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**Title:** SERVING BEERS, TURNING TRICKS AND KEEPING THE  
CHANGE: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF MEXICAN LAP DANCING  
CLUB WAITERS

**Abstract:** This is an empirically grounded, ethnographic study that looks at the role of tipping in club interactions and its relationship to social control. Using data collected through first-person, situated interactions within a club located in the city of Monterrey, I argue that Mexican lap dancing club waiters hold a pivotal role in social control. The findings show waiters are responsible for mediating their customers' relationship with club services and that they produce and reproduce workplace hierarchies. As part of their job-related responsibilities, they set their customers' behavioural expectations and use strategies to encourage and sanction customer tipping. In brokering deals between customers and dancers and promoting club services, they rework their subordinate role in order to redefine themselves as their customers' allies and gatekeepers, becoming the club's main figures of power in the process.

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**SERVING BEERS, TURNING TRICKS AND KEEPING THE  
CHANGE: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF MEXICAN LAP  
DANCING CLUB WAITERS**

**By**

**Jorge Vladimir Castañeda Ochoa**

**Word Count: 85201**

**Thesis submitted to the University of Kent and Utrecht Universiteit in partial  
fulfilment for requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy after following the  
Erasmus Mundus Doctoral Programme in Cultural and Global Criminology.**

# **SERVING BEERS, TURNING TRICKS AND KEEPING THE CHANGE: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF MEXICAN LAP DANCING CLUB WAITERS**

**Bierservers, pooiers en kruimeldieven: een etnografische  
studie van Mexicaanse lapdansclub kelners**  
(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

## **Proefschrift**

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor aan de  
Universiteit Utrecht  
op gezag van de  
rector magnificus, prof.dr. H.R.B.M. Kummeling,  
ingevolge het besluit van het college voor promoties  
in het openbaar te verdedigen op woensdag 26 augustus 2020  
des middags te 4.15 uur

door

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The degree is awarded as part of a Joint Doctorate with University of Kent at Canterbury.

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Erasmus + Europese Commissie Doctorate in Cultural and Global Criminology

## **STATEMENT OF SUPERVISION**

This research project was co-supervised by Prof. Dr. Philip Hubbard of the Department of Geography at King's College London, Dr. Marian Duggan of the School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Research at the University of Kent, and Prof. Dr. Dina Siegel-Rozenblit of the Willem Pompe Instituut voor Strafrechtswetenschappen at Utrecht Universiteit.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Antes que nada, le dedico mi trabajo a todos mis compañeros de *Marbella's*, sin quienes no hubiera sobrevivido una semana en el bar. Este trabajo está dedicado a quienes, habiendo perdido la vida por el simple hecho haber ido al trabajo, fueron culpados por su muerte. Espero que, al desvelar la vida interna de uno de los tantos bares que existen en el país, se contribuya también a cambiar la opinión pública acerca del personal que labora en los nocturnos en México. / First and foremost, this is dedicated to my co-workers at *Marbella's*, without whom I would not have survived a week at the club. My only hope is that in bringing your work-lives into the public sphere, I can draw the Mexican public's attention to the risks involved in working in the Mexican adult entertainment industry.

To my anonymous gatekeeper and my friend, David Licea for hosting me.

To my supervisors Dr. Marian Duggan, Prof. Dina Siegel-Rozenblit, and Prof. Phil Hubbard for their patience and guidance. Thank you all for your professionalism and for bringing me back in line when necessary. I would especially like to express my sincere gratitude to Prof. Hubbard for his invaluable insight and critique. Thank you for your challenging feedback.

To my parents. To Judy for her support, understanding, and an unlimited supply of noodles. Now it's your turn, I'll do my part with the tacos.

To the Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social (CIESAS) Noreste for allowing me to undertake my fieldwork as a guest researcher under supervision of Dra. Séverine Durin.

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To the people of the European Union and the United Kingdom for their continued support and contribution to global social science.

This project was funded by the European Commission through the Erasmus Mundus/Erasmus + Doctorate in Cultural and Global Criminology (DCGC) programme.

## DECLARATION UPON OATH

I declare that the research embodied in the thesis is my own work and has not been submitted for a degree at any other university. No commercial doctoral advisory services were used in conjunction with this research. Neither have any resources or aids—other than those listed in the thesis—been used.

Preliminary versions of some of the arguments included in this thesis were presented at the DCGC Conference in Utrecht University in June 2018, Common Studies Programme in Critical Criminology at the University of the Peloponnese in December 2017. The core argument presented in Chapter Three and Four was presented at the Law and Society Association Annual Meeting in June 2017 and the Men and Masculinities: Politics, Policy and Praxis conference held in Örebro University in June 2017. An early draft of the project was also presented at the Common Studies Programme in Critical Criminology at Ghent University in December 2016.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Jorge V. Castañeda Ochoa

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## **ABSTRACT**

This is an empirically grounded, ethnographic study that looks at the role of tipping in club social control and in the production and reproduction of workplace hierarchies. Using data collected through first-person, situated interactions with club customers, dancers, and other employees, I argue that waiters hold a pivotal role in club social control. In brokering deals between customers and dancers and promoting club services, they enforce club norms. The thesis follows an inductive approach, with a narrative moving in the direction of increasing conceptual complexity. It begins with empirical observations on the behaviour and interactions between space and routines of a club's employees, shifts to the analysis of these vignettes using the concepts of citationality and indexicality and finally arrives at a discussion and critique of the theory of differential association - reinforcement. The findings show that waiters hold a crucial role in the operation of Mexican lap dancing clubs. Waiters are key figures responsible for enforcing their customers' adherence to club norms, are the employees responsible for mediating their customers' relationship with club services. Despite lacking the capacity to determine the dancers' willingness to interact with specific customers, they use their knowledge about dancer services and customer fantasies about dancer sexuality to portray themselves as club gatekeepers effectively reconstructing themselves as dominant figures in the process.

## SAMENVATTING

Dit is een empirisch onderbouwde, etnografische studie die kijkt naar de rol van het kantelen in de sociale controle van clubs en in de productie en reproductie van hiërarchieën op de werkplek. Met behulp van gegevens die verzameld zijn via first-person, gesitueerde interacties met clubklanten, dansers en andere werknemers, argumenteer ik dat obers een centrale rol spelen in de sociale controle omdat ze werken aan het bemiddelen van deals tussen klanten en dansers en het promoten van clubdiensten. Het proefschrift volgt een inductieve benadering, met een narratieve beweging in de richting van toenemende conceptuele complexiteit. Het begint met empirische observaties van het gedrag en de interacties tussen de ruimte en de routines van de werknemers van een club, waarbij de begrippen citationaliteit en indexicaliteit worden gebruikt om de aandacht te vestigen op de gesitueerde constructie van betekenis, en komt uiteindelijk uit op een discussie en kritiek op de theorie van differentiële associatie - versterking. De bevindingen tonen aan dat obers een cruciale rol spelen in de werking van Mexicaanse lapdansclubs. Kelners zijn sleutelfiguren die verantwoordelijk zijn voor het afdwingen van de naleving van de clubnormen door hun klanten, zijn de werknemers die verantwoordelijk zijn voor het bemiddelen van de relatie van hun klanten met de clubdiensten. Ondanks het gebrek aan capaciteit om de bereidheid van de dansers om met specifieke klanten te communiceren te bepalen, gebruiken ze hun kennis over dansersdiensten en klantenfantasieën over de seksualiteit van de dansers om zich af te beelden als clubpoortwachters, waarbij ze zichzelf effectief als dominante figuren in het proces reconstrueren.

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## FOREWORD

I still remember the body lying face down on the sidewalk, with a pool of blood forming around the man's head. The dark, almost black, liquid oozing out slowly, covering the sidewalk in a slimy sheen. It pooled like used motor oil. It was thick slick of a syrup-like liquid, a chocolate fluid that seeped through the cracks between the tiles.

I never told anyone about this experience. I didn't want to relive the memory, think about my own foolish reactions, or think about what could have happened. I tried to turn the page and carry on like most of us had learned to do. After years of violence, we had all learned to ignore the bodies and gunfights. Getting used to this state of things was surprisingly easy. Soon, we were consuming the songs about violence, watching the movies celebrating the narcotraffickers' quick rise to power, and dressing like them. It even had an effect on me. I felt a little tougher, more masculine, indulging myself in the idea that I too shared the look: clean shaven head, facial hair and body art. I now see this is the root of the problem. Directly or indirectly, we all benefit from the meanings brought into circulation by the drug war.

This study is a personal attempt to finally come to terms with this memory by returning to the very streets where this murder took place.

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## PROLOGUE

In this prologue, I want to make three unambiguous statements regarding the general content of this thesis. This need to clarify what the thesis is and is not doing is not fortuitous. Rather, it is meant to address one of several observations made to a previous version of the manuscript. These revisions were the outcome of the first of two examinations needed to comply with the requirements set forth by the doctoral programme awarding the degree of Doctorate in Cultural and Global Criminology at the University of Kent and Utrecht University.

The clarifications offered in this prologue are only the first of a list of requirements needed to be met in order to obtain a final approval for this project. Additional to the clarifications made here, it was also necessary to make a series of edits to the content of the manuscript itself, all of which were responsible for causing the confusion addressed here. As a result, provided that the purpose of this introduction is somewhat duplicated by these edits, and that all unnecessary passages should have been excised from the final manuscript, it is possible that these lines may finally be unnecessary. Nonetheless, given that the final judge of the clarity of the argument presented here can only be the future, naïve reader who encounters the manuscript for the first time, the need for this section cannot be rescinded *a priori*.

In light of this, it should be said that the first of these three unambiguous statements pertains to the subject matter of the thesis: this study on lap dancing is unique in taking an approach that focuses on club waiters and not on club dancers or customers. This thesis offers a micro-level, interactional analysis of the power structures that exist in a Mexican lap dancing club. It locates club waiters at the centre of the club's social world. Unlike other studies on lap

dancing, which look at club dynamics from the point of view of the customer or the dancer, in this thesis I look at the waiters' role in defining club social structure and social control. In particular, one of the overarching themes in this thesis pertains to the importance that tipping practices. Whereas previous studies had drawn attention to the role of tipping in the development of club-specific dancer behaviour, in this study I argue that tipping is a social relationship that binds customers to their servers. More than a relationship involving a monetary reward given in exchange for a service, tipping constitutes a normative social process that produces strategic behaviour among club waiters.

In order to understand the waiters' role in promoting, negotiating, and ensuring the consumption of sexual services provided by the dancers, this study relies on observational data. The evidence for the argument developed here comes from fieldnotes documenting the use of language, behavioural displays, spontaneous conversations, and moments of workplace tension and crisis, either between customers and waiters or between waiters and dancers, with a special interest on the negotiations and arrangements made on the sale of sexual favours.

As such, the thesis should be read with caution. Even though dancers and customers are mentioned throughout the manuscript, the evidence presented is insufficient to offer any insight into their role and motives. Instead, customers and dancers only come into focus as subordinate figures. They make their appearances only in the presence of club waiters; they are peripheral figures that only acquire relevance through the waiters' actions.

Although every effort was made to present a comprehensive image of club interactions, the information presented here is only as good as my own abilities and is limited by the obstacles I faced in obtaining access to and establishing rapport with my co-workers. This remains an

account of my own, personal experience as a club waiter. In essence, every description of the mid-sized working-class lap dancing club that is the focus of this study is made from the perspective of a waiter. Given that the core of my data comes from my own experience as a club employee, I am able to provide an insider's perspective in every description of the sale of alcohol and the promotion of sexual entertainment and favours. Using the findings reported by previous studies as guidance, I look at the use of conversational strategies as a means of obtaining tips from customers and find that this is more prevalent among waiters than dancers.

On a different, but related note, the second unambiguous statement pertains to the role that the Mexican drug war takes in this study: even though it has a prominent role in some chapters, particularly in the introductory section and Chapter One, this thesis is not about the drug war or its victims. In the course of the manuscript, the reader will learn that the violence associated to the drug war was a continuous source of anxiety for many of the waiters. For many of my co-workers, the sudden incursion of armed men into the club they were working in years earlier was a memory relieved in conversation with frequency. Some of them had experienced these attacks first-hand, while others were so familiar with the stories that they often spoke about them in the third-person.

However, it is important to note that the decision to include this material is to set the background context of the study rather than to foreground the effect of the drug war on these men. While the frequency and violence with which lap dancing clubs were targeted by groups of armed men was the main reason why I became interested in this topic, and discovering the circumstances that explained this connection was one of my main goals during the larger part of this project, this final version of the thesis only touches on these

questions tangentially. This is why, in the end, I decided to finally leave out some of these details, as they did not have any added value for the analysis of the waiters' role in the club.

Among the data excised from the discussion, there were descriptions of the weekly visits made by the military police. On these occasions, police officers would arrive in pick-up trucks outfitted with .50 calibre guns outfitted with armour-perforating shells. These trucks often carried several armed officers in the back, ready to jump on and quickly mount a security perimeter outside the club, while they waited for a couple of other officers who would walk into the club, and move from table to table as if they were looking for familiar faces. Similarly, I also decided to remove several passages where I discussed how club employees would hesitate before walking out into the night after the end of the shift. It also included passages describing the suggestions I received from co-workers at different times telling me to use the taxicabs that would park outside of the club at the end of the shift, and avoid all other taxicabs, particularly those circulating at night with more than one person in the car. According to them, these were the vehicles preferred by the men that would target the clubs.

While it is true that much of this information could have been used to address the questions about the relationship between the drug war and the clubs, I decided to leave this line of inquiry aside and to focus on the waiters, particularly because I felt uncomfortable talking about these topics. This is why, to avoid confusing the reader, I have finally removed most of these passage from the text, leaving the only reference to this in the methods section, where I used this evidence to talk about my own sense of insecurity and vulnerability during fieldwork.

