.

When a credit card is used the worker needs only a few items to complete the required paper work; credit card invoice slips, a Bic lighter, and a hard surface. Workers transfer the information from the client's card to the invoice by placing the card beneath the invoice slip on a hard surface and rubbing the top with a Bic lighter. Some workers carry a portable imprinting machine. Most find this an inconvenience and prefer to use a Bic lighter. Besides the basic information provided by the credit card, the worker must also obtain the client's name, address, telephone number, and driver's license number, in case he stops payment on the charge. Surprisingly, very few customers complain about giving the sex worker this information.

Ann kept records throughout the work week detailing calls received by the agency. This information included what the client requested (hair color, body build, age, and so on) and which sex worker went on the call. This allowed Ann to pay the workers their tips. The earnings of workers were recorded using only trade names (Kitten, Bambi, Sabrena, Sam), or in some cases their initials. At the end of each week the women turned in their credit card

invoices and collected their pay from the previous week. Ann sent the recent credit card invoices to be serviced by the front company, and a new week began.

Escort services exemplify the legal loopholes that creative minds can develop. Law enforcement agencies find it very difficult to intervene in the activities of an escort service. The "cost of doing business" is often restricted to a few workers' being busted for prostitution. Seldom does law enforcement endanger the larger operation.

A complex system allows most escort services to evade permanent disruptions. Ann, as the owner, can only sell time. Time is legally defined as a commodity, and is therefore non sexual. Thus, the agency fee charged is for escort services to social functions. For example, an individual in town to conduct business might want to go out to eat dinner. To avoid the social stigma attached to a single man eating dinner in a fine restaurant a client would request female companionship. The same holds true if an individual desires to go to the theater, or any other social activity.

To fill this need Ann sells time. What the women do after they arrive on the call is beyond Ann's control. The legal loophole enjoyed by escort services is that owners can testify in court that they only sold non sexual escort time. Successful legal action requires one or more of the girls working for an agency to testify that the owner was fully aware of, and in agreement with, the act of prostitution.

Although the city prosecutor may set up situations in which a worker will testify against her employer, this is not easily accomplished. Sex workers know that cooperating with the vice squad is unacceptable among their peers. The low fines attached to solicitation for prostitution are absorbed as a cost of doing business. The workers will seldom undermine their relationship with their agency. Testifying against an agency not only puts them out of work, but often blacklists them at other agencies, sometimes extending over a large geographical area. It is common to "know" about risky sex workers in a number of states due to their "working with the police."

A raid by the local vice squad ended my field studies. As a result of this raid, Ann's agency no longer exists. However, the closing of an agency by law enforcement is atypical. Most often an agency will change phone numbers and locations while continuing business. The owner of this particular agency decided that she would not reopen her agency. Instead she is a sex worker for an agency located in another city. Of the nine girls who worked for Ann, only four have stayed in the location of the original agency. All are now working for other escort services. The whereabouts of the other women are unknown to me.

CHAPTER II

FEMALE ESCORT SERVICES:

THE PROFESSIONAL SELF

When I go shopping nobody
knows, you know, what I do for a
living. In the store I'm just another
straight. As soon as my beeper goes off I no
longer belong with the shoppers--I become a prostitute.

Escort service employee

Tomorrow I am going
to work again. I work to
buy admission-price into society,
the ticket to the great theater of life,
the great game. But now I am lonely. . . .

The Journal of Andrew Bihaly
(Tuttle 1973)

Construction of Self

The self is a social perception. Therefore, interactional behaviors become indicators of the self. All we have are impressions fostered by interactions. "The self," said Fenn and Capps, "though not directly observable, also can be inferred from what happens in its immediate presence" (1992, p. vii). And Ichheiser (1949) wrote that "the raw material of social perception, namely, that from which the image of the other man is shaped, has to be defined not in terms of expression but in terms of impression" (p. 15).

Impressions result from interaction from audience reaction to a social action. Conversely, expressions belong only to the actor. They become problematic when we try to recover them. Therefore, impressions are a more reliable target for analysis.

Erving Goffman recognized the significance of impressions. Behavior as seen by an audience was a major theme throughout his work. Using theatrical terminology he described the process as region behavior: ". . . a region may be defined as any place that is to some degree bounded by barriers to perception" (1959, p. 106), which can take such forms as walls, partitions, language, geography, and time. Skillful use of barriers to perception by the actor(s) is key to sustaining the show.

Because social interaction is fluid, the process really becomes multiregional. The dramaturgical model uses two conceptual regions. Front regions are areas that are "in the show," and include crucial interactions presented to the audience. The back region is purposefully hidden from the audience, and gives the actor a place to prepare the show.

Groups socially labeled as deviant are more sensitive than others to the interplay between the front and back regions. One such group is prostitutes. The staging of interaction is a tool for prostitutes, becoming a part of the everyday life. Russian prostitutes understand this process very well. Mysyakov and Yakubovich (1986) discussed how Russian "businesswomen" become less timid,

. . . since they aren't violating anything. They ceremoniously exchange greetings with the doormen and hail policemen in a familiar and friendly way. In the hotel, bar and restaurant, they know everyone, and everyone knows them too. For these damsels, there is no such thing as public opinion. (p. 21)

Escorts, like all social members, must deal with interactions in a social arena. Ongoing in their interactions is the use of whatever social skill that an individual may possess. This skill consist, among other things, of the use of technology. As will be discussed in the next section, physical separation is important. Although crucial, it is often unsuccessful. It is in the mix of interaction that we find self. It is also in the problematic nature of interaction that we can loss self.

When technology fails to mediate potential conflict individuals may use social skills in an effort to maintain interaction. A skilled, "street smart," meretrix can succeed without technology. In an article about sex working Edelstein (1987) offers her employer, Pat, as an example of such a person. In the following quote Edelstein describes the stage work engaged by her boss:

"Whenever her regular customers come in, Pat acts real glad to see them. She always greets them at the door, gets them a cup of our lousy instant coffee (which I usually don't bother with unless they ask), and acts real sexy with them. I don't know what she does in the rooms with the guys, but they always leave her good tips.

Sometimes I wonder whether Pat's hostess personality is all part of her act, or if she really likes the guys. Once I asked her if she liked her job, and she said she did. But I still wonder whether Pat thinks the show is real, that "sexy Pat" is really her. I don't know. Maybe she doesn't either." (Edelstein 1987, pp. 65-67)

It doesn't matter whether Pat purposefully deceived the clients, or had bought into her own act. The result in either case was that Pat was always in danger of losing self in such interaction. To perform the show in the presence of simultaneous clients could destroy her staged self.

Edelstein's description of Pat contrasts with her own method. She realized that her personal self was not centered around her work. "Pretty soon I wised up. I figured I wasn't working for my health. So next time a guy tried to feel me up, I let him. That way he left me a nice tip and asked for me again" (1987, p. 63). Edelstein separated herself from customers by learning not to be there emotionally when they touch her: "When they touch my breasts, I tell myself they're not really touching me" (1987, p. 63).

In such situations the danger of losing self is ever present. Edelstein's reaction to a client who verbally fantasized as she performed a hand job illustrates the tenuous position in which she found herself. "I start to feel sadder and sadder. It's not me he's talking to, not me he wants. It's someone who really loves him that he's wanting" (Edelstein 1987, p.64). When a sex worker realizes that the interaction that is for one partner, the client, personal, while professional for her -- a sadness can overcome upon her. I do not believe that sex workers are the only ones to feel this contradiction, yet they do exemplify it very nicely. Therefore I will seek out and describe how

sex workers place themselves privately, as well as professionally, within society.

Construction of the Professional Self -- Physical Separation

Most often the separation of regions consists of physical barriers. Spatial properties constructed by prostitutes can vary from geographical location, to the physical layout of a room.

Houses of prostitution have a distinct physical separation that mirrors the internal social separation of the front and back regions. Historically, brothel construction allowed for two or more floors. The lower floor served as a waiting area, and saloons and/or gambling halls were located on the first floor to entertain waiting clients. Business was conducted on the second level. The similarity between the floor plans of brothels and those of hotels is not accidental. The layout allows each sex worker to occupy a separate room, allowing privacy for the client during the transaction, and for housing the meretrix during off hours.

Tactics used by brothel owners for achieving region separation often were extreme. One lupanar in the mid 1770s, described by Stanley Loomis, exemplifies the lengths some proprietors went to in achieving region segregation. Owners would construct secret passages between their home and the brothel, "to enable respectable clients (including

women and clerics) to visit her house" (Loomis 1959, pp. 42-43). The owner of this house, Madame Gourdan, also maintained a home in the country where she sent sick or pregnant employees. Region separation in this case was so successful that the local residents thought the house was a convent.

In a 1917 study, Howard Woolston documented the use of "cribs" by prostitutes. Unlike brothels, cribs were single rooms where prostitutes plied their trade but did not reside full time. Usually found in multilevel buildings, these areas contained very few furnishings, and often contained only a bed. In the South, cribs were most often single story buildings. In all cases local lawmakers attempted to segregate such areas geographically in what was to become commonly known as "red-light" districts.

A study of New York prostitution provides another example of the usage of physical surroundings. W. L. Sanger (1858) described an elaborate classification scheme based upon the physical makeup of the brothel. The houses were divided into two main classifications, parlor houses and places of assignation. Elaborately furnished first-class parlors exhibited a gaudy luxury. The employees were often young and always well dressed. The next level was what Sanger called second-class houses. Most employees at this level were older women no longer in demand at first-class houses. Third-class houses were similar to the second-class, but this level employed immigrant women rather than older sex workers. Immigrant clients were not allowed

access above the third-class level. The fourth-class level contained the most "repulsive" form of prostitution. Most often such a house was managed by an old meretrix. At this level clients found prostitutes in basements converted into small bars, equipped with a few cribs nestled in dank corners.

The examples cited above are from accounts written before or during the nineteenth century. Only slight changes have taken place since then. Contemporary brothels mirror those of the past. Cribs are still used in many parts of the United States. And stratification still occurs within prostitution. Those whom Sanger considered fourth-class have become street prostitutes and bar girls. His third class still exists in that girls of foreign ancestry tend to be located in socially acceptable, appointed areas. Massage parlors are the modern equivalent to his second class, and escort services to his first class.

The prostitution hierarchy allows some sex workers more freedom to move about in pursuit of their trade than others. All levels use the same types of geographical and physical separation of regions. The physical layout controls movement between regions.

Employees occupying lower levels often find themselves restricted to individual rooms during working hours. Chateauvert (1987) described her first day of employment in a massage parlor. "These are the rooms," her employer motioned as they moved down a short hall: "you might want this one since it isn't claimed" (p. 73). She continued to

describe the physical layout of the room: "Collette [the employer] pulled back a curtain, showing a small cubicle with three walls, a curtain making the fourth. The beanbag couch was made of a black, fuzzy material that looked dusty. A small plastic lamp on a plastic table, a box of kleenex, and a wall full of mirrors made up the rest" (p. 73).

Although some sex workers are tied to a specific region, others are not as restricted. According to Alvin Toffler, the "growling engine of change is technology" (1970, p. 25). Employees of female escort services do not experience the confinement that Chateavert described. Geographical freedom for these women comes through technology.

Technology usually is designed for a specified use or task, and advertisements expound the specific task to potential customers. Yet, once introduced into society, technology becomes manipulated for purposes other than its designed use. As understood by Hedley, ". . . inventions lead to independent applications" (1992, p. 12). Escort services have used technology to free themselves from geographical boundaries. Technology designed for business communications also allows escorts to facilitate communications. Escort service employees are free to go anywhere as long as they are "on call." No longer tied to brothels or cribs, workers enjoy almost unlimited mobility, tied only to their beepers.

Car phones and cordless phones are sometimes used by sex workers. When first introduced, these two telecommunication devices seemed perfect for escort services. But as escorts

started using the phones, their faults became very apparent. These forms of communication are susceptible to electronic interception. Law enforcement agencies quickly began to use programmable scanners to intercept and record, legally, the escorts' business activities. Consequently, these items are still popular with prostitutes, but only for private, nonbusiness use.

Regulations concerning wire taps make telephones the tool of choice for escort services. Telephones act as a type of social insulator, allowing actors to avoid interactions that could easily go awry. Telephones allow users to manage the exchanges between backstage and frontstage. For example, telephone receivers can be covered by ones hand effectively restricting what is heard on the other end of the phone line. Likewise, callers can be put on hold, or the phone can be muted. During interaction with members of an escort's inner, personal, circle of friends such an escape is less necessary. On the other hand, conversations with interactants from the outside, such as customers, demand more control. Engagement in such circumstances increases the danger of losing self in interaction. Escort services use technology to alleviate this dangerous process by increasing the limits of the front region.

Technology, such as telephones, helps to eliminate the danger of emotional attachment during the initial contact between sex worker and customer. At times other tactics must be employed to keep the sexual interaction business

oriented and less personal. However it is accomplished, be it by technology or social skill, separation must be maintained.

Escorts use technology to gain freedom not just from potentially emotionally dangerous interaction, but from the tedium associated with waiting for an assignment. During the time that I spent with the escort service, most women did not wait for assignments "on site" (the location of the phone lines). Some stayed at home while others went out to "party." No matter the location, every worker was ready to respond at a moment's notice if the escort service paged her.

Most of the day-to-day business in this type of work consists of waiting. Like any other business that relies on phone service, such as taxis and pizza delivery, escorts find themselves dependent on the phone. Sex workers choosing to wait for assignments on "site" did so in the den located at the rear of Ann's house. Serving as a central gathering place, the den becomes a staging area. Ann did her best to provide a congenial atmosphere in which the girls could pass the time.

Entering the den, one finds a large couch, a love seat, a large chair, and a wooden desk. A large color television is strategically located to one side for viewing by those who want it, and away from those who do not. Ann had connected a VCR and a Nintendo game to the television. Along the far wall of the den was a small brick-faced fireplace. Stacks of VCR tapes rested at the base of the

fireplace. The tapes were rentals, and most were overdue.

Ann recently had remodeled the den. An addition to the rear of the den provided a large walk-in closet that stored many of Ann's clothes and a large assortment of shoes. Built-in book-shelves were added at the far end of the den, opposite the fireplace. Being a philobiblist, Ann collected hardback books and used the bookshelves to display her collection.

The den opened to a large covered patio with a gas grill located at one corner. A large flower bed was located at the opposite side of the patio. One of Ann's large dogs had converted this area into a private resting place.

A large wooden desk was the only indication in the den that a thriving business was operating here. The phone girl sat at the desk most of the night. She was free to take part in the activities of the den, yet she had a job to do. The desk provided a place to keep track of the phone, send out girls, and pass time. The phone girl at this service was particularly protective of her turf, but Ann assured me that this was not the case in all services. And in fact on days when the phone girl did not work, I noticed a less regimented treatment of the phone. During the phone girl's absence the telephone might be found under a couch or chair, or the telephone was passed around from girl to girl.