While they have been mostly eliminated from the rest of the text, some of these details are mentioned in the sections about positionality and reflexivity. The rationale for this is that I often felt that I was able to build rapport with my co-workers on the feelings of insecurity and anxiety. We shared a conscious sense of the risk involved in our work, albeit different in the sense that I had not experienced an attack first-hand, which in the end shaped the way I made changes to my project. As a result, in Chapter Two, the reader will read about the way this influenced my decision to finally abandon the idea of doing interviews after the end of the stage about participant observation. It is there where I also talk about the constant feeling of exhaustion that resulted from my inability to fall asleep at night, often because of worries associated to my trip home, the fear of being confronted by certain customers, other waiters, and the difficulties I faced establishing rapport with my co-workers.

In Chapter Two, the reader will also learn about the role these anxieties had in my decision to finally stop talking with my co-workers about topics related to the drug war. Even though the hope of being able to find a more symbolic relationship between the drug war and the activities that take place in the club remained very much alive for the greater part of the project, a hope I refused to abandon until the very last minute of the project, I finally had no choice but to accept the consequences of my decisions. This is, in fact, the main factor that motivated the need for this Prologue in the first place. The previous version of this manuscript continued to place considerable emphasis on the drug war, implying that the attacks against the clubs could be explained by the symbolic value that the clubs hold for their attackers. These discussions centred mainly on the geographic and territorial dimensions of the conflict, presenting waiters as valid targets, and clubs as prized territories.

However, as the analysis neared completion and it became increasingly clear that I would have to abandon this idea or run the risk of disappointing the readers who sought to confirm

their own inclinations as to why these clubs were under attack, I had no other choice. In the end, there was only one option capable of balancing my own personal interests and concerns, the requirements of the doctoral programme, my readers' critical evaluations, and my motivations: to delete these passages. Faced with a desire to contribute to a discussion that had not managed to gain any traction in Mexico, despite the attraction it had received in the form of numerous news media reports and newspaper articles, I relented. Faced with my own unwillingness to look for what would finally prove as undisputable evidence pointing to money laundering, drug sales or human trafficking, I finally opted to shift my attention exclusively to the ethnographic aspects of the study.

Lastly, there is a third and final statement of clarification that needs to be made in this Prologue pertaining to the theoretical framework used in the analysis. Although the study looks at the strategic use of behavioural displays, language and gestures in the context of intersubjective power negotiations between men, involving the exchange of information on and sale of sexual services provided by women, gender theory does not figure prominently in this research. Instead, of using hegemonic masculinity, or the concept of homosociality to discuss the gendered segregation of the workplace, characterize the types of behaviours accepted or encouraged in the club, or relate the micro-interactions to types of gendered practices that prevail in the social order outside of the club, I take an eclectic approach that begins with loose concepts taken from gender theory, evolves into a discussion on social norms, workplace social control, and finally culminates in an adaptation to Differential Association – Reinforcement theory.

Date	Research Questions
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<p>February 2016</p> <p>Methodology Draft</p>	<p>Title: "In 'bad' company": A case study of male patron group behaviour, homosocial male bonding, and performances of masculinity in a lap dancing club in Mexico.</p> <p>(a) What roles do club regulars have with respect to other patrons in terms of the socialization of internal club rules and forms of appropriate behaviour and interaction?</p> <p>(b) How do male customers patronize these venues, in groups or individually?</p> <p>(c) How does group behaviour compare to lone customer behaviour?</p> <p>(d) How do lone customers understand customer behaviour in lap dancing venues?</p> <p>(e) How do customers understand group behaviour in lap dancing venues?</p> <p>(f) To what extent does the enforcement of restrictions to certain behaviours differ according to whether customers are in groups or alone? How does this take place?</p>
<p>November 2016</p>	<p>Title: Among 'padrinos' and 'piojos': Locating hegemonic masculinity in a Mexican Lap dancing club.</p> <p>(1) How are masculinities configured in a masculine space?</p> <p>(a) How do gender practices in a Mexican Strip Club relate to hegemonic masculinity?</p> <p>(b) What is the relationship between dominance and predominance?</p> <p>(c) What constitutes a masculine space?</p> <p>(d) How do male waiters in a Mexican Lap dancing club deal with being employed subordinate role?</p> <p>(e) How does this affect their gender practices?</p> <p>(f) What are the gender practices and how are they configured?</p> <p>(g) What are the forms of interaction?</p>
<p>September 2017</p>	<p>How do interactions among customers contribute to the production of masculinities Mexican lap dancing club after these venues received media attention for being targeted by violent attacks?</p>
<p>September 2019</p>	<p>Title: Bodies on the stage, thieving in the audience: An ethnographic study of a Mexican lap dancing club</p> <p>(a) What is the relationship between Mexican lap dancing clubs and the violence associated to territorial rivalries between organized crime groups in North-Eastern Mexico?</p> <p>(b) Who are the key figures involved in the overlap of violence and lap dancing clubs?</p>

	<p>(c) How are these figures relevant to each instance of violence, bar being directly involved in the activities of organized criminal groups?</p> <p>(d) How does the victim's role relate to the risk of becoming a target of violence within a lap dancing venue?</p>
<p>Final July 2020</p>	<p>a. What does the sale of prostitution look like in lap dancing clubs and what is the waiters' role in this exchange?</p> <p>b. How are customer-dancer interactions structured in a Mexican lap dancing club and what is the role played by other club employees?</p> <p>c. How are waiters responsible for club social control and what specific roles do they perform to facilitate prostitution services?</p> <p>d. What is the waiters' role in these clubs, particularly in relation to prostitution, social control and norm enforcement?</p>

**Table 1** Evolution of the research questions for the project.

Again, like the other issues discussed here, the decision to take this approach is not incidental. As has been stated before, the bulk of the data used in this study comes from observed waiter interactions with customers and dancers in a Mexican lap dancing club. Initially, before the data collection stage had begun, the conceptual framework that underpinned the project laid out in the Ethics Application submitted to Ethics Board at the University of Kent emphasised masculinities and homosociality as key concepts. Months later, once the project was well underway, the approach shifted to hegemonic masculinity and the interactional construction of gender. However, once I had begun transcribing my fieldnotes, and had begun sifting through the transcriptions in search of patterns in the data, new questions began to arise. As the evidence began to accumulate, and it became increasingly clear that I needed to make sense of the way club social norms overlapped with the adoption/appropriation and strategic redeployment of certain behaviours in inter-subjective interactions new conceptual frameworks became necessary. This is why, in latter



drafts I decided to test the analytical power of different theoretical tools. In the end, as the evidence strongly indicated that the practices and behaviours displayed in the club were actually linked to the tipping norm, rather than to the individuals who physically personified these behaviours. That is, the practices and behaviours described here actually make sense in the club, and waiters can make use of them only in relation to their place in the club workplace hierarchy, and not in a different context.

In the end, a doctoral thesis undergoes a significant amount of changes throughout the course of its development. Many of the changes are the direct result of difficulties encountered in the field. Other times, these changes are the result of choices that have to be made to keep the project on track. In the case of this project, however, the changes were instead about following the data itself. Rather than impose a particular theoretical framework over the data, I used the theory inductively, employing only certain concepts instead of full theoretical debates at times, or producing new theoretical approaches at other times. In this manner, I take the concepts of performativity and indexicality from gender theory, use them in a semiotic analysis of the language used at the club, and then coupled them with organizational theory in order to analyse the intersection between tipping, workplace social control, and the strategic appropriation and use of behaviours and vocabulary.

As it is to be expected, such an approach to research involves a large component of trial and error and accurately reflecting this process in writing is uniquely challenging. In this thesis, the manuscript is structured in a way that attempts to reproduce this process without making the discussion overly convoluted. Rather than organizing the chapters in a way that suggests that the goal was to empirically test certain theoretical predictions, chapter organization follows a logic of increasing complexity. In the first chapters, the reader will find descriptions of concrete interactions. Subsequently, in each of the later chapters, I introduce

an increasing level of complexity into the analysis. In the first chapters, rather than full theoretical frameworks, the reader will only find loose concepts. Gradually, these concepts are brought together as the argument develops until a theoretical discussion finally appears in the final chapter.

Additional to this logic of increasing abstraction, I also organize the thesis in chronological order. Starting in Chapter Two, the reader will be gradually introduced to the location of study, the first interactions between customers and waiters, and the types of services available at the club. In this chapter I also provide an extensive description of the setting, including details about the architectural layout, lighting, music, and on-stage routines. In the following chapter, the reader learns about the waiters' labour conditions, their salary, and their alternative sources of income. The strategic use of behaviours comes later, as does a description of club forms of social control and norm enforcement. It is in these latter chapters where I offer a semiotic analysis of gestures and the use of topics of conversation, making use of the concepts introduced in earlier chapters to discuss the significance these behaviours hold for club organization.

In synthesis, thesis structure follows a logic that prioritizes induction. Each chapter can be read as a self-contained unit, as it includes interactional evidence, concepts and analysis. By following this approach, my goal was to maintain an empirically-driven approach in all aspects of the project, from research design on to the writing of the final report. The inquiry is driven by a set of evolving research questions, multiple layers of analysis, concepts drawn from different disciplines, and the exploration of new conceptual frameworks.

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **DRUG WAR VIOLENCE AND THE MEXICAN LAP DANCING CLUB**

After decades of research on the subject, lap dancing has come to be understood as a form of erotic entertainment consisting fundamentally of dancing and limited touching, conversational seduction, and sexual arousal, but not sexual intercourse (Frank 2003; Egan and Frank 2005; Barton 2007; Pilcher 2008; Bradley-Engen and Ulmer 2009). Lap dancing clubs are thought to be spaces where customers can find stage shows consisting mainly of naked dancing, and table-side entertainment consisting of conversational seduction and restricted lap or table dancing (Frank 2007; Egan and Frank 2005; Egan 2003). Lap dancing clubs are also seen as a business where dancers specialize in offering the illusion of emotional intimacy in exchange for tips (Ronai and Ellis 1989; Pasko 2002).<sup>1</sup> In this way, these clubs are part of the sexual entertainment industry. They cater mainly to a heterosexual male clientele, though there are variants that offer similar forms of entertainment for women ( see, for example, the cases discussed by Wosick-Correa and Joseph 2008 or Montemurro, et al. 2003).

In other words, conventional wisdom dictates that lap dancing and prostitution are the opposing poles or extremes of a continuum. In lap dancing, sexual intercourse is an

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<sup>1</sup> A more detailed discussion on extant literature on lap dancing will be provided in Chapter Two of this thesis.

exception; in brothels it is the rule. In Mexico, however, this is not the case (López Villagrán 2012b; López Villagrán 2012a). According to the evidence collected by some of the limited studies available on the subject (López Villagrán 2012b; López Villagrán 2012a), the Mexican lap dancing industry has evolved into its own, unique variant of the business where prostitution is not an exception, but the norm. This has not always been the case, but is the result of the influence of factors unique to the way the industry evolved in the Mexican national context.

This evolution of Mexican lap dancing into a unique variant of the business can be understood by looking at the history of the business in the country. It is a process that can be classified into two, clearly defined stages. The first began with the establishment of the first of these businesses, which took place in the early 90s around the time when the North American Free Trade Agreement came into effect (López Villagrán 2012b). During this time, the industry experienced sustained growth fuelled by a business model that was marketed to office workers and high-end consumers, offering an experience modelled after the *Playboy* clubs and hostess bars from the United States (López Villagrán 2012a; 2012b), which ostensibly prioritized conversation and seduction over physical contact.

The second stage began with the period after the economic crisis of 1994, when lap dancing establishments experienced a change in their business model (López Villagrán 2012a). Up to that point, Mexican clubs had simply followed the American model, sharing many similarities with the clubs north of the border, to the point that club managers employed US and Canadian dancers. This meant that the emphasis here was fundamentally on erotic entertainment and conversation. However, with the onset of the economic crisis of the late 90s, working in Mexican clubs became less attractive for foreign dancers (López Villagrán 2012a; 2012b). Faced with a shortage of dancers, club managers looked towards

Eastern and Central Europe and South America in search of replacements (López Villagrán 2012b: 155).

These factors produced a change in the types of services available in Mexican clubs (López Villagrán 2012a; 2012b). It was a change driven by the dancers' own cultural backgrounds, as well as their relationship with rules and regulations. It involved a different approach to their interactions with customers that made use of prostitution and sexualised physical contact a part of their work. While their predecessors had been introduced to the business in jurisdictions where the amount of physical contact is limited, and prioritized the conversational aspects of their interaction with their customers, these new dancers used prostitution as way of having a competitive advantage over other dancers. According to López Villagrán (2012b), the effect of these changes could be summarized as a shift in priorities: instead of the theatrical or conversational elements of seduction and the sale of companionship that characterized its earlier business model, these clubs transitioned towards an approach that emphasized physical contact and the possibility of sexual intercourse (López Villagrán 2012b: 150). Eventually, this also paved the way for local dancers to join the business, working under these same conditions.

While the existence of such a business model brings into question some of the certainties of lap dancing research, the normative and organizational implications of it have not been studied. Conventionally, it is assumed that one of the goals of customer social control is to prevent physical contact between customers and dancers (DeMichele and Tewksbury 2004; Egan 2006). However, in Mexican clubs, where the business model that centres on prostitution, this would not be the case. Instead, if prostitution is available, physical contact between customers and dancers would not only be allowed but encouraged. Additionally, given that dancers would not necessarily profit from prolonged interactions

with their customers, but from sexual intercourse, this would also de-emphasise the role of strategic flirting strategies developed by dancers to obtain tips from their customers (Pasko 2002).

As a result, little is known about the internal dynamics that take place in these clubs. This empirical vacuum further underscores the need to redress the lack of academic attention given to this industry. At present, this is even more important given that these venues have come to be publicly associated with the violence that drug trafficking groups direct against certain locations in the urban economy. The attacks against lap dancing clubs cannot be characterized as indiscriminate acts of violence against private citizens, but as targeted incidents, that have claimed the lives of dozens of male employees and customers.