By far the most popular item in the den was the Nintendo game, which sparked many arguments. The attention commanded by the game was contagious. During my visits

almost every woman was at one time or another waiting for a turn to play. Ann controlled access to the game, having the last word on who received a turn. Most arguments that erupted were between Ann and her ten-year-old daughter, who was equally addicted to the game.

Reading was the second most popular activity in the den. Ann was an avid reader. Many of the women shared Ann's love for reading, along with her taste in literature. Most titles reflected an affinity for romance novels. A few titles were biographical and less sex oriented.

Many times throughout the evening one of the women would read aloud a passage that she found especially exciting, often the more sexually graphic sections. At times it became a contest, with each trying to find a passage more graphic than the previous.

The working world of escort services eliminates some problems associated with other forms of prostitution. Transactions are more businesslike allowing for less personal attachment. For example, escorts, unlike other prostitutes, do not have to put on a show to entice clients. Street prostitutes often rely on their physical appearance to attract customers. A common picture of a meretrix consists of a skimpily dressed women walking the streets. When personal appearance does not get a client's attention, street prostitutes turn to other ways to "make the sale."

One alternative method used by street prostitutes involves verbal signals. Calling out to potential clients

often will start a transaction. Other, less obvious techniques are often used to make a sale. Street prostitutes can demonstrate their "availability" by making prolonged contact with a man, indicating that a transaction is possible. Curiously, the lack of attention that a prostitute gives a potential client can also signal their availability. A meretrix can demonstrate her availability by appearing uninvolved with the street scene, shunning interaction with other prostitutes in the same area (Luckenbill 1984).

Fragile Professional Sexuality

For escorts the real interaction occurs after the worker arrives at the client's location. In these situations stage management is paramount. It is on this stage that her show is played out. Although escorts may not have to deal with as many problems as other prostitutes, when they meet with a client, sexuality places all prostitutes on equally tottery stages.

Sexuality has been subjected to scholarly inspection from the earliest times. Art, literature, poetry, physiology, psychology, and sociology have examined sexuality from varying perspectives. Sexuality is an area that some sociologists wish had been addressed in more detail by Erving Goffman. Randall Collins (1986) felt there were at least two books left to be written, which might have discussed sexuality, at Goffman's untimely death in 1982. To be sure, Goffman did discuss arrangements between the

sexes (1977). In this work his major concern was not arrangements between the sexes but the treatment of participants according to sex types in differentiated ways through interaction. Goffman defined sexuality as "patterns of activity involving sexual stimulation, sexual experience, and the adumbration of inducements to these activities taking a culture-specific form of appearance, dress, style, gesture, and the like" (1977, p. 304).

Concern with the fragility of social relations was paramount for Goffman -- the monumental blunders that can occur in social interaction. In general, interaction disruptions arising from social relations, both in and out of the bedroom, constitute fragility. Furthermore, Goffman would have been interested in how we keep interaction alive despite the adverse possibilities that can occur as a result of sexual encounters.

Emotionally, the potentially hazardous nature of sexual relations is difficult for prostitutes to overcome. Problems arise from the frequency of sexual relations involved in their professional duties. The situation is not as acute for sexual relations conducted in less businesslike environments. The question that arises concerns how sex workers handle these interactions.

Sex workers have developed techniques for dealing with this problem. Experienced sex workers isolate their most intimate self from their professional self. Neophyte sex workers need time to adjust to the need, as Foltz described,

to "disconnect their substantial selves from their work" (1979, p. 127). With experience, transformations required by the sex-for-hire occupation are accomplished without undue anguish. As sex workers become more experienced, they "begin to 'normalize' the sexual aspect of the job, and also become less ashamed of it" (Foltz 1979, p. 127). Douglas (1977) discussed this process in the following passage:

This is actually a common finding with people who are not deviants, are just becoming deviant and have been deviant for a long time; they start out feeling paralyzed by the fear of being shamed, or mortified by shame at the thought of it, so they don't do it; they progress to doing it with situationally intermittent feelings of fear of shame and sometimes actual self-shame; and shame becomes pride and confidence if they continue to get away with it -- go unashamed. (p. 65)

To be professional allows a sex worker "to look at her work objectively and not become emotionally involved" (Rasmussen and Kuhn 1976, p. 279). It would be difficult to rationalize being paid for sex if during "work" the prostitute becomes involved emotionally. Rasmussen and Kuhn (1976) pointed out an even larger problem for the workers who become emotional involved: ". . . customers would no doubt wonder if they should get paid to satisfy her" (p. 279).

Professionalism in the sex-for-hire business requires workers to remain emotionally detached while seeming involved with the customer. As hard as the sex worker may try to be detached, the possibility for sexual arousal always exists. Sex workers overcome arousal in different ways. Experienced prostitutes visualize the many slobes they

have served, to quickly bring them back to the businesslike work environment. "Tom" is such an example. Throughout my field study I heard references to Tom. He was a large man, middle-aged and lacking in personal hygiene. The workers would call my description too lenient, they say he is a "gross pig." A frequent customer, Tom is a reliable source of income for Ann's escort service.

Every time he calls the workers debate over who will go on the call. Tom creates a dilemma for Ann and the women. He always gives the escort a large tip for her services. The workers like his money but hate physically being near Tom. Mental images of Tom were often used by these escorts to bring themselves back to reality. The "Toms" of the sex-for-hire business serve to remind workers that they are professionals. In a tactic similar to the one described above, but less specific, workers may think about how distasteful it is for a stranger to touch them. Workers do not think of any individual when they use this ploy. No matter which of these two methods she uses each sex worker must develop some way of dealing with personal attraction to clients. Professional growth occurs as each sex worker develops strategies for dealing with frequent sexual contact.

No matter how hard a sex worker tries not to, she may still become sexually aroused. Although none of the women I interviewed confessed to arousal by clients, other scholars have related instances of client involvement. Bryant and Palmer (1975) told of one sex worker, a

masseuse, who to handle arousal would "stand up [presumably she had been getting massaged] look at him [the customer] [and] lose interest" (p. 238). Even when a sex worker does become aroused she must deny the occurrence. To do otherwise would compromise the business relationship. At times a good show requires the worker to feign disinterest:

I had this nice old guy in and he paid me \$20.00 to perform sex on me. He said all he wanted was to make me feel good. He started off really slow which made me feel really at ease . . . he knew what he was doing . . . and then all of a sudden I got sexually aroused. I laid there on my back trying to control my breathing and stomach muscles, so he wouldn't know. After it was over he asked me if I had gotten off. I told him no, but I did enjoy it. (Rasmussen and Kuhn 1976, pp. 279-280)

Overall, sex workers must move between two sexual dimensions. While with customers the worker must keep sexuality business oriented. With intimate individuals, other than clients, sex workers enter a more personal dimension. Tactics are employed to ease the transfer from business to personal milieus. When used by sex workers these changes are often erratic. As a result of the sexual contract that each partner enters the expectations will differ. Davis (1983) reminded us that a prostitute's "everyday concerns -- time and money -- often clash with their customers' erotic concerns" (p.84). He wrote of one sex worker who "never got off with her customers, but treated her hand jobs like ironing" (Davis 1983, p. 84). Davis concluded that "conceiving of sexual activity as one of the dull, repetitious, mechanical task of everyday

reality lessens the enthusiasm necessary to give a good tour of erotic reality" (1983, p. 84).

Since the movement between sexual dimensions is so important prostitutes tend to exaggerate the social processes discussed by Goffman. Interestingly, the methods employed by prostitutes magnify what is characteristic for nonprostitutes in similar situations. According to Adler (1975) "there is little that distinguishes these women [prostitutes] as a group" (p. 65). In support of this belief, Margo St. James remarked: "Whores are no different from the rest of society" (1976, p. 183).

All individuals passing through adolescence learn how to "play the game." Early encounters allow actors to try out and modify scripts. While some scripts are successful those that fail are discarded from our "catalogue." During this trial-and-error method of sexual interaction, individuals do not recognize fragility as unusual. The situation does not become unusual until we learn the correct, socially appropriate, way to behave, thereby giving something by which to compare. The framework of these interactions remains unclear to adolescent social actors precisely because it is a learning process. Early sexual partners serve what Goffman (1959) referred to as training specialists. Further interactions, new trials, cover over blunders, which in turn contribute to the process.

Leaving adolescence and proceeding into adulthood, one finds new meaning in the same blunders. These may now

create embarrassment, discomfiture, or uneasiness (Goffman 1956). The situations once viewed as trial-and-error explorations now become problematic, symptoms of the fragility of sexuality.

As one becomes older embarrassment can no longer be interpreted as part of learning. If one is expected to have learned earlier, the blunder now is demoralizing. After the time allotted for learning has passed individuals are expected to maintain the often unstable interaction perfectly. Yet actors seldom succeed in completing a perfect, problem free, social encounter.

How often do individuals fail to realize what they have done? Anyone who has ever woken up the next morning wondering whom s/he is with understands such a frame of mind. In such situations interactive individuals, by they prostitutes or nonprostitutes, are at a loss for an appropriate "script" to employ.

Goffman realized that embarrassment was a by-product of interaction: "in our Anglo-American society at least, there seems to be no social encounter which cannot become embarrassing to one or more of its participants, giving rise to what is sometimes called an incident or false note" (Goffman 1956, p. 256). Embarrassment requires the presence of two social actors. Furthermore, to embarrass one of the actors, an audience must see the blunder. Blunders are effectively stopped by using a new "line." This, in effect, constructs a new interaction in which the instability is negated. Such a sequence allows for a string of

interactions to flow as if one. The ability to "pull this off" differs from person to person. An individual's "social skills" govern how successful s/he is at maintaining a successful show.

Rooted in the beliefs held by a society, embarrassment is a sign of "moral guilt." As such, the embarrassing situations are a construct of society. "Embarrassment," according to Goffman, "has to do with unfulfilled expectations (but not with those of a statistical kind). Given their social identities and setting, the participants will sense what conduct ought to be maintained as the appropriate thing, however much they may despair of its actual occurring" (1967, p. 105). This socially shared concept of morality will lead to embarrassment for those who do not conduct business in the "appropriate" manner.

As a result, interactants expect individuals to possess certain socially defined attributes and skills. Some consider these skills screens behind which individuals hide. As, in 1921, Lord Chesterfield put it:

They are ashamed in company, and so disconcerted that they do not know what they do, and try a thousand tricks to keep themselves in countenance; which tricks afterwards grow habitual to them. Some put their fingers to their nose, others scratch their head, others twirl their hats; in short, every awkward, ill-bred body has its tricks (from Goffman 1956, p. 268).

Failure to possess a set of "tricks" is a sure way to embarrass oneself. In most social interaction this is not a critical problem. However, in sexual situations, because they are hidden from general view, the audience is reduced in size. And since prostitutes usually do not know their

clients, they must contend with unknown performance expectations. As long as individuals do not "blow their lines," as governed by the other's expectations, the interaction runs along smoothly. Failure to do so leads to embarrassment. Sexual interaction, more than most, is a process of constructing and reconstructing "performances." The secretive nature of expectations lead to an interactional setting in which the slightest miscue can be disastrous to the performance.

Individuals use many defensive practices to maintain interaction. Goffman understood such practices as a reaction to instances in which disruption of an interaction occurs. Defensive practices aid in perpetuating performances. The use of defensive practices, or "tact," in maintaining the fostered impression was of importance to Goffman. Tact is of even greater importance in sexual interaction.

Sex workers know tact as "street smarts." Experienced workers gain a sense of how to act in order to keep disruptions to a minimum. Defensive practices are built through an accumulation of experience and by watching other sex workers. The "school of hard knocks" teaches these individuals how to be tactful, just as nonprostitutes learn tact.

To eliminate shame from embarrassment, tact realigns the performances viewed by interactants. In turn, the continuation of the interaction relies upon the audience's reaction. Therefore, performances are viewed by the

audience as successful, or, in the case of a failed performance, the result will be heightened embarrassment.

As they are being used the methods thus far discussed are not often the topic of introspection. During interaction, conscious exploration of this process seldom occurs. Individuals are aware of their actions only in cases in which the actor is intentionally deceiving the audience, as is a chess player contemplating strategy. Such aberrations are not of concern here; far more interesting is the unconscious use of these strategies to sustain a social self. Too much contemplation of these processes creates a saliency that would endanger continued interaction. Others have recognized this fact. Yet Goffman was one of the earliest to uncover the games we play. Just as games are evident in everyday encounters, they thrive in sexual interaction. Any sexually active member of society can understand the processes that prostitutes deal with professionally everyday.

Sex Working: A Means to an End

A desire for material goods is not unique to sex workers. References to materialism occur often in discussions concerning quality of life. Most individuals will concur with Henry David Thoreau's desire to avoid discovering, as death awaits, that

. . . I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practise resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life . . .
(Walden 1968 [1854], p. 113)

Such differences as exist between various social groups appear in the method of attainment. Prostitutes, like all of us, want to "live deep," to maximize the quality of life.

Social actors find some means of obtaining material wealth acceptable, while they stigmatize others. Prostitution is a stigmatized occupation. But sex workers become entangled within two concepts -- desires (materialism) and means of attaining such desires (socially acceptable ways of achieving materialism). Sex workers are like other working social contemporaries: they seek to enjoy the fruits of their labor. On the other hand, they must always conduct themselves with the utmost caution so as not to be viewed as deviant -- that is, having achieved desires through illegitimate means. In order to do their jobs, sex workers present facades that exclude parts of themselves.

Individuals who make their living in nondeviant occupations take for granted the interplay between work and material gain. Walter Block (1976), on the other hand, makes "the moral and economic status of the dozens of rivaled, scorned, and grievously misunderstood professions and occupations in our society: those whom he rightly calls the 'economic scapegoats'" (Rothbard 1976, Foreword). Rothbard describes Block's understanding of the extreme lack

of respectability among economic scapegoats in the following manner:

. . . the grocer, the steel producer, and others are generally allowed to go about their business unmolested, and indeed earn respect and prestige from their fellow members of the community. Not so these scapegoats; for not only are their economic services unrecognized, but they face the universal bile, scorn and wrath of virtually every member of society, plus the additional restrictions and prohibitions that government have almost universally placed upon their activities. Scorned and condemned unmercifully by society and state alike, social outcast and state-proclaimed outlaws, Professor Block's collection of scapegoats go about their business nevertheless; heroically proceeding to confer their economic services in the teeth of universal scorn and outlawry. (Rothbard 1976, Foreword)

Sex workers' understand the interplay between their livelihood and material gain. They deal with stereotyping as described by Block on a daily basis. For these women the stage metaphor is more than an analytical tool; it is a strategy for daily life.