Table Two below summarizes the results obtained from an Internet search focused on the Mexican news-media reports. From the list, it is possible to identify a total of 69 incidents reported in the local media between January 2006 and December 2016. These are all incidents that involved an aggression against the lap dancing club venues, their customers or their employees and were reported in Spanish. They were identified by the use of the word *ataque* and *table dance* as keywords in their headlines. Geographically, these attacks are not evenly distributed throughout the country, but follow specific regional patterns. These include the Mexico-US border region, the area the states located between Mexico City and Jalisco, and six incidents in the Yucatán Peninsula.

Attacks against Mexican Lap Dancing Clubs 2006 – 2016							
	Club	State	Date		Club	State	Date
1	Sol y Sombra	Michoacán (Márquez 2006)	Sept 6, 2006	37	Castillo del Mar	Quintana Roo (Varillas 2010)	Aug 31, 2010
2	Givenchy	Nuevo León (Tapia 2008)	Oct 15, 2008	38	Infinito	Nuevo León (CNNMéxico 2012)	Feb 7, 2011

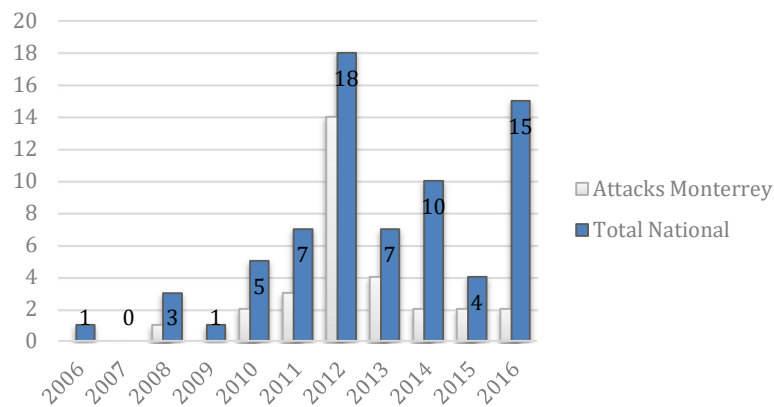
3	Los Baldes	Sinaloa (Redacción 2008a)	Apr 30, 2008	39	Tabares I	Guerrero (Flores-Contreras 2011a)	Aug 4, 2011
4	Rancho Loco	Nuevo León (Especial 2014)	May 2, 2010	40	Bikinis	Puebla (Muñoz 2011)	Nov 10, 2011
5	Mirage	Tamaulipas (Corresponsales 2010)	Apr 2, 2010	41	Azul Tequila	Nuevo León (Staff 2012a)	Aug 19, 2012
6	Penelope	Morelos (Redacción 2010)	Dec 30, 2010	42	Harem	Nuevo León (Staff 2012b)	Oct 12, 2012
7	El Nuevo Rincón	Nuevo León (Staff 2011)	Nov 17, 2011	43	Bahamas	Nuevo León (Ochoa 2012c)	Feb 1, 2012
8	Tabares II	Guerrero (Flores-Contreras 2011b)	May 28, 2011	44	Woman Mens Club	Nuevo León (Redacción 2012b)	Mar 9, 2012
9	La Muralla	Guanajuato (ZonaFrancaMX 2011)	Oct 23, 2011	45	Makiavelo	Nuevo León (Staff 2012d)	May 24, 2012
10	Matehuala	Nuevo León (Garza 2012)	Aug 12, 2012	46	Elefante	Nuevo León (Zócalo 2012)	Feb 1, 2012
11	Makiavelo	Nuevo León (Ochoa 2012a)	Aug 8, 2012	47	El Jale	Chihuahua (Redacción 2012a)	Feb 19, 2012
12	Pasarelas	Nuevo León (Ochoa 2012b)	Sep 16, 2012	48	Bad Boys	Estado de México	Feb 29, 2012
13	La Cascada	Nuevo León (Ochoa 2012c)	Feb 1, 2012	49	Harem	Nuevo León (Redacción 2013a)	Feb 12, 2013
14	The New Excellence	Nuevo León (Staff 2012c)	Mar 15, 2012	50	Woman Mens Club	Nuevo León (Redacción 2014d)	Apr 1, 2013
15	La Paloma	Nuevo León (Zócalo 2012)	Feb 1, 2012	51	Dickens	Chihuahua (Redacción 2013c)	Apr 25, 2013
16	Nightclub 123	Guerrero (Trujillo 2012)	Nov 5, 2012	52	Pasarelas	Nuevo León (Redacción 2014a)	Feb 6, 2014
17	Harem	Quintana Roo (Redacción 2013a)	May 8, 2012	53	Titanium	San Luis Potosí (Redacción 2014b)	Apr 30, 2014
18	El Nuevo Rincón	Nuevo León (Ochoa 2013)	Apr 13, 2013	54	Chilly Willis	Quintana Roo (Redacción 2014c)	Aug 6, 2014
19	La Papaya	Nuevo León (Redacción 2013b)	Feb 9, 2013	55	El Corral de la Chiva	Guanajuato (ZonaFrancaMX 2014)	Jan 23, 2014
20	Bombay	Chihuahua (Redacción 2013d)	May 23, 2013	56	Barbies Mens Club	Guanajuato (Mota-Ávalos 2014)	Apr 5, 2014

21	Mandra	Guanajuato (Redacción 2013e)	Jul 5, 2013	57	El Deseo	Nuevo León (Rojas 2015)	Aug 14, 2015
22	Woman Mens Club	Nuevo León (Redacción 2014d)	Jun 25, 2014	58	Mens Club	San Luis Potosí (Redacción 2015)	Apr 9, 2015
23	Chrome Mens Club	Guerrero (Redacción 2014e)	Dec 15, 2014	59	Woman Mens Club	Nuevo León (Solheim-Rocha 2016)	Sept 25, 2016
24	Nova	Quintana Roo (Redacción 2014f)	Nov 28, 2014	60	Titanium	San Luis Potosí (Redacción 2016a)	Mar 8, 2016
25	Barbies Mens Club	Guanajuato (Mota-Ávalos 2014)	May 2, 2014	61	Envidia	San Luis Potosí (Redacción 2016c)	Mar 8, 2016
26	Mama Mia	Puebla (Pérez-Corona 2014)	Sept 29, 2014	62	Sensation	San Luis Potosí (Redacción 2016b)	Oct 18, 2016
27	Matchuala	Nuevo León (Garza 2012)	Feb 18, 2015	63	Club 69	Guerrero (Bello 2016)	May 6, 2016
28	El Establo	Guanajuato (Flores 2015)	Aug 15, 2015	64	Majesty	Guerrero (EFE 2016)	Mar 24, 2016
29	El Deseo	Nuevo León (Martínez 2016)	Sept 12, 2016	65	Miami Beach	Colima (NoticiasManzanillo 2016a)	Apr 28, 2016
30	Scorpions	San Luis Potosí (Redacción 2016c)	Mar 8, 2016	66	El Caporal	Colima (NoticiasManzanillo 2016b)	Apr 5, 2016
31	El Tavares	San Luis Potosí (Redacción 2016d)	Oct 4, 2016	67	El Botanero	Zacatecas (Espinosa 2016)	Jan 28, 2016
32	Titanium	San Luis Potosí (Redacción 2016a)	Sept 11, 2016	68	Yardas Mens Club	Zacatecas (Guerra 2016)	Sept 10, 2016
33	Harem	Nuevo León (Sada 2008)	Nov 18, 2008	69	Taboo	Guanajuato (ZonaFrancaMX 2016)	Jun 3, 2016
34	Cesar Palace	Chihuahua (Redacción 2008b)	Jun 2, 2008				
35	Maxims	Chihuahua (Redacción 2009)	Nov 20, 2009				
36	Azul Tequila	Nuevo León (Agencias 2010)	Oct 6, 2010				

**Table 2** Number of attacks against lap dancing clubs in Mexico. The data was obtained through a simple Google query using the search terms *ataque* and *table dance*. Self-elaboration.



While the violence has had an impact across the country, the majority of these aggressions have taken place in Monterrey, Nuevo León. According to the available incident data, out of the 69 attacks, 30 took place in Monterrey, the majority of which happened in a single year. From 2006 to 2016, there were at least 71 victims at lap dancing clubs reported by the Mexican media, 41 of which were reported in the city of Monterrey. In terms of absolute numbers, the year that accounted for the most victims was 2012. This can be shown by charting the ratio of attacks against lap dancing clubs in Monterrey and nationally, over time (see Figure One).



**Figure 1** Comparing the absolute numbers of violent attacks against lap dancing clubs in Monterrey and nationally (including Monterrey). This chart is based on the data presented in Table 2 in this chapter. The numbers plotted exclude the unconfirmed incidents. Self-elaboration with data from García García (2017).

As long as there is a continued lack of information about the clubs, the locations they occupy, the services available, the customers and the types of activities and interactions that take place among the employees and between employees and customers, dispelling any false perceptions or misconceptions about the people employed in these businesses remains an impossible task. Faced with a continued onslaught against these venues, the potential for the

future criminalization of the activities that take place in the clubs is a reality. This is why, in this thesis, I make the case for the need to investigate the interactional dynamics that take place in these spaces.

The focus in this study is to contribute to the literature on lap dancing in two ways. First, the study seeks to collect evidence on the interactional and organizational implications of the Mexican approach to lap dancing. It is a study that looks at the way customers-dancer interactions develop when the exchange of money for sexual services is the norm, and on the emergence of new, social control-specific roles performed by other club employees in light of the exchange of money for sex. Secondly, the study strives to shed light on the organizational structure of Mexican lap dancing clubs, which have heretofore been ignored in the academic literature, and which have come to be associated with the presence of deviant or illegal activities as a result of the many violent incidents that have taken place in their premises. That is, as a secondary task, the study indirectly addresses questions about the relationship between the activities that take place in these venues and the broader territorial disputes linked to the drug war, a relationship that hinges on assumed illegalities taking place as part of the inner workings of these clubs.

It is important to note , these goals have important implications in terms of research design. Given that the focus of this research into the inner-workings of Mexican lap dancing centres on the interactional dynamics that occur in these clubs, data collection for the project relies fundamentally on ethnographic participant observation (Cook and Crang 1995; Baker 2006), a qualitative method that focuses on the situated production of meaning. Broadly speaking, ethnographic participant observation is a first-hand approach to data collection that involves acquiring group membership, observation, participation with the goal of achieving understanding through an ‘insider’s point of view’ (Baker 2006: 173).

The strategy used to gain entry into the field, in this case a Mexican lap dancing club located in the city of Monterrey, involved using my own personal social network to obtain full-time employment in a club. This undertaking accomplished three important tasks. First, it furnished information on the intersections club organization, prostitution, and workplace social control. Secondly, it provided a means of obtaining information on the types of deviant practices that take place inside these spaces. And, finally, it indirectly offered a way of looking into the meanings that these locations, and their employees, have for the criminal groups that have selected them as targets of violence.

The thesis seeks to explore these issues through the following research questions:

- What does the sale of prostitution look like in lap dancing clubs and what is the waiters' role in this exchange?
- How are customer-dancer interactions structured in a Mexican lap dancing club and what is the role played by other club employees?
- How are waiters responsible for club social control and what specific roles do they perform to facilitate prostitution services?
- What is the waiters' role in these clubs, particularly in relation to prostitution, social control and norm enforcement?

By addressing these questions, this study also contributes to broader discussions on the relationship between space and crime. It offers a glimpse of the 'micro processes' (Hayward 2012: 445) of situated meaning construction (Ferrell 1997) at the level of the interactions that take place in one club, this project offers ethnographic insight into the occupational milieu of the many employees working in these clubs, the norms that regulate customer behaviour, and the mechanisms of norm enforcement.

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **TIPPING, DANCING, WAITING AND CLUB SOCIAL ORGANIZATION**

While dancers are a visible and fundamental part of the lap dancing industry, this business also employs the services of bouncers (DeMichele and Tewksbury 2004), DJ's (Egan 2006), managers (Lilleston, Reuben and Sherman 2012). However, to date, the vast majority of research on lap dancing has focused mainly on the dancers (Kaufman 2009; Wesely 2003; Brooks 2010; Lilleston, Reuben and Sherman 2012; Colosi 2013) giving them a central place in the structure of club social organization (Pasko 2002; DeMichele and Tewksbury 2004; Litzky, Eddleston and Kidder 2006; Egan 2006). In recognizing the importance of the dancers' role in the industry, this approach has had the unintended effect of obfuscating the role and significance of the rest of the staff and little is known about the other people who work in these clubs, particularly male employees. Whilst there is abundant information on the complexity of, and the power imbalances that characterize the customer-dancer relationship, nothing is known about the type of interactions that club patrons may have with other employees or about any organizational differences that may exist between clubs.

In the past, scholars have remarked on the overwhelming attention given to the dancers (Erickson and Tewksbury 2000; Egan and Frank 2005), rightly noting that customers roles, motivations and behaviours are also relevant. Authors such as DeMichele and Tewksbury (2004) have drawn attention to the significance of other club employees,

particularly in relation to club social control, but these approaches continue to reproduce the idea that the fundamental service relationship in these clubs takes place between customers and dancers and nothing has been said regarding the possibility that patrons may be interacting with other club employees.

In this context, scholars have come to accept a universal definition of lap dancing that prioritizes the conversational element in these interactions and highlights the discovery of theatrical strategies developed by dancers' to seduce their customers and secure tips in exchange for the promise of intimacy (Enck and Preston 1988; Wosick-Correa and Joseph 2008; Morrow 2012; Frank 2002; Egan 2003; Kaufman 2009). As a result, little is known about the contributions that other employees may have to the development of these strategies, or whether they make use of these strategies themselves.

In this way, lap dancing is defined as a type of on-stage performance in which dancers earn money through the sale of services that include erotic physical contact (Frank 2003). According to this view, dancers are able to achieve financial gain by using interactional strategies that allow them to influence their customers' tipping behaviours (Enck and Preston 1988; Pasko 2002; Frank 2002; Frank 2005; Egan 2003; Deshotels and Forsyth 2006; Morrow 2012). Lap dancing is generally understood to be a business based on the sale of 'sexual arousal' (Bradley-Engen and Ulmer 2009) through the use of nudity (Carter and Stringer 2014; Brewster 2003) involving some interaction between customer and dancer—which includes fantasizing and emotional exchange (Bowen and Daniels 2006; Brewster 2003; Frank 2007).

In turn, this way of representing the lap dancing club, with the dancer at the centre and the customer-dancer relationship as the only significant interaction, has had an effect in

the way scholars have come to understand other aspects of club life. This can be seen, for example in the way club social control is portrayed in the literature. Montemurro (2001: 277-278) explains that ‘in an environment laden with hypersexuality, partial nudity, and heavy alcohol consumption, it is necessary to carefully lay out the boundaries and norms for interaction between dancer and customer, as well as to clarify general norms and expectations for appropriate behaviour within the club setting’. According to Montemurro (2001: 280), social control can be understood in relation to the business goals of the organization. In this way, social control entails the ‘ability’ of capitalists to produce the ‘desired behaviour’ from their workers (Montemurro 2001: 280). This includes mechanisms of directions or instructions, evaluation or supervision, as well as discipline or ways of responding to violations. Furthermore, Montemurro (2001: 282) establishes a distinction between bureaucratic forms of control (which are characterized by being impersonal and appearing in the form of written rules) and simple forms (which entail being personal interventions, idiosyncratic and unsystematic actions of discipline and application of norms, as well as the use of personal relationships for surveillance of violations and a differential application of sanctions).

This is the same approach taken by Price (2008), who argues that club social control is mainly concerned with policing dancer behaviour. According to Price (2008: 375-376), social control is not only a concern for security personnel - such as bouncers and doormen - but is also one of the responsibilities of other employees, such as bartenders, waitresses, DJs and housemums. Activities related to social control involve everyone employed in the club, including male employees, managers, as well as female employees and the dancers themselves (Price 2008:375-379). Viewed in this way, all jobs contribute to the enforcement of the rules that govern the type of physical contact that can occur between customers and

dancers. More specifically, according to this author, because social relations are characterized by 'gender inequalities that privilege men and marginalize women through the interactions of social actors' (Price 2008: 370), social control in organizations like lap dancing clubs is geared towards monitoring the activities of female dancers (Price 2008: 374).

However, as we have seen, while it may be true that clubs make use of their entire workforce to police and enforce the limits on touching and other forms of physical contact between customers and dancers, this will only be the case as long as the clubs in question prioritize conversation over physical touch and as long as dancers are able to engage the customer for a prolonged period of time in order to make a sale or receive a tip. This means that for clubs where customer-dancer contact is restricted, where the amount of time a dancer can engage a customer in conversation before a payment is received, such conversational strategies would not be possible. Furthermore, if conversational interaction between customer and dancer is limited, and employees are given the task of policing these limits, club social organization would be different from the way it has been represented up to date.

This is why it is important to note that scholars have found evidence to show that, under certain circumstances, this portrayal of club relationships and interactions may not be completely accurate. For example, in Mexico, lap dancing is fundamentally different. Where dancers in clubs in the Anglo-American world make money from lap dances, dancers working in Mexican clubs can either opt to make money through the consumption of alcohol at a customer's table or by offering sexual services in exchange for money. In other words, prostitution is one of the key services available in many clubs (López Villagrán 2012a; 2012b). This means that, unlike their American or British counterparts, Mexican lap dancers use seduction to ensure that their customers purchase alcoholic drinks or sexual services,

instead of lap dances, and that their time at the customer's table is limited by the speed at which a dancer is capable of consuming her drink. It also means that rather than controlling the amount of physical contact between customer and dancer, club employees spend their time ensuring that any dancer sitting at a customer's table has a full drink in front of her. However, while this is known, the implications that these differences may have in regards to the social organization of the club are a unknown and require further empirical research.

### **LAP DANCING AND TIP MAXIMIZATION**

One of the central themes in the lap dancing literature is the relationship between tipping and intimacy. Conventional academic wisdom dictates that dancer income depends on customer tipping in exchange for conversational intimacy (Erickson and Tewksbury 2000; Pasko 2002) and that, in order to increase their earnings, dancers can make use of an array of behavioural strategies to seduce their customers in exchanges for money in the form of tips (Enck and Preston 1988). That is, that dancer tipping will increase with the dancer's capacity to develop and employ the strategies necessary to ensure that the customer believes that he has achieved a certain level of intimacy. Among the strategies in question, authors have identified the display of gender appropriate gestures, behaviours, and clothing which together constitute a 'club-specific' persona. This idea rests on the assumption that customers are generally drawn towards dancers who match their aesthetic preferences as well as their behavioural expectations (Wood 2000). As a result, in order to ensure that their customers were entertained, and ensure their own financial rewards in the process, dancers are able to change and adapt their behaviour and appearance accordingly (Frank 2002; Egan 2003).



The groundwork for these ideas was laid out by authors such as McCaghy and Skipper (1969) and Boles and Garbin (1974), who argued that money was the primary motive driving people to join this line of work. Later, this idea would be re-deployed by authors like Enck and Preston (1988) and Ronai and Ellis (1989), who found that dancers' awareness of tipping as their main source of income was linked to the development of behavioural strategies that encourage tipping to maximize earnings. In other words, because of the monetary nature of the exchanges between dancers and customers, where dancers make money from the sale of drinks and dances to customers, and the dancers' obligation to respond to customer advances, lap dancers have an incentive to create strategies 'to manipulate customers into spending money' (Erickson and Tewksbury 2000: 272).

To refer to this process, Ronai and Ellis (1989: 274) employed the concept of 'counterfeit intimacy', following the earlier work by Boles and Garbin (1974). In Ronai and Ellis (1989: 274), this 'counterfeit intimacy' is defined as the phenomenon that results from the encounter of opposed interests between customers and dancers. It is an opposition originating in the clash between the dancers' desire for money and the customers' expectations of arousal, companionship, understanding, mutual affection (Ronai and Ellis 1989: 272). According to them, this has the effect of producing bar-specific negotiation or bargaining strategies like those found in the business world.

The general thesis is that the dancers' ability to meet their goals involves emotional suppression, and the strategic use of the body and conversation to seduce their customers. One of these strategies involved deception through sexual insinuations and the display of 'affection, attraction, and/or sexual desire toward the customer' (Erickson and Tewksbury 2000: 272) to engage the customer and increase his spending. Ronai and Ellis (1989), for example, speak of club-specific behavioural strategies, which dancers then employed to

manipulate customer behaviour according to their own self-interest. According to Ronai and Ellis (1989: 274) the strategies observed included: a) the use of gestures as symbols of sexual intimacy that resonated with a particular customer base and be interpreted as an expression of desire; b) choice of music that appealed to a specific clientele; c) the development of a scale through which to evaluate customers according to their needs; and (d) the strategic use of conversation to control their customers.

Expressed in this manner, the emphasis placed on the interactional aspects of the tipping relationship by Ronai and Ellis (1989) is also apparent in the work of other authors. For example, looking at customer behaviour, Brewster (2003: 223) argued that customer behaviour is structured around acts of 'economically-driven exchange'. At their core, these acts consisted in the 'display of naked bodies' in exchange for money (Brewster 2003: 223) through the sale of overpriced drinks, private dances, and lap dances (Brewster 2003: 223). As a result, they developed behavioural strategies to appeal to a certain public, to engage with potential customers, and to persuade said customers to participate in these transactions (Brewster 2003: 224). In other words, because it pays for dancers to behave in certain ways and dancers are motivated by financial drives, dancers adapt their behaviour according to the interests of their potential customers.

The idea that dancers employ club specific personas to influence their customers' behaviour was later expanded on by other authors. Pasko (2002), for example, revisited the question arguing that lap dancing is an example of a 'confidence game', a term used to describe the practices of deceit used by 'confidence men' to defraud their victims. This work is important because it framed dancer strategies as an expression of more widely known behaviours. That is, the strategies dancers used to encourage their customers' tipping were not exclusive to them, but were also found in other spheres of society. 'The confidence game

is an act of trust development, fake pretences and duplicity in order to acquire gain, usually monetary' (Pasko 2002: 52). It involves the creation of 'a false social relationship' in order to empathize with "the prospective victims, or 'marks', for the purpose of exploiting them' (Pasko 2002: 52).

The strategic use of 'flirting, feigning emotional closeness and vulnerability, and becoming ideal sexual provocateurs as well as mental stimulators' (Pasko 2002: 50) to manipulate customers was also the subject of interest in Erickson and Tewksbury (2000), who employed Goffman's (1959) theatre metaphor to develop their analysis. Erickson and Tewksbury (2000) explain that the tipping norm defines expectations for lap dancing customers: patrons sitting in proximity of the stage are expected to tip more and dancers reward or sanction this behaviour accordingly by showing personalized attention and punishing deviance through contempt and gestures of violence. It is in response to these expectations that customers display different tipping behaviours. In a way similar to Erickson and Tewksbury (2000), Brewster (2003: 224) draws from symbolic interactionism, particularly the work of Goffman and the concept of impression management. Using these concepts, the author suggests that dancers develop club-specific stage personas that involve the use of costumes and music in their on-stage performances. Through these personas, dancers can convince customers that through consumption of club services they have the possibility of obtaining a sexual favour or companionship. Additionally, these personas are also a means of managing the stigma associated with their profession by establishing a distinction between their self-identity in the club and in the outside world (Brewster 2003: 224). To summarize, the evidence collected by previous studies on the development of dancer strategies to manipulate their customers' tipping behaviour speaks to the importance of tipping in lap dancing clubs. In this way, studies on dancer strategies have been

fundamental in theorizing the normative potential of tipping expectations for both customers and dancers.

The problem here is that in order to fully engage their customers by the use of strategic flirting, dancers need conversation time with their customers. In Mexican clubs, however, this conversation time is limited both by the requirement that customers' purchase alcohol to keep a dancer at their table, and by the possibility of obtaining sexual favours in exchange for money. On the one hand, the need for tipping is reduced by the fact that a drink is already a monetary reward for the dancer's presence at the table, and on the other hand by the fact that the delivery of a sexual service in exchange for money does not require any more interaction than the amount necessary to arrive at a price. As a result of this, it could be assumed that for Mexican lap dancers, the need for conversational strategies such as those described in the Anglo-American literature is less prevalent among dancers. Whether this is true or not needs to be said without empirical analysis.

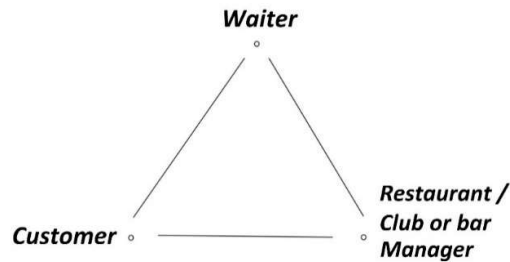
If lap dancing club customers are not engaging dancers in conversation, is it possible that this role is being performed by other club employees? If we look at the scholarship on tipping practices that exist in other businesses, particularly in the hospitality and service industry, there is evidence that similar tip-seeking behaviours may be used by other employees in the clubs. It is a known fact that tipping is prevalent in businesses where drink is sold for on-site consumption, and that the tipping relationship in other occupations, despite their marked difference with lap dancing, is also marked by the development of conversational strategies that employees use to control customer tipping. As a result, it is reasonable to think that these behaviours may have been adopted by employees other than the dancers.

## TIPPING IN THE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY

Tipping is a social practice consisting in the giving of voluntary gratuities to service providers in exchange for their work (Azar 2007; Becker *et al.*, 2012: 249; Lynn and Kwortnik 2015: 15). This means that unlike the more conventional pricing system, these gratuities are not regulated by law. Instead, authors agree that tipping behaviours are norm driven (Lynn and Brewster 2015: 68; Whaley *et al.*, 2014: 122). These norms ‘specify who should be tipped and how much they should be tipped’ (Lynn and Starbuck 2015: 158). Whaley *et al.*, (2014: 122) cites Saunders and Lynn (2010) to explain that ‘consumers tip through choice, rather than because they are legally or ethically bound as patrons to tip’ (Whaley *et al.*, 2014: 121), so tipping practices operationalize the problem of norm conformity. Lynn (2015: 74) adds that from an economical rationality, tips can be viewed as ‘anomalous behaviour’ since they ‘are an expense that consumers are free to avoid’. In other words, tipping can be ‘legally’ (Lynn 2016: 38) avoided and so has attracted attention from economists who find it inconsistent with utility maximizing behaviour.

To understand what this all means, it is first necessary to clarify its role in the restaurant and hospitality industry. According to Whyte (1963: 2), the restaurant and hospitality industry distinguishes itself from other industries in that it brings the consumer directly into the site of production and service. In order to mediate between supply and demand, organizations in this industry have developed unique roles and specific forms of social control to regulate consumer behaviour and consumption. A restaurant, for example, is a single productive unit that brings the production of perishable goods, the people responsible for producing that good, and the service personnel who are responsible for presenting the goods to the customer into a single location. This means that in the space of one establishment, it is possible to find employees dedicated either to the production of

goods and services, to the delivery of said goods and services, as well as to the mediation of operation of production and consumption.



**Figure 2** Organizational structure of the service and hospitality industry. Adapted from Whyte (1963: 4).

Given that the main activity involved in customer contact is service (for example, relaying orders from consumers to the producers and then delivering the goods back to the customer), waiters' workplaces put them in direct contact with the customer. In this way, like other customer-contact employees, restaurant workers this means they are accountable to both the people involved in producing the perishable goods demanded by the customer, as well as with the people who consume them. Because their work is visible to both, they are subject to the evaluation of both. Their service is evaluated by the final consumer of the goods and services offered at their place of employment, as well as by their supervisors and managers (Whyte 1963: 2).