Experiences with the audience lead escort workers to identify with an increasingly narrow group of people. To alleviate the stress of concealing themselves prostitutes often associate only with individuals connected to the escort business. Workers develop an inner circle that allows them to deal with the stigma attached to their work. By surrounding themselves with other sex workers they do not need to worry about contradictions between their work and their material possessions. Together they can dream about future desires.

As for escort workers, they have the means of obtaining a greater portion of their dreams. Although this is a circumstance that many would like to be in, it is

problematic for sex workers. The stigma attached to the source of obtaining material goods sets the stage on which the sex worker must sustain self.

Sex workers' desires vary according to the society in which they live. American sex workers, especially at the escort service level, concern themselves with obtaining consumer goods. Russian prostitutes focus on more basic needs. Mysyakov and Yakubovich (1986) emphasize this difference when they describe Russian sex workers' attitude towards work:

Their "business", as they see it, is no worse than any other, and in many respects even better. The main advantage is security. . . . At worst, they will be shamed and admonished. Then they will be released anyway. (p. 21)

The above description suggest that Russian prostitutes' desires are based on a relative deprivation that makes them seek basic security. "Nina," a Russian meretrix, "had something that most of her acquaintances did not have -- her own two-room apartment fairly close to the center of town" (Mysyakov and Yakubovich 1986, p. 21).

In a society rich in basic commodities, such as the United States, desires reach beyond survival needs. Although American society provides a good, stable life for most of its members, not all Americans are happy. Many demands are psychological, and therefore possibly insatiable. Americans often view work as a "means to an end," a way to gain material goods. To understand this occupational motivation I examine the goals of escort workers in Ann's agency, including new escort workers as well as experienced escorts.

As the youngest employee of Ann's escort service, Eve exemplifies the desires of most sex workers. At twenty years old, she has been a prostitute for two years. When asked to describe herself Eve says that she is "a normal twenty-year-old girl. Just an average girl."

Eve's divorce left her with one child, whom she never discussed during my time with her. She admits to leaving high school during the tenth grade, but does not offer a reason.

Compared to the other employees Eve was not very talkative, perhaps for several reasons. Eve was new to the agency at the time of my field work. Just beginning to establish her place in the inner circle of sex workers, she was not comfortable with me.

Even though Eve was not open about her past, she was willing to discuss her future. When asked what she would be doing five years from now, Eve said that she would be "Hopefully having a good time somewhere while I'm running my own business of some sort. Or working at a 9-5 job while my investments are making me money." A recurrent theme is found here: every worker expressed the desire to live off of investments from saved money, or to buy into a "legit" business. Some expressed a desire to pursue a college degree.

The goals expressed by the sex workers are tenuous, due to the short time span that prostitutes enjoy high incomes. Typically the demand for a sex worker's services begin dropping off around the age of thirty-five. As one topless

dancer said, "you get tired fast. There's always new faces and prettier bodies" (Farley 1990, p. 7). The average worker can expect about fifteen productive years in the sex-for-hire business.

Faced with the limited choices available at this late stage, many will "buy" an existing phone line and run an escort service herself, as Ann did. Some may marry during their career. And others are forced to choose from less attractive options, such as welfare.

I asked each of the nine girls the same question as I asked Eve: What will you be doing five years from now? The following are the responses given by the remaining eight women.

Jill, age 20: Hopefully I'll manage my budget well enough where maybe I won't have to work, but if not I plan to try to get a degree in business.

Tammy, age 23: I have no idea--maybe living off the interest of money invested wisely--which is what I plan to do.

Pam, age 27: Attending school, pursuing a career, hopefully starting a family, leading a very stable life.

Sandy, age 27: Probably the same thing I'm doing now. But hopefully for better pay.

Kim, age 29: Hopefully, running my own agency.

Brooke, age 30: Living in the country, with my honey.

Stacy, age 30: Have a day job, still happily married with a teenage daughter; she will keep me pretty busy.

Ann, age 33: Hoping to be settled down with someone.

Women entering prostitution believe that they know what the future may hold for them. Though they don't say so

explicitly, each "knows" she will be different from the rest. Each believes that she will not repeat the failures of other workers. The younger employees were more likely to openly express a goal of economic self-sufficiency. But although they were less open about this topic, even the older women expressed similar future goals. Yet, as a worker gains experience, she may begin to temper the fervor with which she discusses her future.

Although most of the women seek ownership of a business or desire to live off of their savings, they remain ignorant of the risks involved with such endeavors. When they discuss such a future, failure is not part of the equation. They seem to think that all that is required is the correct funds: if the worker can come up with the monies, the rest will come naturally. When I directed the discussion toward the possibility of failure, the women would counter with stories of "others" who succeeded. The owner of the escort service observed knows of many success, yet few are legal businesses. Ann's own experiences in trying to diversify her business has not been successful. A Horatio Alger naivete permeates this group. This is not unlike the experience of non-sex workers.

Jill, another twenty-year-old employed by the agency, is different in many ways from Eve. Jill has not been married and has no children. She completed high school. She has been in the sex-for-hire business for a little more than a year. She is more open in expressing herself. Nevertheless, they share the same long-term goal -- to live

off money earned in the business. Jill's completion of high school and her desire to obtain a college degree reflect her belief that education is important.

Some of the employees plan to attend college in the future, but they seem to discount the requirements for completing this task. This became apparent during discussions about my own life. Those who were interested in college often engaged me in the topic. Typical questions involved what it was like to be on campus and what the people were like.

Any talk involving the time required to complete a degree quickly ended the discussion. Four years seemed like a very long time to these individuals. Indeed, the time required deters many would-be college students. The reaction of some to my eight-year "career" as a student was astonishing. They cannot grasp such a long-term commitment to something that they view almost as a hobby. None of the women said that they needed to go to college -- just that they "would like" to go.

In an article concerning the private lives of sex workers in the topless dancing business, Tim Farley (1990) noted an emphasis on a college education. He cites one dancer as planning to attend college in the fall of 1990. She wanted to obtain a degree in education because she ". . . wants to be an elementary school teacher" (Farley 1990, p. 7). Another dancer, a student at the University of Oklahoma and a mother of a seventeen-month-old girl, told

Farley that she wanted to work as a lawyer or paralegal someday.

Even among those willing to dedicate four years to the pursuit of a degree, few are academically prepared. Again, little thought was given to this aspect of their goal. I was not asked many questions concerning the work involved with completing a college degree.

Although it is difficult, some sex workers do complete a college degree. But prostitutes often are surprised to discover that a degree does not guarantee a better life. Few sex workers overcome their lack of work history. Questions arise concerning what the prostitute has been doing for the last ten years. Sex workers who obtain the degree quickly will be able to counter such questions. A twenty-four-year old with a degree and no work history is not unusual. On the other hand, a thirty-year-old with a college degree is expected to produce evidence of a work history.

Most sex workers do not complete a degree within the same time frame as do regular college students. Seldom does a sex worker attend college as she works. Prostitutes usually begin college at an age similar to most graduating seniors. The late start makes the lack of work history problematic.

Another path taken by some sex workers is to come into the profession with a college degree. Women are presented with the option of entering sex work sometime following completion of a college degree. I believe that this career

path is rare. During my field work I did not speak to any sex worker who had obtained her degree before become a meretrix. Likewise, the escorts did not personally know any girl who fit this pattern. Other scholars writing about prostitution have interviewed such sex workers. Symanski (1981) described a "bright, articulate, well-educated, beautiful" (Symanski 1981, p. x) woman named Kitty, who graduated from the University of Michigan. After having difficulty finding employment that paid well or provided challenging work, Kitty turned to prostitution. According to Symanski, "she couldn't believe that a degree in business had prepared her for little more than a secretarial position" (1981, p. xi).

Kitty faced a difficult choice. She could do as her father asked -- "find a job and work your way up" (Symanski 1981, p. xi) -- or take a job offered through a friend. The friend told her about the money that could be made in the brothels. Like many others presented with similar choices, Kitty chose the latter and prospered financially.

As I talked with escort workers it became obvious that they entered prostitution for the same reason -- money. None of the women I talked with were forced to become prostitutes. They all chose sex work over other occupations. While Ann's pandering charge was being litigated, I asked her why she does not get out of the business. "Jimmy" she started to reply, "how can I live?" "How can I make enough to live?" she continued. My reply consisted of another question, "What do you mean, how can

you live?" Ann told me that she would get out of the business if she could find a way to make what she made presently. To me this answer was not sincere. Many times we repeated this line of questioning, and the answer was always the same. Ann knew, as I did, that there was no other way in which she could make \$2,000 to \$3,000 a week. To consider seriously getting out of sex work would require Ann to change her life-style. This is the major obstacle she faced. She understands this fact, yet will seldom discuss it.

Whatever the desires of sex workers upon entry into sex work, life in this profession requires large resources. Potential incomes are a major factor considered by women when entering sex work. But this does not mean that women enter sex work due to poverty. This myth persists, although recent research dispels the notion that all prostitutes are forced into servitude due to poverty. Several scholars have addressed the connections between poverty and prostitution (Finnegan 1979; Action 1857; Marcus 1971; Fryer 1968; Quennell 1969). Most conclude that destitute women enter prostitution as a last resort. Action (1857) believed that prostitution derived from both social conditions and "the vice of women" (p. 7). The social conditions he saw creating prostitution were overcrowding, poor pay, poor working conditions in respectable occupations, and the lack

of opportunity. To this list Action added personal flaws:

Natural desire. Natural Sinfulness. The Preferment of indolent ease to labor. Vicious inclinations strengthened and ingrained by early neglect, or evil training, bad associates, and an indecent mode of life. Necessity, imbued by the inability to obtain a living by honest means consequent on a fall from virtue. Extreme poverty. To this black list may be added love of drink, love of dress, love of amusement. (1857, p. 7)

Action (1857) concluded his thoughts by stating that

". . . prostitution consigns to a life of degradation thousands of our female population, ruining them utterly body and soul . . . it is the cause of disease, premature decay, ultimately death" (p. 5). Readers of Action will notice contradictions in his writing. Peter Fryer (1968), writing an introduction to Action's "Prostitution", pointed out one such contradiction, noting that Action was the first to challenge the:

conventional parable that prostitutes necessarily rotted in ditches, died miserable deaths in workhouses, or perished in hospitals. Such a fate was exceptional, he insisted. Most prostitutes were transients, who re-entered the ranks of 'respectable' society within a few years: and an increasing number did so by getting married, sometimes above their class. (1968, p. 12)

Likewise, Keith Nield (1973) believed that Action erred.

Says Nield, Action showed that:

far from rapidly succumbing to disease and demoralisation . . . for many women, short periods of prostitution often culminated respectably in marriage or in business . . . The illusion was shattered that prostitutes sank more or less rapidly to the lowest grade of the profession where they soon died.
(introduction)

Debate centered around Action's work continues among contemporary scholars. As more research becomes available the picture will become less muddled. But ideological lag

is common as research moves forward. Therefore many ideas by thinkers such as Action remain embedded in social opinion.

I have observed a different side of an escort workers' entry into the profession. During my field study I had a chance to watch Ann hire a new worker. Interested individuals find their way to Ann through referrals from a friend. Often this friend is a part of the inner circle that insulated sex workers from non-sex workers. Through insider referrals potential employees come to Ann's attention. Such restrictive entrance into escort services presents women with an occupational choice that otherwise would not be considered.

The woman interviewed by Ann was in her early thirties. She had been working for a number of years in a variety of jobs that paid minimum wage. During the interview she was visibly uncomfortable with the idea of doing sex work.

Throughout the interview the woman focused on the potential earnings of escort service work, which was her reason for considering prostitution. She was not in need of more money, but desired more. Working for an escort service was her means to material wealth, not to food and shelter.

At this point the potential sex worker pressed for information concerning earnings. Ann informed her that she could expect to earn between \$2,000 and \$3,000 per week. As another escort service owner put it, "the sky is the limit" adding, "heaven or hell is yours" (Merlino 1990, p. 36).

The new employee went on her first call, as a duo with an experienced worker, that evening. I left the field a couple of days after she was hired. I do not know what happened concerning her employment.

Women enter sex work with similar desires for material and financial success as other prostitutes. The resulting social milieu sets the stage for most of their productive years. The social world created and reproduced by the workers actively enjoying material wealth ultimately interferes with the very desires that brought them into the profession -- financial security.

If there is an overriding theme for an escort's world, it is to enjoy life. This group believes in having a good time whenever possible. Since this goal depends upon income levels, they are successful. Yet success comes at a price measured in more than monetary terms. The goals expressed at the time a sex worker enters the profession are displaced by the "good life."

Sandy, for example describes her proudest attainment as her two automobiles. "I have two new cars. A little sports car, and a luxury car." Most of the women drive cars that gave them status. Very few of the workers drove the most expensive cars; I saw no Mercedes Benzes or Jaguars. The car of choice for this group mainly consisted of two types. The trendy sports cars included BMW, Chevy Camaro, Pontiac Firebird, and other two-seaters. Second, large luxury cars; such as Lincoln Town Cars and Cadillacs, were automobiles of choice.

Another escort worker described her pride in owning a car free of a lien. Before being "busted" by an undercover agent she explained that her 1987 Nissan 300ZX was "her car and that it is paid off free and clear, and that [my] only means of earning money is by working as a prostitute for escort services" (Merlino 1990, p. 62). She also expressed a desire to buy a BMW, but was having trouble finding a legitimate "employer" to put on the loan application. It struck me as strange that a sex worker would need to apply for credit to purchase an automobile. I learned later that many women avoid large cash purchases. Flashing around too much cash draws attention to themselves. Therefore, they buy on credit and pay off the loan ahead of schedule.

The older workers often chose large luxury automobiles. Sex workers gaining experience in the inner circle of prostitution begin to narrow their perception of what constitutes an acceptable car. For example, Ann will not drive anything except a Lincoln Town Car. She does admit to owning a few Cadillacs, only because "she had no other choice at the time. At my low points, I have to take what I can." Her low points do not include owning a mid-size or economy car.

Taste in other consumer goods follow the same pattern as their choice of cars. Successful escorts own extensive wardrobes. Contemporary styles dominate the array of clothing found in sex worker's closets. Mostly consisting of dresses and skirts, such cloths become the worker's

tools. Like other occupations, escort services require a certain type of dress for employees.

Due to the clientele served by escort services it is vitally important to exhibited the expected personal appearance. Most calls are from middle-aged businessmen. Typically, these men stay at luxurious hotels while conducting business. Sex workers must use props to avoid drawing attention to their activities and allow a worker to enter a client's room unnoticed.

Ann understands the importance of this strategy. She requires all of her workers to wear either a dress or a skirt while on a call. Whichever is chosen, their attire must be conservative so as not to draw attention to themselves. It is important not to look out of place while arriving on a call. The workers understand the necessity for this requirement and adhere to it faithfully. Most of the workers enjoy the chance to dress up nicely and "go out on a date" (go on a call). Escort workers told me that this was one of the more enjoyable aspects of sex work.

Besides dressing up for a call, sex workers must be able to engage in meaningful conversation. While discussing a client one meretrix pointed out the importance of being able to "mingle" well. She talked about one client,

. . . a very wealthy businessman who pays me. . . just for my company. He takes me to the best places in town for dinner and dancing, and buys me expensive gifts. And I've never been in bed with the man! He told me that I mingled well with the finest people. He said once, "you act like a lady." (Jackman, O'Toole, and Geis 1963, p. 155)

Researchers differ on their opinion of how often clients just want company, without sex. Very few of the sex workers I interviewed had clients that did not want sex. In his study of California escort agencies, Shaw found that "most of the girls and most of the agencies are straight . . . and, surprisingly, most of their customers want it that way" (1977, p. 196). To support this statement Shaw reports the comment of one psychiatrist:

You'd be surprised how many of these big-wheeled executives are impotent. They're anxiety-ridden, drained of all vitality by the pressure and pace and competition. All they want is a friend, someone to talk to, so they won't be lonely in a new city. Sex threatens them. It's the last thing they're looking for (1977, p. 196)

To be sure, some clients only desire the company of a friendly female ear. Although not all customers will want to converse with the sex worker. The better escorts are prepared to discuss current world and domestic affairs with their customer. As important as this social skill may be, sex workers know that the ability to mingle is often less important than looking good (or at least not looking like a prostitute). For customers not planning to leave their room success is measured by the sex worker's ability to arrive undetected. No matter the intent of the client, wardrobe plays a crucial role in achieving the desired results.

An addition recently built onto Ann's house illustrates the importance of wardrobe. During my field study Ann was having the final stages of a walk-in closet built onto the back of her home. Ann referred to this addition as a

closet, but others would call it a room! Measuring thirty feet long and about fifteen feet wide, this "closet" was astonishing. Segmented into two main areas this space stored winter and summer clothes in separate sections. Although Ann did not own enough clothes to fill it, she looked forward to "filling my closet up with new clothes."

Most clothing purchases are made for work. But two other aspects of escort services cause an accumulation of clothes. The desire to "stay current with the fashions" is the first factor. I have observed a great deal of compulsive buying among this group. If an article of clothing attracts their eye, they often buy it without hesitation. Second, the transitory nature of the profession can require frequent replacement of clothing: In their haste to leave one location for another, escorts will abandon whole wardrobes. Where legal intervention is imminent, workers leave behind extensive wardrobes to get out before the police arrive. Their income allows the worker easily to purchase new items. Some sex workers value mobility over retention of personal possessions.

The worker does not purchase everything herself. Occasionally clients provide a "tip" in the form of a material gift rather than cash. Escort workers often have two or three fur coats in their closet from customers' tips.

As a sex worker cycles through this process of accumulation and abandonment, she spends a large amount of money. Ultimately this expense keeps many workers from achieving the financial security they initially desired.

To be sure, this consumption of material goods is not exclusive to sex workers. The majority of non-sex workers seek to gain many of the same things that prostitutes desire. The difference is most clear in the level of attainment. The higher-than average incomes of sex workers allow them to spend lavishly. High levels of spending thus become an integral part of a prostitute's social world.

The process described concerning wardrobes is repeated for other consumer goods. As a worker becomes a part of this group she soon views consumption of material goods as central to her social circle. The longer a woman is a part of this environment, the quicker she loses sight of the goals that brought her into the business. Life begins to take on a pattern of spending and consuming.

When not spending money on themselves, sex workers spend it on other people. It is common for a worker to support male friends. There is never a shortage of men seeking to attach themselves to a sex worker. Ann has a long record of providing for male friends, most whom have been lovers. Others are just men in need of help. No matter who they are, they always come to a sex worker's attention through the inner circle of the group.

The intervention of the legal system is the last major drain on resource that affect sex workers. Even if a sex worker controls her spending, she is often in legal peril. Being "busted" for solicitation is always possible. The fine for solicitation is not high (about \$50), but over time it adds up to a large sum of money. If a worker buys a

phone line and starts a business, the risks increase. Owners of escort services are susceptible to charges of pandering, which in most states is a felony carrying a much larger legal sanction.

Legal sanctions outside the United States vary from total legality to complete control. In Canada and Great Britain soliciting for prostitution is illegal, but the act of prostitution is legal. This creates what Symanski refers to as "a double moral standard" (1981, p. 9). A sex worker who has privacy can conduct business unhampered. The methods used by escort services allow both the solicitation and the act to take place unseen. Street prostitutes, massage parlor workers, and bar girls are not as fortunate. These sex workers must openly solicit customers, becoming vulnerable to legal action. This type of legal sanction results in a double moral standard, distinguishing those who do and do not have access to private space (Stinchcombe 1963; Lowman 1980).

Law enforcement agencies often use decoys to make arrests. Most sex workers believe that a decoy cannot lie about being a cop. This error often results in a worker's arrest, since police officers do not have to admit that they are undercover. Some undercover officers will go as far as to undress with a meretrix to provide a stronger case

for the District Attorney. Ann related an incidence where this occurred:

He came up to the room, I asked if he was a cop. He laughed and began to take off his clothes. So, I stripped too. I went to the bathroom to get ready. When I came back into the room, he was standing there with this big hard on. I asked if he wanted me to go get some ice. He said there was no need because I was under arrest.

Ann was an experienced sex worker at the time of her arrest, but still did not think a police officer could go so far and still bust her. This belief is widespread. Most of the workers that I spoke to thought a police officer must answer affirmatively if asked.

Ann wondered how such a "nice guy" could be so sneaky. She found both his personality and physique attractive. she seemed more disappointed in his being a cop than in being busted. Most police officers do not see anything wrong with decoy work. Symanski believes that they find it "no more obnoxious than driving to and from work" (1981, p. 9). They rationalize the use of decoys in a number of ways. Some officers see it as a means to fill arrest quotas. Others see decoy work as a way of earning "overtime pay," or "to satisfy one's personal zeal toward crime fighting" (Symanski 1981, p. 9). Some find this tactic harmless, while others dislike what they are doing (Lemert 1968; MacNamara and Sagarin 1977).

Sooner or later, escort service owners must obtain legal counsel. Most owners keep a lawyer on retainer, and often the lawyers are part of their social network. At times a member of the inner circle will enter law school and return

to serve the sex working community. Other lawyers become a part of the network as a way of achieving their own financial goals. Lawyers serve a vital function in the world of sex workers by redirecting failed social interaction. They provide the link between a sex worker and the legal system, and are very expensive. Yet this cost is unavoidable. Sex workers wanting to stay in business must pay the price in order to sustain their own income.

Payment to lawyers, like spending on material objects, often keeps sex workers from achieving financial security. Successful prostitutes who manage to save their money often lose it to legal fees. Several workers have told me of cases in which a girls have saved large amounts only to get "popped" (arrested). If arrested for a minor offense the cost of the fine will not be high (\$50 to \$100). Although it does not immediately set her back financially, over time, this cycle can prevent a sex worker from reaching her goal of financial self-sufficiency.

In other cases an arrest can be devastating. At the time of my field study Ann had saved thirty thousand dollars. Her target was fifty thousand dollars. She was going to sell her phone lines and get out of the business upon reaching her target. At the time of this writing legal costs have eroded her savings. Almost two years of legal action as a result of her arrest for pandering has left her broke. She is now starting over, working as a call girl for another agency.

CHAPTER III

FEMALE ESCORT SERVICES: THE COMMERCIALIZED SELF

In market economies anything can be bought and sold. This fact is at once liberating and troubling. For what it means is that a person can obtain what he or she wants without negotiating such matters as personal worth, moral fitness, political ideology, or religious affiliation--if one has the cash, these matters become largely irrelevant. It is difficult to overemphasize this enormous benefit of the marketplace over other economic systems in terms of efficiency, freedom, innovation, and industrial progress. But the advantage such an economy gives with one hand it may take away with the other. For it turns out that if one can obtain food, clothing, shelter, and other commodities by the simple expedient of money, other things that people often regard as sacred, or ethereal, or somehow beyond the reach of money can be bought and sold as well: identities, images, emotions, hopes, dreams, and physical gratifications. In a market economy anything can be commoditized, and questions of value have a way of being reduced to questions of price. It is this capacity for egalitarian leveling which makes sexual commerce simultaneously a source of great liberation and equally great dis-ease. (Edgley 1989, p. 370)

Commercialized Sexuality, Tenuous Interactions

Exploring escort services, eroticism for hire, as a microcosm of sexuality can be a substantial undertaking. This task can overwhelm a researcher with all of the possible views, analysis, and interpretations. Goffman's complicated prose exemplifies the complexities of such issues. Goffman wrote book-length studies so that each work could examine a section of life in great detail. This

process is obviously selective, yet he makes the slice of life vivid for the reader.

In chapter 2 I discussed how barriers and occupational goals separate a sex worker's personal and professional self. In this chapter I focus on how region maintenance allows for a commercialization of the self. Barriers and goals tend to be static. Region maintenance is active. For escort services, the central concern is interactional maintenance through strict segregation between the front and back regions. Unsuccessful region segregation causes performances to crumble. Therefore, this aspect must receive priority in order to sustain the show. The importance of region segregation is obvious in a sex-for-hire interaction. Similarly, region maintenance is essential for interactions at all levels of everyday life. What is easily recognized for deviant cases is often overlooked in the mundane, everyday, circumstances.

Disruption of interaction results from unsuccessful region maintenance. Social actors build relationships through communications, and through interaction disruptions they can see their disintegration. Keeping the show going requires the individual to control the effect of interruptions. Goffman felt that this was possible through the treatment of the absent, staging talk, team collusion, and realigning actions. The ability to direct, control, contrive or arrange is to manage. Therefore, to direct, control, contrive or arrange things social would constitute interactional management.

Interactional Management. The backstage treatment of the absent is privy only to those allowed access to back regions. Such treatment includes ridiculing, gossiping, caricaturing, and cursing the individual who is encountered in the front region. Derogatory treatment must be kept away from the audience in order to keep from spoiling the show.

Similar techniques are used in sexuality for hire. Female escort service employees openly use these techniques. Just as male workers talk among themselves about sexual encounters, so do female workers. The open denigration of clients is a salient aspect found among this group; yet, as Goffman put it "they meet under a temporary truce, a working consensus, in order to get their business done" (1959, p. 175).

Treatment of the absent stabilizes social interaction by serving as a type of ritual profanation of the front region. A very real danger for prostitutes is the mixing of personal and work lives. When a job requires daily sexual contact it becomes difficult to maintain close personal relations. A job-induced sexual alienation is commonplace among sex workers. Controlling through backstage treatment of the absent helps sex workers cope with the division between erotic and everyday reality.

This process not only can help maintain personal sexuality, but also, in an accumulative manner, can define or exemplify sexuality for society. Engaging in the treatment of the absent provides a sense of the expectations expressed by others, which ultimately builds or modifies our

erotic ideology -- a processual sexual ideology as well as an individually controlled technique.

When Goffman spoke of staging talk he was referring to group talk such as gossip. Although he felt that this method needed little elaboration, "I have stressed it here because it helps point up the fact that individuals with widely different social roles live in the same climate of dramaturgical experience. The talks that comedians and scholars give are quite different, but their talk about their talk is quite similar" (1959, p. 176). The intriguing aspect of stage talk is that such similarities actually do occur between disparate groups. Just as "boys will be boys," so too will "girls be girls." As a male researcher immersed in the world of female escorts, I did not anticipate this similarity. I was fully aware of how men talk when in groups; stage talk abounds in all sorts of ideas about "what the guys do when together." However, I was not ready for "what the girls do when together." Comments concerning the physical attributes of males on television and commercials, expressed desires to "jump between the sheets," and many other such conversations dominated group discussions among sex workers. Groups considered nondeviant engage in similar discussions: I have noticed such a phenomenon among a group of female graduate students and female faculty at various professional meetings. As Goffman (1959, p. 176) showed that the "talk about their talk is quite similar" among comedians and scholars, so too is that of prostitutes and

scholars. I suspected that the talk would be the same, yet when confronted by the experience I was surprised.

The escorts spent a great deal of time discussing clients. Acceptable and unacceptable behavior was a major concern in such discussions. Open discussions concerning sexual techniques often took place in the presence of the members of the back region. This was especially so when new workers were present. Staging talk among this group served as a major component of the in-house training for less experienced workers.

An immediate shift to frontstage behavior would occur when an unknown or uninitiated person entered the backstage region. As the individual exited this informally controlled area, the group would resume the topic of discussion as if nothing had occurred. Other groups, of course, also use this technique. Women at garden clubs engage in similarly skillful talk, as do men in bars. And most often, as Goffman pointed out, we all engage in staging talk.

Sometimes, if these techniques are to succeed, social actors must be able to withdraw into privacy. A preserver of interaction, withdrawal also allows actors to escape interaction. Actors desiring to sustain the self must use private areas to their fullest. This seems true both in the mundane interactions, such as marriage, and in unusual situations.

In a marriage, partners often feel trapped. Excessive interaction with a person, or group, leads to conflict (Schwartz 1968). Searching for ways to relieve this

tension, actors retreat into private surroundings. The process described by Schwartz is needed in all interactions. Interactional management would not be possible without techniques such as stage talk. In turn, stage talk would not be possible without privacy.

Interestingly, the need for privacy feeds upon itself. Just as sex workers use private, backstage, areas to cope with their work, they also need a way to withdraw even from other sex workers. Ann has provided this escape by constructing private areas for the workers. An example of this is the way she segregates the bathrooms. Ann provides her workers with a place to protect the sacred "inner circle" (Lindesmith and Strauss 1956, p.435). By providing a separate bathroom for the workers Ann allows them to escape from interaction.

The bathroom that Ann added onto her home is small. This insures privacy by limiting the number of individuals who can enter at any one time. There were times when I observed more than one worker in the bathroom area: one would apply makeup, while other workers engaged in conversation. Obviously this area was not being used for privacy while preparing for work. Perhaps, as Phyllis McGinley suggested, modern society is losing the idea of an "inner circle." (11) Although used in many ways, this bathroom did serve as a haven for workers. At times a worker would take a book and retreat into this area alone.

Social interaction forces sex workers to balance between successfully maintaining the self and acquiring deviance

status. Too much privacy leads to overprivatization, in which social interaction cannot be successful. To be effective, privacy must be selective. Individual unmaskings to strangers are subject to much forethought (Schwartz 1968). An over reliance on privacy leads social actors to "actually believe themselves to be what they present to public view" (Schwartz 1968, p. 752).