In study after study, tipping has been shown to be more than an act of generosity or status; it is a social norm (Azar 2004; Azar 2007; Azar 2011; Conlin, *et al.*, 2003) with important implications for management, employee and customer. Tipping operates as a mechanism of bi-directional social control, that allows for the simultaneous oversight of customer-contact employees and customers. To understand how this works, it is important to note that a waiter's role involves functional and technical elements. On the one hand,

waiters are obliged to comply with what Whaley *et al.*, (2014: 122) refer to as the ‘technical and the functional aspects of service’. On the other hand, the technical aspect of service includes activities such as and describe the speed of service, the number of visits to the table, and the waiters’ knowledge of the food and beverage items Whaley *et al.*, (2014: 122), which are all monitored by management. With functional dimension of service, the author refers to the ‘relational’ aspects of service delivery (Whaley *et al.*, 2014: 122). This involves the manner or personal approach to service taken by the server, which is evaluated mainly by the customers, and includes aspects such as mimicking, touching, talking about dancers’ bodies and willingness to perform sexual favours, as well as other verbal and non-verbal cues.

This distinction is important because it means that management retains control of the technical aspects of service while customers become the main figures responsible for overseeing the functional and technical aspects of service through their tipping practices. For the business, this is useful because certain aspects of service delivery are only visible to the customers. It is the customers who can perceive the more interactional or interpersonal aspects of their servers’ comportment. Deficiencies in the technical aspects of service delivery, such as problems with speed and knowledge of menu, are likely to have direct repercussions with the rest of the organization while smiling or touching the customer may only affect the waiter in question.

In the restaurant and hospitality service industries, this system of oversight is articulated through the tipping system. When customers deem a server’s work to be satisfactory, they tip. Otherwise, they withhold their tips. In this way, customer tipping has been shown to increase as a response to subtle behavioural cues and gestures used by servers in the course of their work. To show what types of behavioural cues have been known to be

effective in encouraging customer conformity to the tipping norm, I have decided to briefly include an abridged review of some of the findings by key authors in this discussion. Immediately afterwards, I will focus on the question of bi-directional oversight and its role in the development of workplace agency, as this evidence places waiters and other customer-contact employees at the centre of social control.

## **THE TIPPING NORM**

In their investigation into the motivations for tipping, Becker, *et al.*, (2012) review prior research on the subject of tipping behaviours. According to these authors, the extant body of literature on tipping can be classified into two groups. In the first group, these authors include studies informed by social psychology which also tend to use social experiments as their preferred methodology. These studies involve testing of hypothesis through an experimental design that relies on controlled interactions between unknowing subjects and undercover research collaborators. These field experiments use certain verbal and non-verbal cues as independent variables, which they compare to controls where the collaborators avoid the use of the cue under study. The second group includes all research that has addressed the question of tipping motivations, such as studies that have attempted to understand tipping from an economic perspective and studies investigating whether or not tipping conforms to the neoclassical model of rational economic behaviour.

One of the earliest references to a study that investigates the effects of touch in compliance to a request is Fisher, *et al.*, (1976). The study looks at the responses shown by users when a library clerk briefly touches their hand as they return the customer's library card. Even though this research did not use tips as the measure of the influence of the social cues on shaping behaviour, it is important because it predated similar research that used the



number of tips as a dependent variable. The results were compared to a no-touch interaction through an analysis of variance. Among the results, these authors reported a more positive effect of touch on library and clerk evaluations elicited from female students. Like Fisher, *et al.*, (1976), other early studies that found that touch had a significant role in obtaining compliance were Willis and Hamm (1980) and Smith, *et al.*, (1982). Paulsell and Goldman (1984), for example, used survey responses from people walking around in American shopping malls, finding that there was a greater interaction between a touch gesture and unsolicited helping behaviour among female experimenters compared to men. Hornik and Ellis (1988), investigate the different responses to a request to participate in a shopping mall interview, as they vary sex, touch and gaze. They find that compliance was greater when subject was touched and gazed, than when they were not. In relation to sex, compliance increased in relation to the sex of the experimenter, but not of the respondent.

The first example of a social experiment performed in the context of a restaurant is Crusco and Wetzel (1984). Like Fisher, *et al.*, (1976) and Paulsell and Goldman (1984), Crusco and Wetzel (1984) investigate the effects of touch on the palm of the hand and the upper shoulder. In their findings, these researchers reported that males tipped more than females, but that there was no difference between male and female customers in their reactions to being touched. Men had a less negative response to being touched on the shoulder than did female customers. Stephen and Zweigenhaft (1986) and Hornik (1992) replicated Crusco and Wetzel (1984) with an emphasis on gender in the first case and on server attractiveness in the second. Stephen and Zweigenhaft (1986), for example, investigate restaurant customers' response when patronizing these spaces in pairs and either the male or the female diner was touched by a waitress. Their results indicated that tips were greater when the female in the pair was touched. Hornik (1992), used three experiments: one

involved touching a customer as they entered a bookstore, the second one involved touching mixed couples, and the third involved evaluating compliance attained by supermarket demonstrators asking customers to taste a product. In all cases touching was found to have a positive effect on compliance.

Interpersonal touch was also the subject of study by Jewell (2008) and Lynn, *et al.*, (1998). Lynn, *et al.*, (1998), found that when a male Asian-American waiter touched customers, he received more tips regardless of the duration of the touch and of the sex of the paying customer. Customer age did have an impact as younger customers were significantly more responsive than older customers when they were touched. Jewell (2008) looked at controlling for other factors that may also have similar effects as the interactional cues and gestures discussed by previous researchers in order to dismiss the possibility that these factors may account for the effects observed in the past. In this way, additional to touch, this study also considered other variables, including age, race, gender, alcohol consumption, as well as sitting in the smoking section. The author did not find any significant differences between the responses exhibited by men or women, alcohol consumption, and choosing the smoking section. Similar studies, such as Tidd and Lockard (1978) focus on smiling instead of touch and finding that a broad smile increased the amount of tips, particularly from male customers.

Other strategies employed by servers in the restaurant context that have investigated include the use of visual cues such as squatting (Lynn and Mynier, 1993 and Davis *et al.*, 1998), and the use of written messages (Gueguen and Legoherele, 2000). Stillman and Hensley (1980), for example, looked at the effect of waitress appearance on tips through the addition of a flower to the hair of the waitresses. The results indicated that ornamentation increased their absolute tips and that men were the most generous tippers. Like Stillman and

Hensley (1980), Lynn and Simons (2000) look at the use of other visual cues to influence behaviour. In this case, they look at the relationship between attractiveness and tips, finding that physical attractiveness was a stronger predictor of average tips for waitresses than for waiters. In the case of Gueguen and Legoherele (2000) the object of the study was to determine the effects of including a drawing on the customer's bill on the size of tip left. Rind and Bordia (1995), looked at the addition of a message and/or a signature to the back of the bill. The results indicated that there was no difference in the effect on tipping between the two messages, but there was a positive effect of writing either message compared to the control condition. Garrity and Degelman (1990), look at the effect on customer' tipping of waiters introducing themselves to their customers by name. They find that the tipping rate under the introduction condition was higher than the tipping rate under the no name condition. Like them, Seiter (2007), observed the use of compliments by waiters and its effect on tipping behaviours. They find that complimenting their customers had a significant effect in the percent of the bill of tips each waitress received.

In summary, the studies discussed above show that customer-contact employees can induce compliance to request using verbal and non-verbal cues. That is, there is strong evidence to suggest that dancers are not the only employees of lap dancing clubs who could be making use of strategies to manipulate their customers. Additional to this, these findings offer a glimpse into the mechanisms of norm enforcement. Together they offer insight into the complex interactional dynamics through which certain individuals can assume the role of setting the behavioural tone for specific spaces. In linking the securement of conformity to behavioural limits and expectations to the use of gestures, they reveal the importance of micro-interactions to social control.

More recently, a second group of tipping literature has emerged, which, through a very different approach, has found that tipping is not just about service quality, but that it is a behavioural response that can be encouraged and instigated much in the same way as other social norms. To understand how this idea has come about, it is important to note that the interest on tipping has, for many years, predominantly centred on testing other explanatory frameworks. Authors have tested the relationship of customer tipping behaviours to bill size (Lynn, *et al.*, 2012), service quality (Lynn and Kworntnik 2015; Becker, *et al.*, 2012; Lynn and Wang 2013) and/or by feelings of reciprocity (Becker, *et al.*, 2012; Lynn 2016; Lynn 2018). Because the results obtained in all of these inquiries remain inconclusive, scholars have begun to explore alternatives to the economic approach to human behaviour.

Because the link between service quality and tips is weak, authors have not been able to show that the model of the rational economic agent can be used to explain tipping behaviour. If tipping were a ‘rational behaviour that maximized Economic-Efficiency’ (Becker, *et al.*, 2012: 248), then for the customer and business, efficiency would be a function of service quality (Lynn and Brewster 2018; Alhelalat, *et al.*, 2017; Lynn and Kworntnik 2015). To the extent that tipping is motivated by the desire to reward service quality (Saunders and Lynn 2010: 106), waiters will provide good service in order to receive tips.

Lynn and Wang (2013: 63) have argued that the tipping system is favourable to the interests of restaurant managers because service delivery is an ‘intangible’ good ‘customizable’ to the unique demands of each consumer. For this reason, for the firm tipping is a means to commission control over service delivery to each dining party, a form of ‘buyer monitoring’ (Brewster 2013: 229), since it is not possible for them to be present at the ‘point of service delivery’ at all times (Brewster and Mallinson 2009: 1061). The underlying logic

of this approach is that as long as tipping is motivated by the need to reward good service, workers will be compelled to work more and to be more efficient in order to deliver better service and maximize their tips (Azar 2011: 518).

According to Lynn (2009b) and Saunders and Lynn (2010), reciprocating money in exchange for good service is the most frequently reported motive for tipping according to consumer self-evaluations of their own tipping behaviours. But this is problematic because the reciprocity motive can operate in two directions, either to reward good service already received or to ensure good service in the future (Saunders and Lynn 2010: 107). Both of these are premised on the assumption that customers' tipping practices will affect worker behaviour and vice versa (Azar 2011: 518). Economic-Efficiency, according to Azar (2007) and Brewster (2013) hinges on the possibility that the tip is awarded on the basis of performance, a sort of voluntary price in exchange for good service (Lynn and Wang 2013: 63), and that this has a positive effect on the server to deliver better service.

This is perhaps the reason why the evidence in this regard is inconclusive and empirical tests of this theory have only achieved weak indicators of the relationship (Azar 2007; Becker, *et al.*, 2012; Lynn, *et al.*, 2012: 91). In his review of recent empirical and theoretical literature on tipping, Azar (2007) cites low sensitivity to service quality, evidence that frequent customers do not tip more than infrequent customers and that receiving good service is not a major reason reported for tipping as some of the factors behind the weak relationship between service quality and tipping. In a different review of the literature, Becker, *et al.*, (2012) agree with other authors and conclude that the general perception is that tipping does not conform to the neoclassical model of selfish profit maximization.

According to Azar (2011), the problem lies in the assumptions underpinning the model. The general idea is that the modelled economic individual or agent is thought to be selfish and rational in that its behaviour is driven by the desire to consume in a way that maximizes a utility function which is subject to budget constraints. Yet, tipping takes place after a service has been provided (Azar 2011: 516) and there is no legal obligation to comply (Lynn, *et al.*, 2012: 91). Given that there is no penalty for not tipping, this means that the agent's utility has been maximized before the tip takes place. In other words, tipping is irrational from the perspective of neoclassical economic theory (Lynn, *et al.*, 2012: 91).

Further to this, Azar (2007: 382) cites his previous work (Azar 2005) to argue that research on tipping has shown that consumers derive pleasure 'not only from consumption, but also from positive feelings and, therefore, are willing to forgo consumption (by giving up money) in order to obtain such feelings'. Particularly, consumers obtain negative feelings from not-conformity to norms and positive feelings from norm conformity, which, at the same time, has been shown to be induced using social cues and gestures.

In other words, the point made by Azar (2011) is that the service quality-tipping relationship fails to recognize that tipping behaviours are an expression of normative behaviour, which, as the abundant social psychology literature shows, are responses triggered in the course of social interaction by subtle gestures and other cues that remain 'beyond the scope of conscious awareness' (Becker, *et al.*, 2012: 250) at the time a respondent is asked to fill out a survey on service quality or is asked to explain the size of the tip given to a particular server. In this sense, Whaley, *et al.*, (2014) identify two underlying dimensions to service quality. For Whaley, *et al.*, (2014: 122) the technical dimension of service quality encompasses the 'objectively measurable' aspects of service such as the restaurant ambience, visits to table side, knowledge of the menu, the waiters'

routine, and accuracy of menu descriptions, as well as the more functional and subjective aspects of service, such as the interactional aspects of service which only become apparent in the exchange between server and customer.

This split system of oversight is fundamental because of the implications for the waiters' role. For example, other authors have emphasized that, due to the personal nature of server's occupation, managers are unable to exercise control over their employees (Brewster and Mallinson 2009: 1061). According to Brewster and Mallinson (2009) because the tipping system exerts a level of control that leaves service employees with a sense of powerlessness and routinization, any break in the system of oversight can be used by workers as an opportunity to develop conscious strategies to 'alleviate' their condition (Brewster and Mallinson 2009: 1061). As these authors explain, this is the result of the 'inherent economic uncertainty' of the system (Brewster and Mallinson 2009: 1059). This uncertainty results from the fact that the server is obliged to allocate an amount of effort before tipping takes place, and there is always a potential that the customer does not leave an adequate tip, and also as a result of the type of control exercised by businesses which involves defining server appearance, how they act, what they say, how they feel, and what they think (Brewster and Mallinson 2009: 1060). It is these factors that produce the good-bad tipper dichotomy, which underlie servers' discriminatory practices (Brewster and Mallinson 2009: 1059).

Like Rusche and Brewster (2009), Brewster and Wills (2013) have also put forward the idea that servers can 'exercise control' to improve their job related circumstances and influence or 'manipulate' the behaviour of tipping customers (Brewster and Mallinson 2009: 193). Noting that scholars traditionally portray workers as docile and dependent or exhausted and stressed, partly because of the way the social system of capitalist labour is organized, Brewster and Wills (2013: 193) endorse Rosenthal's (2004) theoretical approach for having

recognized that workers are not hopeless, but that they are also able to use their creativity and agency to navigate their workplace environments through the system of social control.

In order to resolve the lack of attention in this regard, Brewster and Wills (2013: 194) argue for the need to focus on servers workplace experiences and agency. Drawing from Hochschild's (1983) work on emotional labour, they argue that restaurant work, like work in other organizations in the service industry, involves control over the 'employees outward display of emotions' (Brewster and Wills 2013: 195), and, in the case of servers, this control is exercised by customers through the tipping system. While workers who do not conform to the expectations are financially penalized (Brewster and Wills 2013: 196), these authors point out that there is research indicating that workers do not necessarily experience the tipping system as 'demeaning and disempowering' (Brewster and Wills 2013: 196). Instead, their experience of emotional labour can also be a positive means of exercising influence over their customers and of being rewarded in the process (Brewster and Wills 2013: 196). This is the case because in the restaurant and hospitality industry worker control is divided between customers and management, which means that restaurant workers can use this decentralized form of control in their favour and that the opportunity for autonomy takes place in the realm of customer interactions. In their review, they identify strategies such as upselling techniques, increasing the number of dining parties served, and managing their effort to increase tipping.

## **SUMMARY**

In the course of this chapter, I started an inquiry that links the lap dancing and the customer service industry literatures. In order to determine what the current available research has to say about the internal social dynamics of Mexican lap dancing clubs, I



reviewed some of the key findings and debates relevant to the questions being asked in this study. As the literature considered here, shows it is clear that there is currently an impending need for further research. While there has been an emerging interest on the roles of employees other-than-the-dancers, this is incomplete and nothing has been said about the male waiters that are clearly being employed in these clubs in Mexico. Moreover, while there is evidence on the availability of prostitution services in lap dancing clubs, the obvious questions that the presence of such activities would raise regarding the generalizability of previous findings have not been addressed.

In relation to the literature on the customer service industry, the evidence focuses fundamentally on the restaurant and hospitality businesses. Despite the similarities between lap dancing clubs and other bars and clubs, these overlaps have not been discussed. As a result, nothing has been said about the overlap between restaurant, bar and lap dancing club waiters, nor has there been an inquiry into their differences. In consequence, even though there appear to be important similarities among the employees working in these different industries, and that the uniqueness of the role in one industry may contribute to create new lines of research in the role in another industry, this questions remain unaddressed.

Finally, there is the issue of the lack of interest in the Mexican lap dancing industry and the influence that this has had in shaping our understanding of the business as a whole. A predominant idea in the lap dancing literature is that this is a form of entertainment that centres on seduction and erotic arousal. However, this is in stark contrast to the emerging evidence collected in Mexico where, as discussed in the introductory chapter to this thesis, the emphasis is on prostitution. Because this is an important difference, the information derived from lap dancing clubs located in the urban West may not be useful to inform a discussion on the occupational role of Mexican lap dancing club employees.

This is particularly the case when the issue of club social control is brought to the fore. Conventionally, it is assumed in the literature on lap dancing clubs that social control in these clubs is mainly concerned with policing the amount of physical interaction that is possible between customers and dancers and that other employees are given the responsibility to enforce those limits. However, if the business model does not place restrictions on physical interactions, the role of other employees in social control is brought into question. Nothing is known about the mechanisms of social control, about the rules and norms that exist, nor about the key people involved in norm enforcement in Mexican lap dancing clubs.

In the following chapter, I consider these issues in light of the empirical evidence collected through ten weeks of full-member participant observation in a Mexican lap dancing club. My focus is on the role of tipping among Mexican lap dancing club waiters. The empirical section of this thesis attempts to address the questions raised in Chapter One and Two, with the goal of documenting the waiters' relationship with their customers in the context of a business that emphasizes the sex work aspect of lap dancing, and to explore the behavioural implications of tipping for the waiters, an issue overlooked in the literature on lap dancing.

## CHAPTER 2

### STEPPING INTO A MEXICAN LAP DANCING CLUB

Broadly speaking, an ethnography is a method of social research defined by its emphasis on the direct participation of the researcher in the world of a social group or community of interest with the explicit goal of ‘understand[ing] parts of the world as they are experienced and understood in the everyday lives of people who actually ‘live them out’’ (Cook and Crang 1995: 4). Following on the footsteps of authors like William Whyte (1993), Erving Goffman (1956), Howard Becker (1963) and Victor Turner (1982), and more generally in the tradition of the Chicago School of Sociology (Cook and Crang 1995: 5), I have use this methodological approach in the study of a Mexican lap dancing club. Located in the disciplinary overlap between Anthropology, Sociology and Criminology, the thesis relies on first-person, direct participation in the activities of the community under study as the fundamental method of empirical research. Through the direct participation in the inner-life of the club, this project seeks to shed light on the everyday world of the employees that work in these businesses, while prioritizing understanding, lived-experience and collaboration over detached observation.

The research questions being answered ask about the club’s employees involvement in the in the activities that make the provision of prostitution services possible, and the relationship between these activities and club social control. My interest lies in identifying the types of activities they perform and in determining the extent to which these activities are linked to the promotion of prostitution. I ask what the waiters’ role is in the sale and provision of prostitution services and the degree to which they are responsible for policing

customer-dancer interactions. In other words, my concern is to determine what prostitution looks like in these clubs, and to identify the waiters' role in this exchange?

As a result, the situations described in this thesis involve morally, and often legally, dubious behaviours. Taking a phenomenological approach to criminological research is messy endeavour and gaining access to the processes that produce meaning will invariably involve participation in situations that will question the researcher's integrity (Ferrell 1995; Ferrell and Sanders 1995; Ferrell 1999). From the beginning, my experience was fraught with multiple decisions that, in the best possible scenario, could potentially be contested at one point or another, and at worst could result in harm to myself or my new associates. To navigate around these challenges, my point of reference was my own common sense, integrity and the ethical guidelines set by the discipline and the professional association of which I was a member at the time (British Sociological Association 2017).

As a fieldworker, my two main ethical preoccupations were the decision to conceal my identity in doing covert research and the question of the extent of my involvement in the deviant activities that were a part of everyday life in the club. My solution to these challenges is, first and foremost, firmly grounded within the principles set forth by the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (Algra *et al.* 2018), particularly as it pertains to honesty, transparency and responsibility. In understanding that my work fits in within a broader field of knowledge production, and that the decisions made in the course of my work have implications for the profession as a whole, I assume my professional responsibility with transparency and honesty. During the time spent as a fieldworker, I ensured that the full extent of my participation would be subject to peer review, both at the time of fieldwork (through direct supervision both from my thesis committee as well as by an external researcher in Mexico), as well as through the process of writing the manuscript.

In terms of the decision to conceal my identity, I was motivated by my own responsibility to my co-workers. While this was not the only possible course of action, more importantly, the social benefit that my findings could bring as the public attitude towards these businesses had begun to associate them with the activities of organized criminal groups. By shedding light on the activities that take place in one of these clubs, that revealed the full extent of any illegal practices, my plan was to finally release the clubs and their employees from being connected without justification with more violent crimes. In this regard, my decision prioritised point 24 of the (British Sociological Association 2017: 6) which addresses the consequences of my research and the need to guard against harm to research participants.

While it is true that covert research is ethically problematic, I should also clarify that in deciding to follow this approach I also gave consideration to the specific characteristics of the customers that patronize the club. As I will discuss in more detail below, my decision considered prior experiences in other cultural in relation to accessibility and the caveats mentioned in British Sociological Association's (2017) guidelines regarding circumstances where 'participants change their behaviour because they know they are being studied' and the access issues that may develop because of 'secretive interests' (British Sociological Association 2017: 5).

## **PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION**

Conceptually, this approach to social research that seeks to answer its research questions through direct participation in the social exchanges of interest follows from the idea that people's everyday actions are not separate from, but thoroughly influenced by social norms and culture, and that these are constructed through people's actions (Cook and

Crang 1995: 5). Epistemologically, this means that a culture becomes accessible through embodied, emotionally invested learning and doing. In taking part, enacting and looking at the impact that participation in the rituals and routines of a community has on its own and non-members, the researcher can gain a deeper understanding of the meanings that circulate in this social context.

In this project, I translate these ideas to the study of the social organization that develops around the provision of prostitution services in a Mexican lap dancing club by placing my own experience at the centre of the fieldnotes and the monograph. However, it should be said that my understanding of ethnographic research, and of the role this approach would have in the final project, changed at different stages of the study. Initially, the perspective that informed the first research proposals looked at similar studies for guidance. After an initial literature review, similar studies came into focus and it seemed reasonable to adopt an approach that prioritised a form of participation that did not include those activities ‘central to group membership and identification’ as they had done in the past (Erickson and Tewksbury 2000; Brewster 2003).

At that point, my view of participant observation placed more emphasis on the observational component than the participation aspect. Like Erickson and Tewksbury (2000), I considered adopting the role of a patron and observing the activities and behaviours from a table and taking notes on napkins, expecting that this approach would not generate suspicion among group members, whether they were employees or customers. As long as my goal was to either look at customer or dancer behaviour from a ‘safe distance’, it did not matter whether I were a customer or an employee. Observing from ma distance could practically be accomplished from any vantage point, as long as I was inside the club. For me, the best scenario was to have full access to the setting by working as an employee in the

club, but I also contemplated taking the less desirable alternative of adopting the role of a regular customer and make periodic visits to a single venue.

None of these options were optimal. Instead, I had to go a step further to ensure direct access to the interactions and become a covert, full participant-observer. Taking this approach was a pragmatic solution to an abundance of unknowns. Given the lack of studies about customers or other employees in Mexico, I had no point of reference as to how this sort of study may have been received. Ultimately, what mattered was to be able to collect as much detail on the interactions that take place in the club. I wanted to be able to hear the conversations, to be present as they took place, and to watch the customers as they interacted with the dancers from a short distance. Being a ‘peripheral-member/researcher’ (Adler and Adler 1987: 36 cited in Erickson and Tewksbury 2000: 275) afforded the possibility of having an ‘insider’s perspective while avoiding interfering with setting activities’ (Erickson and Tewksbury 2000: 275). Given that prostitution was involved, and that there was a possibility that I had to consume alcohol in order to be allowed to be in the club, this was an optimal position that would not provoke mistrust or rejection.

More importantly, I feared that, like me, any potential respondent would also be overly cautious of anyone asking too many questions, either about any illegal activity that may be taking place at the club, or about their role in consuming services that they may not view as legitimate, either because of their fear of moral condemnation or because they were aware of the fuzzy legal standing of these clubs. Ultimately, these clubs had been the object of multiple and repeated violent attacks and had gained a reputation that linked them to the drug war, not because of a direct relationship but because they had become targets of a type of gun violence that was characteristically attributed to the conflict between organized criminal groups. If any of these allegations were true, and I did not have evidence to prove

or disprove any of them, having a researcher asking unsolicited and uncomfortable questions could have provoked a reaction against group members or myself. In this context, I thought, taking a detached position, that also involved keeping my identity a secret to everyone but my gatekeepers, would be ideal.

However, from the beginning, this was also not a plan-then-do-then-write project. Instead, there were multiple instances where it was necessary to stop, regroup and change direction. This was true for the project as a whole, and it was particularly the case during the fieldwork stage. As a result, as it became increasingly clear that there would be environmental (loud music and darkness) factors that would not allow for unobtrusive observation, I made the decision to consider other qualitative methods which would run parallel to the ethnography and would help me validate my findings. Taking cue from the literature on gender, I considered triangulating my methods. Alongside the ethnography, it would be necessary to run interviews and focus groups with dancers and customers. With this, I hoped, I would be able to obtain information that would otherwise be out of reach. This is, in fact, the methodological approach laid out in the ethics proposal submitted to obtain approval for the study.

Following this same empirically driven decision-making process, my understanding of ethnography changed once I began doing fieldwork. While the reasons why an ethnography was the optimal method remained the same, my outlook on the method became more about making sense of the implications of my own involvement in the club's social world. Before my first day at work at *Marbella's* my approach had been to avoid all activities central to group membership. However, once my routine included serving tables at the club, it became increasingly clear to me that I needed to change my approach. Rather than focusing on the dancers or their customers, I came to the realization that one of the consequences of



having taken a role as an employee was the unexpected abundance of information on my own experience learning the ropes. I had found myself in an unanticipated privileged position. As a waiter, I had an optimal vantage point. I now was in an unrivalled capacity to describe club social organisation, both in terms of the structure itself and its effects on club daily activities and interaction, from the inside.

Through direct participation in club activities, I had gained direct access to attitudes, gestures, 'symbolic action, as well as words' (Conquergood 1991: 189). As my co-workers began to guide me in the use of the symbols, markers, and norms available to them either outside or inside the club, and invited me to redeploy these elements with them, collectively, I gained awareness of the interplay between gestures, facial expressions and vocabulary. It is at that point that I recognised the role of language, of how waiters used the prestige and recognition conventionally attributed to a figure of power in order to coax their customers to assume certain roles, comply with certain norms and to understand that for every favour, there was an expectation of tip to be given in return.

It is through doing fieldwork that I came to understand the need to recognize my own role in group activities, how my own presence had an impact on the situations I was experiencing, many of which otherwise would not have occurred. As a waiter at the club, I became the object of hugs and embracing. In every face to face interaction with a customer, there was physical contact from customer to waiter. My co-workers would encourage to reciprocate in these tactile exchanges. They would tell me how to pat an arriving customer on the back, would do it to me, and would then talk to me about the effect these exchanges had on our income.

In this way, doing fieldwork became about my own process. It was about me learning their vocabulary, their strategies, and their practices. I was no longer an observer. When needed, I was called over to a table, I was shown what to say and was told how to say it. When it was necessary to hide a hustle, when beer was being stolen or when a customer was being tricked to believe that another customer's drink was being opened for the first time, I was an accessory. In Goffman's words, I learned from 'them in the first place "on their pulses," in coactivity with their enactors, having beforehand shared for a considerable time much of the people's daily life and gotten to know them not only as players of social roles, but as unique individuals, each with a style and soul of his or her own' (Goffman, 1975: 28-29, cited in Conquergood 1991: 187).