Interplays between truth and lies, honesty and deceit, are ever present. Likewise, actors must choose between the need to include others and the equally pressing need to escape. Our "selves" center on this interplay. As Goffman recognized, "our sense of being a person can come from being drawn into a wider social unit; our sense of selfhood can arise through the little ways in which we resist the pull" (1961, p. 320).

Stage talk serves both the individual and the group. They may be served simultaneously, such as when releasing group stress. Other times, an individual may gain relief by engaging in stage talk. Another means of "resisting the pull" is team collusion, in which members secretly communicate with one another in winks, coded phrases, or some other strategic use of a prop. Such secret signals are usually undiscernible outside of the inner group. At other times secret signals are known to all interactants, yet not acknowledged.

Goffman did not address three-way knowledge. His main concern was with two-way interaction among teammates. Even

though there is obvious team work in the escort services, at times an outside member is knowingly involved.

Thus, a common procedure for call girls is to "check-in" when they enter a client's room. This check-in most often takes the form of a telephone call to the escort service. Escorts accomplish a number of "checks" using code words and phrases. For example, whether or not the worker intends to stay and the amount of time she will be on a particular call are expressed in a short time using coded phone calls.

Ann told me that the "standard" time that an escort will "visit" a client is one hour. Smiling, she related that workers call this the "forty-five minute" hour. She said that the workers often finish a call in less than an hour. Not all owners of escort services subscribe to the forty-five minute hour. Another local escort service owner ". . . makes her prostitutes stay one hour for the \$300 charge, and she does not expect the prostitute to rush the man, and if it's only five minutes or ten minutes and they are finished, then the prostitute will talk to them until the hour is up" (Merlino 1990, p. 23). Richard Sennett sees this truncation of time due to the customer becoming ". . . discomfited by the old routine of staying around for a whole evening, talking and drinking with the girls before retiring to the bedrooms" (1970, p. 74). According to Sennett ". . . they now wanted their sex fast and privately" (1970, p. 74). Team collusion enables a sex worker to signal when trouble is expected. If necessary, the escort

service can telephone the hotel room within a prescribed time, allowing a worker to slip away.

The need for team collusion varies among sex workers. For female escorts the most problematic situations center around the client's demeanor. A client's condition may vary widely. He might be under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Or a client might make a worker uneasy for some inexplicable reason, a sense of something just not being right.

If the sex worker feels the situation is unacceptable, she will relay this in the coded message telephoned to the service. Other factors may also be the emotional character of the client; he may be violent, upset, or otherwise unstable. The sexual act requested by the client is the last item considered during the preselection screening. If the sex act requested is offensive to the worker, she will use the code to make her exit. Most clients know that this process is ongoing, but may not understand the code used. Although known by all three actors, this type of team collusion serves a vital function to a successful transaction.

The intra-interactions that actors engage in were a major concern Goffman's frame analysis. Frame Analysis (1974) applied Goffman's unique perspective to the larger stages of life.

Sexuality is more problematic when placed in the realm of natural verses social frameworks. The purely physical world of human sexuality becomes entangled in many

situations with socially guided frames. The mix of these two frames creates circumstances requiring explanations, or a vocabulary of motives.

One such process leads to what Goffman (1974) called "muffings," or occasions when the body unexpectedly breaks free, deviates from course, or otherwise slips from control. "Muffings" are manifested in those little noises, fragrances, and physical miscues that occur in sexual intimacy. Being very hazardous to sexual interaction muffings must be redefined as sensual.

A similar handling of the situation is found in commercial sexuality, redefining unexpected moments as a part of business. Muffings often are considered an occupational hazard for the sex workers, while being a part of the product for the clients. The interplay of expectations is illustrated in the following experience:

There I was all spread out on the foot of the bed, sort of half on and half off. The guy was sitting on the floor, you know, eating, well, performing oral on me. There was a show on the TV that was real good and I was all engrossed in it. The guy was just going to town on me, and he was not that exciting so I was watching the tube. All of a sudden I looked down and he was looking up at me. I about freaked, not knowing what to say. He just smiled and went back to eating me out.

There is no doubt that a noncommercial situation would have required a different response. The partner's indifference would not have received the same response in a personal situation as it did here. The partner's interest in the television did not detract from the product that the client was paying for, but in a nonpaying performance it would have taken on a quite different meaning.

Goffman referred to this mix of expectations as combined frames: an "embarrassing fact that during any one moment of activity, an individual is likely to apply several frameworks" (1974, p. 25). In the example cited above, the sex worker was using one frame, while the client another -- allowing interaction to continue unabated.

Actors become competent in interaction by rehearsing potential situations. Practice can be as elaborate as a simulation in time and space of the performance, or as simple as thinking through the scene mentally. Rehearsals do not provide a perfect reenactment of the future, although many individuals place such expectations upon them. To do so leaves the individual vulnerable to failure of the show.

If used correctly, rehearsal can help social actors. As a way of gaining insight into possible outcomes, rehearsal can aid in planning for and neutralizing potentially disruptive interaction. Rehearsal cannot prevent unpleasant interaction from occurring, it can only prepare an actor for the performance to be given on the stage of life.

Considering the nature of sexuality -- both sexuality-for-hire and "normal" sexuality -- one cannot overlook the importance of rehearsals. Modern social interaction requires individuals to be particularly adept at practice. As both Arlie Hochschild (1983) and Erving Goffman (1955, 1956, 1959) recognized, individuals must learn to manage their hearts. In contemporary interaction, emotional control requires rehearsal of lines. The

interactional model sees social factors entering into the very formulation of emotions through codification, management, and expression (Hochschild 1983).

One can find examples of such practice from high schools to hotel rooms. Becoming sexual in adolescence, individuals begin to understand the utilitarian aspect of practice. Often this is understood as "guy talk" among adolescent friends. As we began to date, the management of emotions becomes an ongoing practice or, if you will, a sexual scrimmage. Practice does not stop with the passing of adolescence. Individuals continue to practice throughout life, both in sexual and nonsexual matters. Although the framework employed changes over time, the pragmatic aspect of practice does not diminish.

The social stage occupied by escort services is no different. Practice serves both as a training ground and as a coping mechanism for prostitutes. An interesting feature of practice for Goffman was "that the instructor and the student are likely to find it useful to focus conscious attention on an aspect of the practiced task with which competent performers no longer concern themselves" (1974, p. 64). Neophytes practice and learn in the safety of the back regions before entering the show. Veterans, use it to cope with the harsh realities of transforming from the erotic to the everyday realities. Both rehearse, yet with a different focus.

So what are the limitations of practice? Goffman believed there was no limit on practicing. Even if practice

is limitless, it is impractical in some instances. Goffman felt that society viewed some individuals "so high in ritual status that they ought to be too unbending to rehearsal at all, although, of course, even more than lesser folk, they have to bend this way" (1974, p. 62). To stress his point he gives the example of the president of the United States rehearsing for his daughter's wedding. Just as the president practices for a wedding and the meretrix practices for her client, we all practice for our next social interaction. As Goffman saw kids practicing smoking, military war games, and other organized and unorganized practices, I also include all levels of commercial and noncommercial sexuality.

The Management of Space. Mastery of interactional arenas requires actors to be competent managers of space. This space may be as localized as one's own immediate area, but most often it concerns large geographical areas. This ability to understand how interaction is played out geographically I call space management. Whereas interactional management deals with smaller areas, such as personal and immediate space, spatial management concerns social space.

Every type of business manages space. The success or failure of a business is directly related to its ability to do so. The capitalist social structure has commoditized space: The ability to extract value from space management influences the ability to create wealth. The tug-of-war

between use value and exchange value defines space in this sense. Individuals see a home, while realtors see a house. (12) While both actors refer to the same space, their orientation toward that space differs.

If space is commoditized it can also be assigned. If space has stratified value, then it will be distributed according to highest use value. That is to say, highly valued space finds high-value use. Those businesses that are legitimate will locate in favorable locations. Businesses that stray from the approval of the public will find locations in socially less desirable locations.

The results of this process are evident in American cities. Businesses have followed the out-migration of desirable clients, leaving the abandoned space undesirable. Businesses of questionable value -- liquor stores, high priced mini-markets, peep shows, and prostitutes -- began to locate in the void created by those exiting the city.

Escort services have been able to escape this trend. Their ability to manage space has allowed them to insulate their activity. Escort services are the only form of prostitution to escape from the limitations of space. In order to understand why this is so, I first examine why others have not succeeded.

Historically, prostitutes did not concern themselves with space management, often because they had no space to manage. Relocation to areas unwanted by others caused prostitutes to become spatially marginal. The most often used technique was mobility: Rather than manage space, they

moved. To some extent this still occurs in contemporary prostitution. Yet, as I will discuss later, modern strategies have developed to enable the management of space.

The mobility of prostitutes is legendary. Early prostitutes traveled with armies. The armies of the Crusades, for example, included thousands of "camp followers." When the Duke of Alva invaded the Netherlands, 1,200 prostitutes went along. Several hundred years later, hundreds followed the British from Halifax to Boston (Bridenbaugh 1968). Davis (1974) tells of many prostitutes that followed both armies in the American Civil War, often disguised as men to avoid detection by officers.

Every port city in Europe contained areas of prostitution. Although the areas were relatively permanent, the sex workers were not. Many traveled from one city to another to avoid arrest. Some of the women even accompanied wealthy travelers on summer vacation. Symanski (1981) provides an illustration of this seasonal movement:

. . . Liverpool was not unique for its periodic influx of prostitutes, nor was the navy the only reason for intra-island trade in Victorian Britain. The prostitute population of Edinburgh decreased rather drastically in the summer and again during the university vacation in the fall. Some women traveled with the wealthy customers on excursions, others moved to villages to be near their clients. In Edinburgh the prostitute population increased during the horse races, especially those at Musselburgh. The women came from all of the country's major cities for these famous summer races. (p. 179)

The need for mobility also affected brothels. Usually considered permanent structures, brothels became mobile when the need arose, such as during war. World War I found

brothels "in abandoned castles, in little village houses which had been more or less spared by the war, in wooden barracks which were erected for this purpose, or in empty wagons" (Hirshfeld 1937, p. 143). As the need for mobility increased, brothels became motorized. Brothels with blue lights were for officers, those with red ones for everyone else (Basserman 1968).

Even mobile prostitutes displayed patterns in their movements. Circuits developed as sex workers settled into a set pattern of movement from one location to another. In early seventeenth-century England, a class of prostitutes developed known as vagrant whores, who traveled in small spatial patterns containing only a few cities or parishes. The group would make seasonal rounds among this select group of locales.

A similar type of mobility was observed in nineteenth-century America. Known as a parlor house circuit, this pattern extended from South Dakota to California and south to New Mexico. A Colorado circuit included Georgetown, Aspen, Denver, and Cripple Creek (Symanski 1981, p. 181).

The term "cat wagon" also was born during the nineteenth-century (Bullough 1973). The discovery of gold in the Dakotas motivated prostitutes to follow the migration of miners up from Colorado. One year alone found 2,000 men and women joining the rush for gold, so many that "the Denver Tenderloin showed signs of becoming depopulated" (Drago 1972, pp. 2-3).

As recently as the 1930s a group of pimps known as "The Independent Benevolent Association" moved prostitutes from city to city (Woolston 1921). This type of spatial management by mobility was also observed in the south and northeast. Along the west coast, pimps would "sell girls back and forth, or trade them like ballplayers" (Lane 1975).

Escort workers rely on the telephone service area to define service areas. Street prostitutes, on the other hand, use appearance to define their geographical boundaries. Stereotypical attire and behavior derive from both fact and fiction. The tight dresses and heavy makeup serve to mark areas and occupations. It is also common for prostitutes to put forth a less obvious appearance. At times throughout history laws have mandated how prostitutes were to appear in public. Roman law prohibited prostitutes from wearing jewelry, shoes, and purple robes.

A common trait for prostitutes in 1930s America was bleached blond hair. Streaking of the hair in front became popular in the 1940s. Just as hair color served as a social mark, colored stockings in the 1950s also distinguished prostitutes from respectable women (Winick and Kinsie 1972).

These dress codes forced prostitutes to endure physical discomfort. While displaying their goods sex workers were exposed to physical and environmental elements. As one sex workers put it, "we . . . must either muffle to the eyebrows, which is not particularly attractive, or hope that our frosty faces and hands will not detract from the appeal

of our underclad, but at least visible, figures" (Anonymous 1960, p. 84). Prostitutes often huddle around small bonfires to warm themselves.

The means of spatial management most often used by street prostitutes is "strolling." Streetscapes take the form of strolls, or loosely defined areas where prostitutes solicit customers. The geographic area covered by a stroll depends on several factors. Strolls are larger in the winter, allowing more movement in cold climates. More movement also occurs in the daytime. This increased movement helps the sex worker avoid detection. Thursday through Saturday will find a meretrix enlarging her stroll in response to client demand. And, finally, older workers use smaller areas than younger prostitutes.

There usually are many streetwalking areas throughout a city. These areas are well known to most citizens. Even people who do not use the services of sex workers know the location of the tenderloin. It is not uncommon for a young male to discover these locations in fulfillment of an informal right of passage.

Not all streetwalking areas are equal. These areas are stratified, and prestige is attached to workers in each stroll. Therefore, new workers are not allowed to work more desirable areas offering better working conditions and more client contacts. An informal system of seniority is at work among prostitutes. As a worker moves up to a more desirable location her fee for services will reflect her promotion.

Settled into a stroll, prostitutes can gain some stability in their lives. Becoming acquainted with an area allows a sex worker to "become familiar with the quirks, prejudices and demands of hotel owners, bellhops and elevator boys, good, bad and indifferent types of potential customers who come into the area and--most important of all--the policemen who patrol" (Symanski 1981, p. 176).

The advantage of this type of spatial management is illustrated by a London streetwalker:

I always stand here, where Half Moon Street and Piccadilly meet, and every brick of this shop front, every fault in its paintwork, every crack in the pavement is familiar to me. There is a certain safety and advantage in this familiarity, too: I know the quickest route to take if I spot the police, the best angle of light from the street-lamp for my face and figure, the most comfortable section of wall to lean on when the minutes drag. Besides, they expect to find me somewhere near this corner if they come back for more, and a good many of them do. (Anonymous 1960, pp. 3-4)

Street prostitutes experience limited spatial management. The ability to stroll in familiar areas is crucial to their success.

A recent variant of streetwalking has centered around truck stops. Known as "pavement princesses" and "lot lizards," these sex workers solicit over citizen band radios, and at truck stops and highway rest areas. Overall, these prostitutes enjoy more spatial management. Strolls vary as the city's political and physical environment changes, truck stops are more permanent. CB radios have allowed managed space to extend to the outer reaches of the radio waves.