This understanding of Ethnography that prioritised a first-person approach to fieldwork, of course, had important ethical implications, as well as repercussions regarding how to write about what I was doing. On the one hand, there were professional and personal choices that I was forced to make. On the other there were implications for my own safety for which I had to prepare. It is to these issues that I now turn my attention.

### **DOING FIELDWORK AND THE FIELDWORK EXPERIENCE**

An ethnography, like every other method of social research, is embedded in a web of academic debates about applicability to certain objects of study, about its strengths and weaknesses and about its role in strengthening or redressing the social inequalities that underly the process of knowledge production. In this section I want to discuss the way I came to understand the method and my own position in this research process, the strategies I used to deal with the more complex ethical issues raised in the course of fieldwork and the way I view the relationship between monograph writing and doing fieldwork as a whole.

Like other aspects of the method, the experience of fieldwork is subject of contention. For some scholars, it can be understood as ‘the product of a confrontation between the collective equations of at least two cultures’ (Pitt-Rivers 1992: 138). For the fieldworker working from this perspective, documenting a culture from the inside would involve placing aside any conflicting moral norms external to the field and prioritizing the principles and cultural meanings observed during fieldwork. Understanding another’s culture is possible, from this standpoint, as long as they are able to detach from their own cultural background and assume a different identity. Fieldwork is thus a process of self-discovery through ‘detachment’ and ‘projection’ (Pitt-Rivers 1992: 138).

This, of course, is a positivistic ideal. Even if the researcher is a group member, and has been a group member from before beginning fieldwork, it is unlikely that a single group member can claim a full understanding of a dynamic and changing process. Either because of the factors unique to a specific individual’s life, or the unexpected contextual factors that may emerge at any given time, it is also unlikely that there would be a single, a one-dimensional understanding of any given phenomenon.

The alternate approach assumes that this ideal is not achievable, recognizing instead the contribution of the individual researcher into a collective, multidirectional process of meaning construction (Conquergood 1991). My approach as a fieldworker was to accept that by assuming a role in the social interactions that take place in the setting, I was contributing to the process of assigning one of the multiple meanings that exist in this particular location. In the club, I was a student of Criminology learning to wait tables in a lap dancing club, who was at the same time responsible for reconstructing this experience after fieldwork, and a factor of increased competition. Before I worked at the club, there were more customers per waiter. Because of my presence, the other waiters’ were forced to share ta diminishing

number of customers with me. By this simple fact, the work environment at the club was different before and after I began fieldwork. In this way, the interactions that figure in this monograph may not have taken place if there had been one less waiter at the club.

For this reason, rather than assuming that I would eventually be able to write about the lap dancing club waiter as a general category, my approach was instead to embrace my underlying assumptions and preconceptions, both cultural and moral. This monograph talks about my own learning process. This is my fieldwork. My process is unique, both in terms of my relationship with and working alongside the other waiters. If another researcher had been present in the same venue, it is possible that they may not have experienced being rejected by the other waiters, or that they would have experienced less conflicts than encounters. The aspects of the club I found interesting and later decided to present here are the result of my own experience as a lower-middle class student, as an individual with prior experience in the hospitality industry, as an occasional customer socialized into the business by my own social circle and as a left-leaning community organizer who, in the past, had witnessed a murder up close.

It should also be noted that this approach to doing an ethnography prioritizes collaboration and gives more prominence to some group members, while others were only present in the background. This is very important and I have dedicated considerable effort to making this aspect clearly evident in the way the ethnography is written. During my presence in the club, I had more contact with some waiters, either because of our similar age groups or personalities, while I was unable to build rapport with other waiters. This meant that I would often find myself collaborating with certain waiters and that I would rarely have this experience with other waiters. Similarly, while part of my job involved negotiating constantly with the dancers, I often found that some dancers would avoid working with me,

while others would approach me frequently to ask me if there were any interested customers. Together, these two factors shaped my experience. The account reconstructed in this monograph reflects a perspective of the club that is the result of the participation of the social circle I built during the three month period of fieldwork.

Similarly, the final monograph is the result of a collaborative process that developed during the writing stage. Given the circumstances of the programme, and my very unique mobility scheme, I was able to collaborate with some members of my supervisory group more, while my relationship with others was more distant. As a result, this final monograph is the result of the influence of the scholarly input of different supervisors at different stages. As the experience was reconstructed retrospectively, the views of other subjectivities often pushed for a scale of priorities that met the canons of the discipline, but did not necessarily follow the highlights of my experience.

While a more positivistic approach to fieldwork would see this experience as an attempt at reconciling two different, opposing identities, the phenomenological approach I have taken recognizes the input of different stakeholders at different stages of the process. Rather than assuming the position of a naïve observer, the approach here is to be forthcoming about my own place in the context of the social relationships that exist in the club. This is evident, for example, in how I begin the discussion.

When I speak of the *padrino* (godfather) figure in the club, my starting point is the frequency with which I hear the term, as well as the way the use of this term clashes with my own, conventional understanding of the term. This is not the position of an impartial observer. In drawing attention to this word during the fieldwork, and then later writing about it, I am shaping the way I portray the social relationships that exist in the club. Furthermore,

this is not something that the other waiters were conscious of, but something a term that they simply used to refer to their customers.

Had I not been a Spanish-speaking Latin American working in the club, this linguistic difference may not have been given any significance. As a Latin American, I was aware of the importance of the relationships of reciprocity that this term described. In this way, the prominence given to the term is the result of the interplay between two instances of meaning production: the fieldwork experience and the process by which this experience is reassembled into a cogent discourse through the act of writing the monograph. In both of these instances, my role is not of a waiter, but of a student who is learning to be a waiter, who is also trying to make sense of club experience.

In other words, my experience in the field was, invariantly, shaped by my own personal affinities, fears and moral limits. Together, all of these factors had a significant influence in the way I experienced the field and then, afterwards, I reported on this experience. Rather than deciding what should be of interest beforehand, by a theoretical interest, the starting point of my study was the fieldwork experience itself. To give another example, one of the most troubling and challenging decisions that had to be made during the early stages of the study involved shifting the focus away from the dancers and their customers. Initially, I resisted this shift, but after a reflexion on my own position and the possibilities of studying the club's customers, I reformulated my approach. My approach was to use my own gender as leverage. After all, what better position to study the Mexican men that patronize these clubs than from the standpoint of a Mexican man. Working as a waiter, I could very well have unlimited access to the customers' tables, talk to them directly and even influence their behaviours.

During this time my supervisors pressed for more information about the dancers. Perhaps informed by the Anglo-American approach, it seemed impossible to conceive a discussion about the customer that ignored the dancers. In a way, the customers were interesting because of their relationship to the dancers. Even though there were multiple different employees working at the club at any given time, it was the customer-dancer unit that captured the imaginations of everyone I spoke to.

The majority of my first month working at the club was spent trying to find a balance between these two perspectives. My impulse was to talk to the customers, to look at the relationship between their approach to masculinity and the violent behaviours that seemed to permeate through Mexican society. My supervisory team, in contrast, pulled in a different direction. Just as the customer could not be conceived separate from the dancer, there seemed to be something wrong with a study about a lap dancing club that did not talk about the dancers.

For me, this whole approach was problematic. The problem was that, from the beginning, it was clear to me that waiters would tease and bully each other particularly when they attempted to talk to the dancers for a longer period of time than the time needed to arrange a transaction with a customer. When a waiter tried to talk to a dancer, other waiters would notice and bring this up the very next day, during group interactions. They tolerated interactions with certain dancers, but would often respond with banter when other dancers were approached. At the same time, the number of dancers that were willing to talk to waiters about topics not related to work was only a minority. And of this minority, the dancers that did respond would do it using sexual innuendos. To me, it seemed as if these dancers were aware of the constant teasing that took place among the waiting staff and played into it, teasing the waiter in front of the others.

This happened to me several times<sup>2</sup>. It made me feel uncomfortable and anxious. After a few times, I was not willing to play in to this dynamic. I dreaded being the object of teasing, which reminded me of the teasing that continuously takes place in Monterrey. In my own personal experience, men are constantly teasing each other. This is a feature of my own social circle and it is something that I have learned to identify in most social interactions in Monterrey. My friends called this type of banter *carro* (car), but I have also heard it called *carrilla* (short for *carretilla* or wheelbarrow), both words describing its incessant character -the analogy here being of getting carried away without having a say in deciding the direction. I dreaded the idea of being teased then, and felt that writing about it without having experienced this teasing would have basically negated the methodological approach I had adopted by that time.

Aside from my unwillingness to subject myself to the cruel banter with which Mexican men tease each other, I had other, more strategic reasons for my decision. From a gender perspective, a focus on this banter would have been profitable, but would have also diverted my interest away from the social relationships that constitute the club's social world. As I have said, this banter is not something unique to the club. I have experienced this type of relationship in my work, academic and personal life. If I chose to insist on engaging with the dancers, I would not only be breaking with club workplace norms and be forcing a situation that would not have occurred otherwise, but I would also be abandoning my own methodological approach and be subjecting myself to a type of mistreatment that

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<sup>2</sup> I have included a description of how this plays out in the club in the text of the thesis.



made me very uncomfortable. I knew I would become angry as I would often do in my own, personal, social interactions and this had the potential of jeopardizing the project.

Following the example set by Cybriwsky (2011), I decided to prioritize the method in order to avoid any involvement in situations I did not feel comfortable with. My personal limit was to avoid participation in anything that would be difficult to talk about at a later point. The approach to ethnography I had espoused prioritized honesty and transparency and I felt the only way I could ensure I would adhere to them would be by avoiding this line of work. In this way, even though the experience of doing an ethnography at *Marbella's* was ethically, emotionally and physically straining, I managed to keep going without becoming too emotionally involved. To me, this was particularly important because of the sexual nature of the interactions at the club, the lack of limits as to the amount of alcohol that could be consumed by any given customer, the lack of security personnel, and the pressure all of these circumstances placed on the waiting staff.

## **POSITIONALITY**

Initially, I did not plan to engage directly with any of the debates surrounding the politics of social research. However, as the experience of doing fieldwork began to take shape, it became increasingly clear that I needed to reflect on my role and to be forthcoming about my position as a fieldworker, particularly because of my decision to keep my motives and true identity away from my co-workers. At first, the reason for concealing my identity as a PhD student, political activist, ex-government employee and community organizer, was about safety. I knew nothing about the people working at the club, felt there was a multitude of illegal activities that could be taking place at the venue and did not know have a clear sense of the risks of disclosing my personal information. Having been a victim of two

muggings and a witness of a murder in the past, my perception of Monterrey and its inner-city districts was tainted by a sense of vulnerability. Additionally, being that I am a Spanish-speaking, heterosexual man who had patronised these businesses in the past, I was well aware of the lack of security personnel in these spaces.

However, one of the factors that had a determining influence in shaping my experience of club interactions was my own physical appearance. In my opinion, the key here was the way I styled my hair. My appearance was a reason for reactions from customers and employees alike. Having a shaved head and facial hair on my chin was enough for people to approach me and later realize they had mistaken me for someone else. On several occasions, after I began working at the club, there were employees who would approach to ask if we had met before. Apparently, someone that looked very much like me had been or was working in a nearby club and I had to dedicate considerable effort to prove that this was not me.

To me, it felt as if I had always worked in the business. I was a familiar face and, rather than feeling any sort of privilege, I often felt I was being punished for someone else's mistakes. Despite not being an employee or a member of the group, I found that I was afforded a degree of trust I was not comfortable with. Retrospectively, I am now convinced that my experience would have been better if I had been able to identify myself as an outsider.

In contrast, I found it difficult to feel at ease in the club and in the district. I often felt intimidated by the neighbourhood and the venue. The whole ensemble reminded me of the many articles I had read about these clubs. The many descriptions of how the attacks had taken place were fresh in my memory. I knew these violent incidents to unique in that they

often targeted the same clubs over and over. I was afraid and would often be too cautious in how I approached certain customers and would try to keep my distance from the police, particularly having witnessed their visits to claim courtesy services from the dancers.

In summary, my place and role at the club was defined by my appearance, my fear of the club and the neighbourhood because of my knowledge of the attacks, and my experience as a witness of a murder and a victim of two muggings. When customers reacted aggressively to my presence, I would keep my distance and avoid adding any other provocations. When other waiters asked me to help them steal from a customer, I tried to play a peripheral role. During the time I spent at the club, I often reflected on my role and my place in the social hierarchy.

### **REFLEXIVITY**

As a method of social research, ethnography has been the object of multiple critiques questioning its role as part of the colonial administration of territories (Asad 1975; Conquergood 1991; Cook and Crang 1995; Pitt-Rivers 1992). These debates have brought the tensions that exist within the process of knowledge acquisition to the fore (Conquergood 1991), raising questions about the power imbalances that exist between observer and observed. Additional to this, scholars have raised questions about the validity of sanitized reconstructions or portrayals of the Other that exclude any mention of the researcher's responsibility in producing the interactions and relationships described in the monograph (Conquergood 1991). In particular, it has been noted that a balanced account of the fieldwork experience should include the researcher's own emotional processes and a reflection on how the researchers involvement affects the outcome of the study.

In this thesis, I have made every effort to apply these ideas to both to the fieldwork experience (through the fieldnotes) and in the way I reconstituted that experience in writing. This is particularly evident in the way I talk about the animosity my presence evokes among my co-workers who find themselves competing with an additional waiter to make ends meet. In the passages where I talk about the competition over tipping customers and tables, I have tried to be as forthcoming as possible about my emotional response. When, at the beginning, I would find myself on the receiving end of the other waiters' attention, and feel annoyed or angry, my routine was to return home and record my feelings about that particular day at work. This is the context of the many passages I have included in this manuscript where I describe how I was approached by other waiters, offered assistance, and then find myself in an uncomfortable situation after having accepted their help.