Bar girls control space by localizing their activities. As the label implies, these sex workers solicit in bars. Often the bars also provide other sexual services. Commonly found in topless bars, these workers blend into the environment. At times doubling as topless dancers, these women can increase their income. Although most customers believe that the all of the dancers are sexually available, most are not.

Bar girls frequently sit at the same table nightly. Most important, this allows the sex worker to detect suspicious individuals entering the bar. It also provides a sense of security -- familiarity. Bars offer a manageable space. Prostitutes station themselves in locations that allow interaction with clients. Pimps gather in areas that afford advantageous viewing points. This spatial arrangement allows them to keep an eye on their workers while conversing with other pimp.

Although bar girls have some control over their space, this environment is not totally in their control. Complete control belongs to the owner. The owner can allow prostitutes to solicit, or can stop transactions. As a result, some of the prostitutes' profits find their way to the bar owner in some form of payoff.

In their study of prostitution along the northern Mexican border cities, Curtis and Arreola (1991) identified two types of zonas (zones). The first type, located around tourist areas are district zonas, which flourish "in a city with a clustering of commercial establishments such as

bars, nightclubs, restaurants, and hotels where prostitution is tolerated on de facto, if not de jure, basis by local authorities, including the police" (Curtis and Arreola 1991, p. 335). This tolerance of sexual commerce led the authors to refer to such areas as zonas de tolerancia (zones of tolerance).

Mexican district zonas are similar to strolls in America. They are stratified; Curtis and Arreola note that districts in Mexico are "differentiated by racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic considerations" (1991, p. 336). While prostitutes in both countries manipulate space, the difference lies in how much pressure the authorities put on sex workers. America does not yet -- at least officially -- have "zones of tolerance."

The second type of zona identified by Curtis and Arreola (1991) is more interesting. Appearing around 1945, compound zonas differ from districts in many respects. As the name implies, compound zonas are enclosed areas. A number of individuals employed in compounds also reside within the walls. Bartenders and other men, as well as most of the sex workers, call these areas home.

Near the entrance a visitor finds a set of institutional buildings. A gate, police post, and clinic control and contain the area. Control of visitors helps regulate traffic in the area, while containment of venereal disease helps maintain good reputations. Located near the center is the primary club. This bar is the largest in the

compound and helps give an "image of exclusiveness" (Curtis and Arreola 1991, p. 339). Located along the outer wall of the compound are secondary clubs. These establishments add variety to the compound: Primary clubs are designed to appeal to the general client, while secondary clubs specialize.

Prostitutes who enjoy higher status work the clubs. Other sex workers, older or less attractive women, are "relegated to . . . dingy, austere rooms" (Curtis and Arreola 1991, p. 339). These lower-status areas are known as *acesorias*, the Mexican equivalent of cribs.

Mixed in among the clubs and *acesorias* are low-order goods and services: "restaurants, food and drink stands, pool halls, beauty shops, grocery and liquor stores, and curio shops; the boys' town in Nuevo Laredo also has a tattooing establishment. There are also floating activities, such as food, flower, and curio vendors, photographers and musicians" (Curtis and Arreola 1991, p.340).

The compound environment creates a highly controlled place. Spatial management is maximized by this arrangement. Not only do workers control their environment, but also clients feel secure.

In America the only type of sex work that approaches the level of spatial control offered by compound *zonas* are massage parlors. Operated and often owned by prostitutes, massage parlors allow for complete spatial management. Located in small commercial buildings these sex businesses provide privacy and security. Greeted at the door by a

receptionist, clients are scrutinized upon entering the parlor. Before seeing a sex worker, all customers are screened.

After being screened, the client goes with the sex worker to a small room, enabling the worker to further inspect the client. This inspection involves both a physical inspection and a mental shakedown. A worker uncomfortable with either outcome can terminate the transaction. Some massage parlors require proof of identity. Symanski (1981) noted that "some even tell men to return in two or three days after their stories have been cleared" (p. 220).

This process, controlled from the door to the bed, allows for maximum spatial management. Yet such control also has disadvantages. Being located in one particular place can limit the availability of clients. If they wish, street prostitutes can stroll in a variety of places. Bar girls can move to another establishment when business is slow. To remain competitive, massage parlors must utilize other strategies. Owners often require workers to pass out advertisements as part of their employment. Frequently this task is accomplished by leaving fliers on the windshields of automobiles parked at topless bars and peep shows. Thus massage parlors can effectively extend their areas of influence.

Differing only in form, each type of prostitution manages space. Strolls, districts and compounds, bars, and

massage parlors all allow some level of spatial manipulation. A strong link exists between arrest rates and the level of space control. Prostitutes who experience more arrests are those with little control over their environment. Street prostitutes, whose strolls provide limited spatial management, encounter legal intervention most often. Although strolls may provide psychological support, strolls do not help sex workers avoid arrest.

Legal intervention declines as prostitutes become skilled in controlling the impressions they present to outsiders. Street prostitutes are especially recognizable, and work in exposed environments. Strolls do not go unnoticed by most members of society, especially the police. Bar girls and masseuses work inside. Inconspicuous environments allow their work to proceed unnoticed by those not a part of the inner circle.

No type of prostitution is more skilled at space management than female escort services. Escort services are highly mobile, facilitated by technology and automobiles.

American urbanization set the stage for the development of a sprawling network of interstate highways. The explosive growth in highway construction began in 1956 with the passage of the Interstate Defense Highway Program. Congress approved this program, believing that it would improve the logistics of city evacuation. It also provided female escort services with a direct path to their customers.

Since escort services rely on the phone system, they can locate anywhere a telephone is present. This is the key to an escort's mobility. The ease with which a phone number can be transferred to a new location gives this group mobility. And numbers with different phone prefixes are routed to one location. Clients do not realize that they have reached the same service when they call different phone numbers; therefore, shopping around for a better deal is difficult. Likewise, doing business with another service because of dissatisfaction or a desire for different women is not easy.

Escort services allow an owner to locate in an upscale area while doing business. Unlike other types of prostitution, escorts are not bound by geography. Strolls are limited in their location and zoning laws segregate sex business in certain parts of town. But the ubiquitous nature of phones gives escort owners unlimited locational choices.

The escort service that I observed was located in a well-kept middle-income, working-class, neighborhood. Yet most of Ann's clients called from areas in and around the airport. This location also contained most of the city's hotel and convention space.

Thirty miles separated the service from the location of the clients. Ann accomplished the illusion of spatial closeness in two ways. First, Ann's main advertisement, in the Yellow Pages, displayed an address close to the airport. Ann told me that "by listing an address close to the

airport, we get more calls because the john (13) thinks we can get a girl to his room faster. It has boosted my calls." Second, the highway system allowed Ann to maintain this impression. Sex workers navigate the highways expediently in order to provide prompt service.

Female escorts can accomplish this task by using the services of a driver which most escort services make available, especially for long distances. Drivers allow sex workers preparation time "on the run." Not only does this tactic save time, it allows the worker to arrive refreshed. As the driver deals with traffic problems, the worker can relax and prepare mentally as well as physically. This is a benefit not available at other levels of prostitution.

The escort service arrange drivers for the workers, and each worker negotiates the monetary details with the driver. If the driver is already "booked" by another sex worker, the services become more valuable. Rarely is an attempt made to steal another's "ride." The second worker must try to arrange another ride, usually at a higher price. The average price for a ride was twenty dollars. A driver can make as much as two hundred dollars a night "chauffeuring" escort workers.

A driver's skill determines his (14) income. To make money in this business, as a driver or sex worker, calls must be serviced as quickly as possible. Often a driver is required to ignore traffic laws. Drivers take pride in their skill at circumventing traffic laws. Certain drivers build reputations from their driving techniques. In some

instances a driver can command more fees due to his "known" abilities. Sex workers are likely to choose a driver for two qualities: how safe they feel with the driver, and how quickly they can expect to arrive on location. Both criteria are central to a driver's reputation.

Since most calls are at night, drivers easily evade police while transporting sex workers. During the early morning it is common for most vehicular traffic to ignore traffic lights. Drivers will stop at a red light, look, and, if they see no traffic, progress through the intersection. Transportation planners often program traffic lights to flash either yellow or red after midnight to help the flow of cars.

In large cities escorts often travel as much as fifty miles to a call. Planning is important in order to service a call at this distance. Escort drivers know which intersections contain programmed traffic lights, and if possible will follow a route consisting of programmed traffic lights. If not, they will take risks and ignore traffic laws. In doing this they accept any fines received as a part of doing business.

Most states revoke a driver's license after an accumulation of traffic violations. Thus an escort driver may have to change names and apply for a new license. Some drivers carry duplicate licenses issued under assumed names. Long haul truck drivers have found this tactic useful for a number of years, only recently have they been stopped with the introduction of a national driver's license.

Drivers and workers endure long hours of waiting between calls. One driver and escort told me about their favorite way of passing time between calls. The escort reached into her purse and pulled out a spoon. Laughing, they both told me about how they stop by a local supermarket and purchase a half gallon of ice cream. "We would sit out in the parking lot and eat the ice cream" until receiving another assignment.

Although drivers are available, many workers do not use them. Sex workers sometimes simply remain in areas known for frequent calls, such as the airport and convention hotels. As the workers are needed they can be summoned and dispatched by an electronic pager. Upon receiving a call, they can get ready and respond quickly.

Spatial management, accomplished in many ways, is important to all forms of prostitution. Non-sex professions also require competence in space manipulation. But it is the illicit nature of sex-for-hire professions that heightens the need to manage one's space in order to survive.

The Management of Time. Time is often neglected by those who study social interaction, especially in the social sciences. Scholars working in the physical science have included time as a major part of inquiry. Physiotemporal studies concentrate on the temporal workings within the natural realm. Likewise, biology has a biotemporal order. Contemporary social sciences are only now beginning to

recognize a sociotemporal order (Zerubavel 1981). It is important to understand that sociotemporal order, unlike time in the natural world, is socially constructed. John Horton (1967) reminds us that

time in industrial society is clock time. It seems to be an external, objective regulator of human activities. But for the sociologist, time is not an object existing independent of man, dividing his day into precise units. Time is diverse; it is always social and subjective. A man's sense of time derives from his place in the social structure and his lived experiences. (p. 9)

Humans are products of their own time. The temporal nature of society is designed by social members as the advent of calendars and clocks attests (Wright 1968). "Only within this temporal structure," point out Berger and Luckmann, "does everyday life retain for me its accent of reality" (1966, p. 28).

Only recently has sociological work started to point out the importance of time as a unit of analysis (Melbin 1987; Zerubavel 1981). Following in the footsteps of earlier scholars (i.e., Moore 1963; Schwartz 1968), Zerubavel (1981) views time as a special topic. Attacking the topic from a different angle, Murray Melbin (1987) focuses upon a new frontier -- the night. Both works echo Moore's (1963) position that activities are "concentrated in time . . . and segregated" (p. 7).

Searching for answers, Moore (1963) turned to competition. Competition in this context is less adversarial than managerial. Time is finite and requires skillful management. Tasks and activities do not compete for time slots as a human competes for food. Individuals

manage activity within the confines of a given time frame.

As Moore (1963) pointed out,

. . . competing claims, temporal divisions or allocations and temporal priorities or sequences become major (though not exhaustive) alternatives in [one's] relations with organizations. The individual may, for example, allocate a finite amount of time to each activity, or he may recognize the superior claim of one group and do its duty first, leaving later and residual time for others. (p. 10)

Some groups, considered deviant, do not follow Moore's framework, but instead follow their own rules for allocating time. Seen as a sign of rebellion, deviations are not readily accepted by other social members. Interpreted as a sign of rugged individualism (Melbin 1987), temporal deviations are viewed with awe. I do not believe, as Melbin does, that such arrangements signal a new frontier.

Prostitution is usually a nocturnal activity. But the reason has less to do with rugged individualism or rebellion than with economics. (15) The demand for sexual services is greatest at night. There is little doubt in my mind that prostitution would cease to be nocturnal if demand were higher during the daytime.

This contention reflects the "temporal anchoring of normalcy" (Zerubavel 1981, p. 20). As society becomes more complex, demands for services increase while access to services become increasingly restricted temporally. Melbin illustrates this stratification of access when he points out that ". . . although the community resents some night intrusions, the poor, the working class, and the middle class benefit the most, because the rich and the powerful

could already command goods and services at any hour" (1987, p. 129). Nighttime hours remain for the other members.

Night often offers services not considered proper by the public. Leisure (that is, nonproductive) activities are relegated to this time frame. Nighttime finds people drinking and dancing, visiting friends, and just being out on the town. Prostitution is simply another nighttime service. This became obvious one night during my field work. Sitting around watching a movie, the escorts and I noticed that it was getting close to 2:00 A.M. Noting the time I commented that business was slow. One of the sex workers replied, "the bars will be closing soon. The calls will start as they close because everyone will want some pussy when the bars close down." It seemed a matter of common knowledge.

Nighttime brings out behavior not seen during the day. Tolerance levels are higher among individuals out at night. Melbin (1987) attributes this to the frontier manner derived from individualism that is enhanced at night. He gives examples of workplace behaviors that change as shifts change to support his point. Although personal experience tells me that this behavioral metamorphosis does occur, in the case of female escort services I do not find support that it is due to an individualistic attitude.

Sex workers view time management just as other members of society do. They have a finite amount of time, so only some tasks will be completed. I found that a major difference between sex workers as a group and daytime

workers was the pace of life. Daytime workers were more concerned with scheduling (temporal management). Sex workers displayed a more relaxed approach to task completion.

A similar way of life can be found among other nighttimers. This is one aspect of night life that daytimers find bothersome. Deviant motives are attached to groups living in different temporal zones.

The relationship between temporal management and activities varies among social groups. Each group, whether nighttimers or daytimers, constructs activity within constraints, some of which are more binding than others. Female escort services arrange activity in a very relaxed environment.

Spontaneity is a significant representative aspect of the way that escorts arrange their time. Zerubavel (1981) argues that patterning in modern life has ". . . replaced natural control with social control" (p. 44). Overuse of social control has led to a society devoid of spontaneity. He attacks ". . . routine [as] essentially antithetical to spontaneity. Thus, the very same institution that is responsible for much of the orderliness and predictability of our daily life is, almost by definition, also responsible for robbing the latter of much of its spontaneous flavor" (Zerubavel 1981, p. 44). Nighttime activity allows individuals to regain spontaneity. Playfulness returns as routine breaks down.

Female escorts are spontaneous. My field research found

that an escort's life fits the pattern set by Zerubavel's (1981) criteria for spontaneity: To be spontaneous, individuals must engage in their activities for as long as they desire. Furthermore, they must do things in the order that they prefer, at the rate they desire, and whenever they feel like doing them. Daytimers do not enjoy most of these freedoms. Nighttimers -- such as escorts -- are more likely to conduct activities according to these criteria.

To do things for as long as one desires: Sounds simple -- most people feel that they control the duration of activities. Yet how often have we stopped one activity because it was time to "do something else"? In their time off of work escort workers do things for as long as they desire. I didn't see any concern about temporal duration among this group during leisure time. Activities ceased only when individuals grew tired and left the interaction.

Outsiders find this unsettling. Activities that yesterday took little time, today may be protracted. The two activities most often observed as temporally unbounded were meals and talk. At meals, Ann and the other women engaged in extended discussions. The daytime norm is to eat and run; very few people enjoy a leisurely meal. As I spent time with Ann and her workers I sensed that daytimers were missing a very pleasurable experience enjoyed by these people.

To do things in the order that one prefers to do them is another aspect of social temporality lost to modern scheduling. Being tied to clocks and the calendar forces individuals to adjust interaction not to nature but

to an arbitrary social schedule. Natural body functions are forced to fit the clock. Individuals eat, bath, shave, sleep, and have sex in time slots predetermined by their work and larger social infrastructure.

This control by the clock is institutionalized in the deadline. Even when not under the pressure of an official deadline, individuals speak as if they were: "Oh, I would love to go, but I have to get this done by 3:00." "I can't, I just don't have the time." "Maybe later when I get this done." Most activities are not governed by a natural predetermined completion time. Yet the limited time allotted for each activity necessitates sequencing. People use such statements to help segment time. It is a means of temporal management.

When used by sex workers such statements indicate inattention. Nighttimers know that these statements are not accurate -- time is not that constrained for them. Whereas daytimers mean that they can't do that "thing" until they have time, nighttimers convey in such statements a lack of desire to do that "thing" at this time.

As a daytimer, I found it unnerving to be around this group. A number of years ago I was a member of the nighttimers when I worked as a photographic printer on the night shift. But after six years of military service and five more years in graduate school, I was unaccustomed to this social world.

Nighttimers do not desire temporal discipline. They do things in the order that they wish. It was not unusual

for individuals to do the oddest things at the oddest hours: Meals are eaten when one gets hungry, not when the clock tells one to eat. Party time is any time, not only in the evening hours.

When escorts do things at the rate that they desire, control of events focuses on group behavior. The control of events as they occur historically (rate of occurrence) forces spontaneity out of the interaction. Christmas comes every December 25th. Memorial Day in America is always the last weekend in May. Cinco de Mayo is every May 5th. Activity rates are antithetical to spontaneity.

No social member is immune from the affect of rates. Both daytimers and nighttimers are aware of this sequencing of events. But as a group, sex workers tend to rearrange even these activities. Typically the most common method of rate control is to disregard the event. Most holidays are not observed, except major holidays, such as Christmas.

I believe that contemporary American society is moving away from this type of temporal control. More and more groups are breaking free of activities on predetermined times. The clearest example of this is Christmas.

Christmas parties now begin the first week of December as demand for party-room space increases. Most office parties are held on convenient days that do not interrupt business.

Lack of bureaucratic control allows sex workers to "party" when they desire. Official holidays mean little to them. Other workers are forced to enjoy the time that the establishment offers them (eg., two-week vacations,

holidays), and thus must take advantage of these few times during the year. The freedom from such scheduling allows sex workers to do things at the rate that they desire.

Escorts do things whenever they feel like doing them. As the last indicator of spontaneity, Zerubavel (1981) believes

. . . our adherence to schedules is particularly salient with regard to the standardization of the temporal location of purely biological activities. After all, most of us get up, eat, and go to sleep not necessarily when we feel like it, but, rather, in accordance with a schedule. (p. 47)

Female escort workers get up, eat, and go to sleep when they feel like doing so. They come to work when they feel like working. Ann only requests that each sex worker let her know how many days she wants to work in the next week. Planning more than a week in advance is worthless. Workers do not schedule activities that far in advance. The spontaneity enjoyed by this group forbids planning. This is one aspect of the profession that sex workers find most attractive.

At times the spontaneity of the escorts conflicts with the scheduled mainstream. At such times the escorts become most visible. One example is particularly significant: Ann and the workers decided to take me to the movies. Like other activities, this was spontaneously decided. We all jumped in the car and rushed off to the theater. It was about 4:30 in the afternoon. Rush hour traffic had begun and was heavy. Ann weaved in and out of traffic as two escorts in the back seat argued about which theater would be

best. Just as the decision was made Ann noticed that her car was low on fuel. Making a detour to a gas station, we refilled Ann's car. Diving back into the car and speeding out of the gas station, we were on our way again.

In the back seat, an argument erupted over which movie to see. One wanted a movie full of sex, while the other wanted a love story. Ann put a stop to the argument by suggesting a compromise -- White Orchid. (16) This decision necessitated a change in theater. Quickly we changed course and raced toward the new destination.

Arriving at the theater we rushed to purchase our tickets. We found seats and settled in for the movie just as the previews ended. The movie began before we had a chance to catch our breaths. I sat there for a few minutes reflecting on what had just occurred. I realized that the whole affair -- a blur to me -- was normal for the others. My uneasiness stemmed from a different view of temporality. Spending time with these women, I was introduced to spontaneity as a way of everyday life.

Leisure activities are not the only spontaneous activities. Daily bodily functions, usually mealtime, also lack scheduled timing. On one occasion I had been with Ann all day when she noticed her hunger. Without referring to a clock she asked me if I wanted to get something to eat.

Still operating on a different "schedule," I was not hungry. Out of respect to Ann I said yes to her offer. We drove to a restaurant that she had wanted to try. As we drove into the parking lot I immediately noticed an absence

of automobiles. We attempted to enter the restaurant only to find the door locked. Ann then realized that we were too early for dinner. She was operating on spontaneity -- the restaurant was on a schedule.

Female escorts fit Zerubavel's (1981) framework for spontaneity. This is not surprising, nor should it be. Sex workers as a group stand out as examples of spontaneity. Yet all social groups exhibit these traits. Some groups are less, some more, spontaneous. Many of the examples described here will look familiar to readers. Many people have a rented VCR tape that is a day overdue -- Ann and the escorts have dozens that are weeks overdue. Many people rush to make the start of a movie -- Ann and the escorts rush most of the time. Many people have accidentally arrived at a restaurant too early for dinner -- Ann and the escorts do it often.

CHAPTER IV

FEMALE ESCORT SERVICES: REFLECTIONS

We can, and I think we must, look upon human life
as chiefly a vast interpretative process in
which people, singly and collectively,
guide themselves by defining the
objects, events, and situations
which they encounter . . .

(Blumer 1956, p. 686)

I've looked into your eyes, and I've seen
my reflection,
walked down your street, and it takes me home.

(Pat Murphy and
Paul Colwell, 1993)

Implications for Social Policy

Although my work is not a treatise on prostitution policy, it does invite thoughts relative to such questions. I would like to utilize this section, in a chapter titled reflections, to do just that -- reflect on prostitution policy. I do not encourage the reader to take this discussion as an advocacy of any one policy position. These few remarks are intended only to stimulate thought concerning prostitution policy.

Contrary to popular belief, sex workers have not aligned themselves with the feminist movement. To be sure, they do often identify with the goals of the feminists; independence,

financial autonomy, sexual self-determination, personal strength, and female bonding. Any rift between these two groups of women is due to the feminists hesitation to accept sex work as legitimate. Recent developments have begun to bring these women closer. A re-evaluation of the feminist position is ongoing and show signs of unity. Although promising, the unity is not complete at this time.

Sex workers have been loosely organized for a number of years. The mid 1970s through the 1980s were fertile times for these organizations. Within two years two groups formed to address the issues facing sex workers. The first was started in San Francisco in 1973 by Margo St. James. This group is known as COYOTE (Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics). Many cities rapidly organized chapters of COYOTE to address local concerns of prostitutes. The chapter in San Francisco remained the national clearing house for the group. Two years later, the second organization developed in Great Britain. In 1975 the English Collective of Prostitution came together as an affiliate of the International Wages for Housework Campaign.

These organizations have many differences about how to approach prostitutes' concerns. These differences are not of concern in my discussion. I would like to focus on the one point of agreement -- the question of legalization. Both groups advocate a total repeal of all prostitution laws. A number of concerns are expressed when the question turns to decriminalization as a compromise to legalization. As a result of my field study I share some of

these concerns. I would like to reflect on four of these time.

First, all decriminalization schemes include zoning ordinances. Zoning areas for sex work leads to the treatment of this occupation as an "urban blight" or an "eyesore." In essence, this allows men to enjoy the services of prostitutes while stigmatizing sex workers. This is not acceptable by any group of prostitutes.

Second, decriminalization will continue to divide women between those who are "respectable" and "good" and those who are "loose" and "bad." Such a division is unproductive. While some women remain divided over this issue it harms all women. Therefore, the third concern is that sex workers will not be in control of their own working conditions as independent business women.

My research exposed tactics that sex workers employ to conceal their lifestyles. This need for concealment illustrates the last argument against decriminalization. Decriminalization will still prevent sex workers from achieving financial security while limiting their freedom to enjoy the possessions obtained from work.

It is on one or more these four points that organized sex workers agree. Before discussing legalization I would like to briefly look at the harm done by criminalizing sex work. My thoughts center on two aspects of criminalization. The first is minor in my view. This is the feeling that criminalization of prostitution focuses the "problem" on women rather than on men, who enjoy sex workers' services.

A major concern is the effects of criminalization on the occupational, and therefore the social, environment of these women. Criminalization drives sex work deeper underground. As a result, sex work becomes unnecessarily dangerous.

Throughout my research I have documented aspects of these concerns of decriminalization and the problems associated with criminalization. The question remains whether or not sex workers would be better off if prostitution were legalized.

It is not in the political/policy interest of most people involved with prostitution that it be legalized. Many jobs are created by sex work being criminalized. Many jobs from social workers to vice law enforcement officers would cease to exist. Moralists would lose their ability to control. Indeed, legalization would not be in the interest of most. Only one group would benefit from legalization -- sex workers.

It would be in the public health interest of all if prostitution were legalized. The result of forcing sex work underground is a lessening of health standards. While in the field I noted this groups concern with health standards. The secretive nature of sex work does not allow a continuous monitoring of health standards. I also believe that prostitutes would not become easy targets for serial killers if the publics' attitude towards prostitutes were better. Only legalization would lessen the stigma on this profession.

Would legalization greatly change the findings of this

study? I do not think that the social dynamics would change appreciable if prostitution were legalized. The incomes generated by sex workers are less tied to the illegality of prostitution than with economic trends. Incomes for sex are always highest when the johns have more disposable income. Vice squad activities are more likely during political campaigning, not during health alerts or serial killings. Also, sex workers would most likely still associate with other sex workers -- endogamy is powerful.

What legalization would do is allow sex workers to live dignified lives. Even though their social networks and worlds would not change in great ways, they would be free to be proud of their work. This is a freedom often overlooked by those in occupations less stigmatized than sex work.

I am not optimistic about the question of whether sex workers in the future are going to be able to enjoy a less stigmatized life. Those groups that benefit from their illegality will not let go easily. Additionally, the sex worker's themselves are not fully organized. The groups discussed earlier represent only a small percentage of practicing prostitutes. Sex workers must become a block of voters that politicians and policy makers can recognize. Until they do they will not receive favorable treatment in policy matters.

Final Thoughts

I have strived to bring some understanding of escort workers to the reader. The interpretation offered in my work will lead to a progression of sociological knowledge, not by providing the reader with the means to control the behavior of others. I do not strive to provide this because such motivations are for other social scientist interested with control. I have strived to advance sociological understanding by providing interpretation that enable the reader to place themselves in society along side prostitutes, as social co-members. This interpretation will show that social members share interaction more than may have been previously understood. To be sure, sharing takes place among social contemporaries. What is often overlooked is that sharing also takes place among social members not seen as similar, possibly the reader and the sex workers described in my work.

In an effort to make clear the similarities between social interactants all discussions use words written by the researchers and interpreted by the reader. The readers attitude towards the subject is dependent on linguistics. Therefore, I feel it necessary to briefly discuss the social boundaries within which understand occurs.

Words are culturally constructed. Delacoste and Alexander (1987) have tried to change the view of prostitutes by altering the way writers (usually

nonprostitutes) linguistically label this group. The use of a term originating outside the group, such as prostitute, is an example of a "second-order concept" (Schutz 1962). Terms originating from within the group, that is, self labeling, would be considered a "first-order concept" (Schutz 1962). In the language of the everyday world of prostitutes a first order concept would be sex worker. The "prostitutes" believe, and I agree, that they are sex workers.

Mental imagery brought forth by words is important to self. A group views itself (it self) in part by the reaction of the audience to it (the group). Therefore, the imagery produced by words attached to groups is significant. The changes brought about in contemporary academia (eg. the political correctness debates, disciplinary jargon) further demonstrate the ongoing construction of meaning through language.

Due to the limits of linguistics ethnography describes interaction frames that are temporally constrained. Dramaturgically, these frames can be thought of as stages of interaction displaying all that is social. An individual occupies many different stages daily. Ann and her workers move from one theater and stage to another in a dizzying dance of interaction. The skill involved in such movement can allow them to go undetected as prostitutes. Some step from one stage to another with ease, while others fumble. Just as new actors are easy to spot on stage, so are new prostitutes.

The process of viewing social interaction as stage antics allows for the use of written English. Too strict an application of jargon will cause interaction to retreat from view. Contemporary social interaction is not as clearly delineated in premodern society. To show the complexity of social interaction is to display its multiple interactions and symbols. To succeed one must remember what Denzin said concerning symbols:

These symbols are manifold and complex, verbal and nonverbal, intended and unintended. Verbal utterance, nonverbal gestures, mode and style of dress, and the manner of speech all provide clues to the symbolic meanings that become translated into interaction and emerge from it (1989, p. 7)

If this mix of social interaction is traditionally seen as a theater consisting of a linear stage, than contemporary society is best thought of as theater in the round. No longer can an actor rely solely on the security of the backstage. Props are no longer retrievable from behind the side curtain. Often actors find that audiences surround them as they stand on center stage in the round.

The present study has demonstrated the inherent difficulty of sustaining self. To accomplish my task I used prostitutes to illustrate this tenuous social process. Any group of social actors could have demonstrated the same processes. If this is so, then any individual in society can experience similar problems maintaining social intercourse. I believe that all social actors do have similarly tenuous selves. Prostitutes experience the shaky side of social interaction differently because they are

labeled as deviant by social scientists and others. Yet, as co-members of society, none of us totally escapes the tenuous nature of interaction.

No doubt this research only briefly touches upon the lives of prostitutes. I hope that the reader identifies with the stories contained within this work. To understand social interaction requires acquaintance with other members of society. It is my desire to provide an introduction to prostitutes for those who do not know them -- to know them is to know ourselves.

Epilogue

As the adage proclaims, life goes on. Ann's life did go on after I left her in August 1989. The events that have occurred in Ann's life since I left the field warrant this epilogue. The stories and descriptions contained in this dissertation are from the summer and fall of 1989. January 1990 found Ann in jail on pandering charges. This became the largest hurdle that she has encountered. Life for Ann was to change, and change quickly.

Ann's goal at the time of my research was to accumulate a large amount of cash, a type of retirement fund. Ann was well along her way toward achieving her goal. She had managed to save about \$50,000 at the time I was visiting her. Her goal of \$80,000 to \$100,000 was only a few months away.

Then she was "busted" for pandering. A few months later federal authorities also charged her with money laundering by processing credit card slips. Being put out

of business meant no more income. In fact, it meant that she would have to use her savings for living expenses. In addition, one more expense was now added to her survival -- legal representation. By the fall of 1992, Ann had depleted her savings. This is not new to her, or to the other sex workers. I do not know, and she never told me, how many times she has neared her goal only to see it disappear.

This time was different for several reasons. First, Ann lost her home. At no other time had she "owned" (17) her home. The loss of one's home is devastating, and so it was for Ann. Ann had spent hours planning, remodeling, and dreaming of future improvements. All this vanished as she moved into a small two-bedroom duplex, turning her home back to the mortgage company. Second, her arrest record for prostitution may lead to jail time for a pandering conviction. She has never before faced the real possibility of doing jail time rather than the "street time" (probation). Third, Ann had to leave her daughter with her parents while she worked out of town. In a matter of months, lawyers took most of Ann's savings. Ann has had to work as a meretrix in another city so an arrest would not jeopardize her pandering trial. Fourth, and possibly most important, Ann is getting too old to continue in the sex business. The lost \$50,000 may have been her last real chance at obtaining her goals.

Trial continuances, legal strategies, and an overloaded court system sent Ann on an emotional roller coaster lasting two years. After many court appearances and postponements, the prosecutors offered Ann a deal: If Ann

provided a detailed deposition laying out the inner workings of the escort business, she would get street time on her local charge of pandering. The additional federal charges for money laundering would be dismissed. This deal meant that she would have to inform on other escort services. This aspect of the bargain disturbed her. In January 1992 she accepted the prosecutor's plea bargain. Ann is a free woman today, but she is also broke and living wherever she can find shelter. Although past one legal hurdle, Ann still faces more charges from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Ann recently found that the Internal Revenue Service billed her \$80,000 for unpaid (unclaimed) income taxes.

I have visited Ann only a couple of times since the summer of 1989. She does not seem disillusioned about the future. Her goals are the same today as they were during my field research. I do not know what has happened to the other women in this study. I suspect that most have moved to other agencies -- some in the same town, while others have relocated to different regions of the United States. Of the original eight, only two have stayed in contact with Ann. Like Ann, they have resigned themselves to starting over. In discussions with former neighbors Ann has learned that her house sold at a Housing and Urban Development (HUD) auction for \$30,000. The appraised value for her house was approximately \$65,000. She also learned that her chief nemesis from her old neighborhood had died. Ann always felt that he had had a hand in her arrest. Ann did not grieve over his death.

NOTES

1. Various terms have been used to describe women engaged in prostitution. Historically they have been called common prostitutes, unfortunates, fallen women, women of ill repute, nymphs of the pave, the frail sisterhood, women of the town, abandoned females, harlots, strumpets, cocktails, tickle tails, cats, tarts, doxies, holes, whores, hedge whores, hobby horses, ladies of easy virtue, sisters of the night, scarlet women, bawds. This list is not complete. For an excellent discussion of the etymology and origin of these and other terms see Alan Richter's The Language of Sexuality, (1987, pp. 77-78).

Most contemporary prostitutes prefer to be called prostitutes or sex workers. If they work for an escort agency they accept the term escort. I will refer throughout this work to prostitutes, sex workers, or escorts when discussing individuals in the sex-for-hire profession.

2. I adopt this usage from the definitions used by Murray Davis (Smut, 1983). The experience of the world generated by our ordinary round of life is "everyday reality." "Erotic reality" is the experience of the world generated by our actual or potential sexual activities. Davis provides an in-depth and stimulating treatment of these two realities.

3. Every action engaged in by an individual may result in the creation of a new or different self. Limited only by the number of interactions one participates in, such a potentially fluid self can be recognized as a drama.

The use of drama as metaphor serves only as an analytical tool. It is not to say that life is theater, but that life is as theater. The statement that life is theater proposes a type of truism that I would not want attached to this study.

On the other hand, life as theater displays interaction within an understandable theatrical framework. Just such a display is a goal of the present study: the enclosure of interaction within the framework of the drama.

4. The escort's stories need to be at a contextual level of the emic. First recognized by Kenneth Pike (1954), this term has been a part of the anthropological lexicon for some time. Emic is approachable only after immersion in the life of those being observed. After such immersion, and close listening to the vocabulary, an understanding of emics will emerge.

5. The ghost of Robert Park is alive in such a choice of methodology. Not only did Park urge social scientist to ". . . go get the seat of your pants dirty in real research" (McKinney 1966, p. 71), but he also urged them to use multiple methods. The use of multiple methods provides a balanced vision of the world under study. This type of research strategy provides background, setting, and meaning within the worlds being studied. Examples of this process can be found in the work of Robert Park, Robert Redfield, and a number of others from the tradition of the Chicago School.

6. For a detailed decision of this concept, Mehan and Wood, The Reality of Ethnomethodology (1975). See especially the section titled "Reality as a Coherent Body of Knowledge" for an understanding of what I call "crossed logic."

7. Such treatment must therefore be approached carefully. The symbolically constructed reality provides the most prolific material conveying the importance of environmental meanings. Symbols allow the actor to construct reality. This process is observable. Although freely observed, understanding requires more effort. Immersion and a deep familiarity make it possible to take the role of the other. For this reason the researcher must allow the actors to tell their story.

The self is a reflexive and necessitates a dual analysis. After the actors tell their story it is helpful to rummage through the audience's reactions. The language used for such processes is culturally bound, what Peirce (1931-1935, p. 2,227) has called the "semiotic system." Therefore, selves are limited to a culturally bounded stage choreographed by language.

8. When Giddens refers to structure, he does not use it in the same sense as other social theorists do. He sees structure as a property of social systems, which is furthered in the reproductive aspects ingrained in time and space. Language is a conduit for socialization. This in itself is a type of reproduction or, as Schutz would have it, a social world. Viewed in this manner such processes are seen as both constraining and enabling. As Giddens points out:

This is easily demonstrated in the instance of learning a first language. No one chooses his or her native language, although learning to speak it involves definite elements of compliance. Since any language constrains thought (and action) in a sense that it presumes a range of framed, rule-governed properties, the process of language learning sets certain limits to cognition and activity (1984, p. 170).

Clearly, Giddens' discussion of language does not give up the freedom of the actor in structuration. He concludes his line of thought by affirming that ". . . by the very same token the learning of a language greatly expands the cognitive and practical capacities of the individual" (1984, p.170).

The prostitute's desire to hide potentially problematic aspects of self from nonprostitutes can be attributed to this process. The effect of what Perinbanayagam (1985) calls the "Calvinistic myth" creates certain reflections when one associates a self with prostitution. As a type of world view, it sets up interaction through language. This in turn brings about a perceived need for a "hiding" of one's self when in situations of conflicting selves -- as when a daughter hides her profession as a prostitute from her mother.

9. "Passing" is a term that refers to a black individual who possesses white physical characteristics. These individuals do not always pass in an attempt to hide their identity. Simpson and Yinger (1965) present some of the reasons: (1) passing intentionally; (2) passing for convenience; (3) passing for fun; and (4) passing for economic reasons. Porterfield (1978) added another reason to this list. He felt that some people pass "unintentionally -- i.e., they are perceived by the larger community to be white" (Porterfield 1978, p. 6). I believe that Pam's passing is due to this reason.

I do not know if Pam is of mixed ancestry. Stuckert (1958) believed that 77.4% of the American black population in 1960 had "some degree of non-African ancestry" (pp. 155-60). Interracial marriages have steadily increased from 1960 to 1980 (Gadberry and Dodder 1993). As a result, this percentage is most likely higher today.

10. "Well built" refers to an escort's breast size. Next to hair color, some breast size is the most frequently requested trait by clients. Most often this request is for large breasts, yet, occasionally a client desires a small-breasted escort.

11. McGinley announces the death of the very idea of the "inner circle":

It isn't considered sporting to object to being a goldfish. On the same public plan we build our dwelling places. Where, in many a modern house, can one hide? (And every being, cat, dog, parakeet, or man, wants a hermitage now and then.) We discard partitions and put up dividers. Utility rooms take the place of parlors. Picture windows look not onto seas or mountains or even shrubberies but into the picture windows of the neighbors. Hedges come down, gardens go unwallied; and we have nearly forgotten that the inventor of that door which first shut against intrusion was as much mankind's benefactor as he who discovered fire. I suspect that, in a majority of the bungalows sprouting across the country like toadstools after a rain, the only apartment left for a citadel is the bathroom (1959, pp. 55-56).

12. This difference was brought to my attention while I was selling real estate. Throughout my initial training I noticed that my instructor referred to property as a "house" in the presence of the owners. To a potential buyer the property was a "home." I was instructed that real estate was to be referred to in less personal tones to the owner. Owners are operating under exchange value (as a commodity). On the other hand, it was desirable for potential buyers to see the property as use value (a home). By making the real estate a commodity for the present owner the agent can create a situation in which a bid is more readily accepted. Similarly, the creation of use value in the minds of potential buyers results in higher initial offers. Together these space managements work to the advantage of the realtor. For an excellent discussion of use value and exchange value see Logan and Molotch, Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place (1987).

13. In the terminology of prostitution a john is synonymous with client. The use of the name John originated with the usage of John Doe, the innocent, on police blotters. Police records use to place the name John Doe next to the prostitutes when booked. Sometimes Sex workers will refer to a client as a "trick."

Trick is a noun, the anonymous client who did not get what was promised; it is an action terminated (the customer has been tricked); and it is an unspecified number on a seemingly endless chain (another trick turned). To the prostitute a trick is also the "square" husband and the man who cheats on his wife. (Symanski 1981, p. 54)

14. Drivers are always male. I have never seen, nor been told of, a female professional escort driver.

15. As used in this study, economics refers to an enduring set of cultural ideas and social relationships through which goods and services are produced and distributed in societies. I do not, unlike some others, view economics as a natural occurrence. An example of this "natural law" economics is physiocracy. Early proponents of this view were P. Boisguillebert (1646-1714), S. Vauban (1633-1707), R. Cantillon (1680-1734), F. Quesnay (1694-1744), and A. Turgot (1727-1781). For further expansion on this point see, R. L. Meek, The Economics of Physiocracy: Essays and Translations (1962). This distinction is important because although academic economics has moved beyond the idea of natural law in economics, the general public has not.

16. This choice served as a compromise because it basically was a love story with a great deal of sex scenes. In fact, this film almost received an X rating before release. A revised edition toned down the sex scenes and was given an R rating.

17. This word must be used with caution. Very few individuals actually own their homes. Home ownership in America usually is not ownership, but a mortgage. From a Marxist perspective this amounts to a relationship between capitalism and workers that leaves the worker tied to the production line. Although harsh, there is some truth to this line of thought. Ann's "ownership" did indeed turn out to be a barrier to her mobility.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A
SUBJECT DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

TABLE I
GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

Sex Worker	(See key for explanation)					
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
1.	23	12	D	1	KS	KS
2.	20	10	D	1	TX	TX
3.	29	11	D	1	TX	TX
4.	20	12	S	0	TX	TX
5.	33	8	S	0	OK	CA
6.	27	13	S	0	OH	OH
7.	30	10	D	1	TX	TX
8.	30	11	M	0	TX	TX
9.	27	13	S	0	OH	OH

Note: 5 is the agency owner, 7 & 8 are identical twins, and 9 is the agency phone girl.

Key: I = Age
 II = Years of school completed.
 III = Married, divorced, or single.
 IV = Number of times married.
 V = Place of birth.
 VI = State lived in at 12 years of old.

TABLE II
RELIGIOUS CHARACTERISTICS

Sex Worker	(See key for explanation)			
	VII	VIII	IX	X
1.	N	--	NO/PRIVATE PRAYER	--
2.	N	--	N	NON DENOMINATION
3.	Y	PRESB.	N	PRESB.
4.	Y	BAPTIST	N	BAPTIST
5.	Y	BIBLE	N	BAPTIST
6.	Y	PERSONAL GOD	N	CHRISTIAN
7.	Y	BAPTIST	N	BAPTIST
8.	N	--	N	BAPTIST
9.	Y	PERS.GOD	NO/PRIVATE PRAYER	METHODIST

Note: 5 is the agency owner, 7 & 8 are identical twins, and 9 is the agency phone girl.

Key: VII = Religious preference?
 VIII = If so, which religion?
 IX = Do you practice your religion?
 X = Religious preference of parents.

TABLE III
PARENTAL CHARACTERISTICS

Sex Worker	(See key for explanation)	
	XI	XII
1.	N	--
2.	Y	6 MONTHS
3.	N	--
4.	N	--
5.	N	--
6.	Y	4 YEARS
7.	Y	13 YEARS
8.	Y	13 YEARS
9.	N	--

Note: 5 is the agency owner, 7 & 8 are identical twins, and 9 is the agency phone girl.

Key: XI = Parents divorced?
XII = If so, how old were you when they divorced?

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE OF ESCORT AGENCY NAMES

SAMPLE OF ESCORT AGENCY NAMES.

Ashley's	Bored Housewife	Natalies
Pillow Talk	Aristocrate Escorts	Baby Dolls
Almay	E & S Catering	Amours
All American	A'Mature productions	Class Plus
Amber's Escorts	Close Encounters	Aladdin's
Ace Escorts	Assential Escorts	White Lace
Inspirators	Aloha Escorts	Campus Co-Eds
Omni	Beautiful College Girls	A-1 Escorts
Accent Escorts	Adam & Eve Modeling Agency	Cloverleaf
Charlie's Angels	Adorable Escorts	Lifestyles
Magic Box	Palm Island Bath	High Style
Lynn's Escorts	Gentleman's Retreat	Cheri'
Fox Dreamgirls	Body Shoppe	Fantasy
April's Exotic	ABC Productions	Absolute

2

VITA

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