This is the same approach I take to describe the multiple mini-lessons I would receive as we stood around while waiting for the arrival of more customers. These lessons were disguised as stories about how they did things or how a certain customer had been specially profitable. Sometimes, these exchanges would be short-lived, but often they would last for several minutes, with waiters sharing details on how they approached an interaction with a certain customer. Frequently, they pointed to instances of interactions with specific dancers, particularly the dancers who were known to consume alcohol with their customers. On these occasions they would comment on how they felt comfortable working with this or that dancer, how they found her particularly able to hold her drink and they would mention how much money they would make because of her willingness to perform certain favours or because she was able to drink faster than other dancers.

On these occasions, I was happy, both to receive positive attention, information and to be able to build rapport with my new co-workers. It was during this time that I was willing

to share everything with them. I accepted their invitation to share the cost of buying three kilos of limes on a daily basis in a nearby street-market. I did this despite being told by other waiters to avoid these schemes as these waiters tended to take advantage of such opportunities. But at that time I felt upbeat. It was easy for me to give a little extra – after all, sharing or giving was a way of reducing the tension.

Frequently, I would buy peanuts, crisps, large bottles of water or pop and would share it with everyone around me. At night, once we had been working for several hours, I would buy anything that was offered to me. I bought burritos, energy drinks and pastries, all with the goal of having a moment to share with my co-workers. Nine weeks later, my experience had changed completely. Most of the attention I received was negative as I had become the target of their frustrations because of increased waiter-on-waiter competition. By then, my attitude had also changed. I had stopped sharing the cost of the limes and would also refuse any form of gift. I had learned to suppress the need to pay things back if I was given something like food, would not share my own food unless I was asked directly to do it by someone and would eat by myself.

On their end, things had also changed. Where before they would have approached to teach me something, now they would avoid me. Often, some would try to take over the few customers that would tip. Frequently, they would take the drinks from my customers, placing me in the difficult situation of having to confront them.

For me, working as a waiter in this lap dancing club was nothing like the experience of being a waiter in a restaurant. Initially, I thought that the waiters would have developed a sense of camaraderie because of the hardships involved in the work. I hoped that they would become my personal friends and that we could develop together a way to lower the financial

strain of working at the club. At the same time, I also wanted to be perceived as being a little different. I had convinced myself that being a researcher meant that I would not fit in at first, that rapport building was something that happened at the beginning and that things would only get progressively better until the end of my days in the field. I was mistaken and, perhaps, a little deceived by the experiences of other ethnographers. I thought I would be different and gradually increase the risk of ‘going native’. Instead, I found that my experience worked in the opposite direction.

In his discussion on the role of the personal factors of the fieldworker in the field experience, Pitt-Rivers (1992) explains that ethnographic ‘fieldwork is an intensely personal and intuitive affair’ (Pitt-Rivers 1992: 136), a personal endeavour driven by the individual’s own social standing and perspectives on their own social problems. It is an experience in which fieldworkers often find out ‘more about themselves than about the people they study’ (Pitt-Rivers 1992: 136-137). In my case, this ethnography was particularly challenging because it was about myself as much as it was about my co-workers. In the course of my fieldwork, I was confronted multiple times. During the last weeks of fieldwork, it seemed as if the conflicts between waiters would inevitably detonate and that a full-blown fist-fight would happen at any moment. For me, fieldwork was messy, nothing like the schematic ‘travel diary’ accounts I had read to prepare for the project.

## **WRITING THE MONOGRAPH**

One of the key topics of discussion in this methods section pertains to the way the ethnography worked in practice, both in terms of what it entailed for me as a fieldworker, as well as in terms of how this carried to the later experience of writing the report. Ethnography is both a method of doing fieldwork and a manner of writing the final monograph

(Conquergood 1991: 179; Borneman and Hammoudi 2009: 2). For me, in both of these aspects, the process was anything but linear. Instead, there was a continuous need to analyse and re-work the data in different ways at different stages of the study. In the writing stage, this meant that many chapters were drafted and re-drafted many times over, and that the final manuscript was submitted in multiple versions over the course of several years.

In part, the need to rewrite each draft stemmed from the difficulty of finding the right balance between my intended audience and the academic requirements needed to pass the evaluations of the final monograph. On the one hand, I needed to meet the minimum requirements for a degree and produce a document that would be recognized by other academics as the product of serious scholarship. On the other hand, I often found myself writing in a style that was far from academic. The truth is that I had other people in mind when I reconstructed my experience. Having worked as a journalist, I felt compelled to be as descriptive as possible. I thought that the more descriptive the style, the more likely would be to attract their attention. I wanted my work to appeal to Mexican journalists, to convince them that my experience in the club was nothing like the stories they were producing. From the beginning, my ultimate goal was to reach a wider audience in Mexico and, more frequently than not, I would forget about the argument that was needed in order to be allowed to proceed on to the defence.

It was this struggle that produced entire sections on the phenomenology of walking into a dark club, of feeling fear and anxiety because of the potential violence, but in finally seeing that nothing happened. I wrote many lines on the hardship of doing fieldwork, about the stress of having to enforce club norms with nothing but my own body, and the worry that customers would become aggressive, especially if they had been drinking heavily. After all,

the club had no rule in place to regulate the way customers consumed alcohol and they would sometimes drink until they passed out at their table.

In the end, the final manuscript did not include many of these passages. As it turns out, the process of reconstructing the fieldwork is not the outcome of an individual endeavour. Doing fieldwork is a collective process and, its counterpart is not different in this regard. Like fieldwork, the process of writing the monograph is the result of the collaboration of multiple voices, some of which are not always explicit about their role. In the case of this manuscript, my natural impulse often predominated over the first drafts, but then this was restrained in order to ensure that the argumentation was not left aside. As a result, and because of the need to comply with the canons of the discipline, this final draft is characteristically different from the its earlier versions. As such, it should be judged with caution.

#### **METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THINKING OF FIELDWORK AS A COLLABORATIVE PROCESS**

Related to the factors that interacted to give the manuscript its final form, it is also important to expand on the circumstances that informed my decision to conceal my identity from my respondents and the way this had a role in the final manuscript. In particular, I want to compare the type of relationships that this decision produced during fieldwork and how I tried to reshape this relationship through the act of writing. As I have stated, in this thesis I concealed my identity during the entirety of my presence at the club. In doing so, I effectively deprived all of my co-workers the possibility of exercising their agency. In this single act, I denied everyone the possibility of opting out from participating in this study.



In the next section I will talk a bit more about my reasons, but for now it should suffice to say that I considered several factors in this decision. First of all, my utmost priority was to bring clarity to the activities that take place in these venues and dismiss some of the erroneous assumptions that imagined these spaces as locations of human trafficking and drug sales. While I was not certain of any of this, I knew that more evidence was necessary and I wanted to contribute with the sort of descriptive detail that only an ethnography was able to provide. My intentions, however, did not eliminate the possibility that any of these activities were actually taking place, so I decided to be careful and ensure the safety of both myself and my co-workers.

While my decision to keep my identity a secret was fundamental in how my fieldwork experience played out, during the writing stage it was my decision to participate in the majority of group-member activities what defined the process. The point I want to make here is that the methodological approach taken in this thesis effectively inverts the terms of the relationship that develops between the researcher and the host community. When during fieldwork my true intentions were concealed, I was a part of every routine involved in working as a waiter at the club. As a result, when the writing stage began, and developed a system of ensuring anonymity, I was the only one to bear any sort of responsibility for our behaviour at the bar. This is not to say that that participation in group activities redresses the negative effects of my decision to conceal my identity, but that the approach taken here has the potential of shifting the balance of power between researcher and host community, particularly in the context of criminological research.

Let me explain. During the three months I spent in the field, only a few people, mainly my supervisors and gatekeeper, were aware of my role. This is the reason why my relationship with my co-workers and customers was defined by my advantage, so to speak.

To everyone, I was a waiter and a university student and they knew nothing about this project. This, of course, shaped their attitudes towards me, as the irony of teaching a university student did not escaped them. Little by little, I was taught how to serve drinks and how to steal them, how to give change and how to cheat customers from their money. In all of these activities I participated and helped as much as I could.

Given that the goal of the club is to ensure that every customer maximizes their spending, and that the most expensive service is the sale of sexual favours, my everyday consisted of promoting prostitution and arranging the terms of the exchange for the dancers and customers, the balance of power in the monograph is different. If anyone is responsible for these activities it is me, while the club and the other waiters are protected by their anonymity. If, instead, I had been a detached observer, this would not have been the case and I would have become an informant.

### **COVERT RESEARCH**

In the tradition of the many observational studies investigating the effect of interactional cues on tipping behaviours (Stier and Hall 1984) and the studies on lap dancing club customers and bouncers (Brewster 2003; Erickson and Tewksbury 2000; DeMichele and Tewksbury 2004), in this project I chose to not reveal my identity as a researcher to the other employees or to the customers at the club. I am not alone in choosing to do my ethnography in this manner. Previous scholarly work on lap dancing has demonstrated that lap dancing is a stigmatized activity (Bradley 2007; Thompson, Harred and Burks 2003; Maticka-Tyndale, Lewis and Clark 2008; Wesely 2003; Mavin and Grandy 2013) and authors such as Brewster (2003: 227) have argued in favour of covert techniques, suggesting that they are ‘viable and necessary’ in situations where participants ‘require autonomy and secrecy’. This conclusion

is supported by the experiences reported by scholars who have chosen to undergo their research openly (Bradley 2007; Brooks 2010; Montemurro, *et al.*, 2003; Montemurro 2001; Murphy 2003; Spivey 2005; Thompson, *et al.*, 2003). In these cases there have been reports of difficulties with fieldwork in order to remain unobtrusive (Montemurro, Bloom and Madell 2003) or having access restricted to certain areas (Thompson, *et al.*, 2003). Other authors have simply refrained from interviewing customers (Murphy 2003) to avoid antagonizing their potential respondents. Because patrons loathe the possibility of being exposed or disclosing their activities to the public (Erickson and Tewksbury 2000), this research follows the precedent set by other empirical work (Frank 2005) and takes a covert approach to fieldwork. I disclosed the purpose of research to my gatekeeper, a friend who was distantly acquainted to the club's manager but did not inform other participants in the setting. Observation was covert, a decision taken based on the challenges and limitations (Li 2008) outlined by previous authors (Erickson and Tewksbury 2000) and in order to ensure that the potential involvement in any illegal activities of my participants would not be an obstacle to my research (Sallaz 2002).

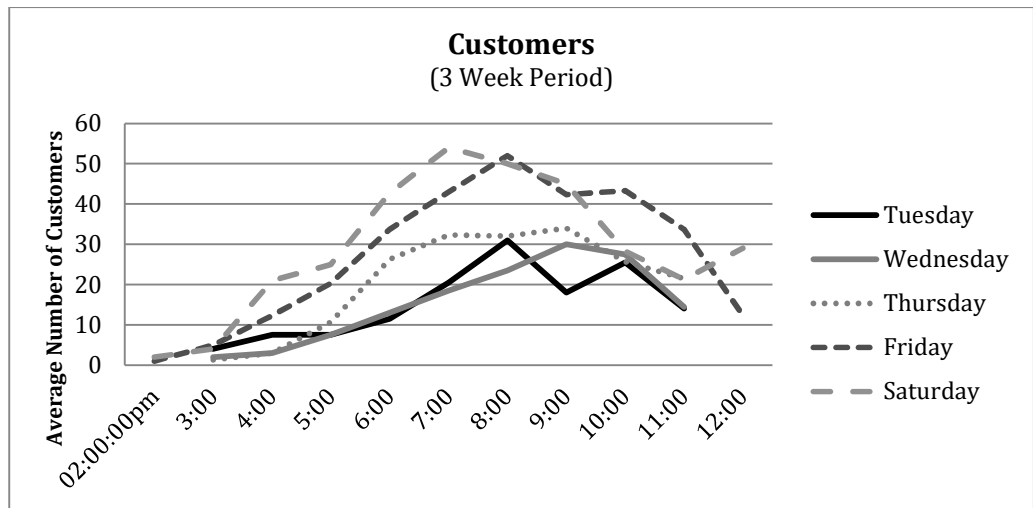
To ensure that the people I worked with remained anonymous throughout the thesis, I have taken systematic steps to eliminate all unnecessary identifying markers and all personal information appearing in the fieldnotes. This included editing and deleting all names from the fieldnotes during transcription, keeping the name list confidential and filed away in my encrypted hard drive. All employees at *Marbella's*, were given a pseudonym that was chosen randomly from an internet list of the 100 most popular names in Mexico in 2014. Maintaining my co-workers' real names confidential in every draft submitted to revision, and avoiding all reference to the club or its personnel in all of my personal conversations about the project.

Additional to this, I keep the precise location of the venue ambiguous. Even though the decision to reveal the city where the club is located was made with the goal of highlighting the intensity of the relationship between the city's clubs and the drug violence, every effort was made to keep the identity of the club anonymous. Considering that the clubs have experienced a period of hardship and reduced patrons, this ambiguity makes it impossible, even for a local, to identify the precise location of the club. I have also taken steps to avoid describing any identifying markers or discussing any of the internal features of the club that would give clues as to the location. In other words, I have taken additional steps to identify identity data as sensitive and I have ensured to the best of my abilities that it is maintained private.

I also paid special attention to ensure that the information collected during the time I worked at the club remained protected from unauthorized access by keeping all the recordings and fieldnotes under lock. During fieldwork, the voice recorder was kept locked away in my personal luggage. To ensure confidentiality and avoid future misinterpretations during translation, recordings were made in English. In this way, I ensured both that no information was lost during a future translation and that, in the event any one in my host family were to have access to the recorder, they would not be able to understand the content of the recording. To prepare for the event that the luggage may be stolen, I downloaded the digital audio files once a week and transferred them into a password protected hard-disk. This hard disk was kept separately, hidden away inside an empty soap bag tucked away at the back of a cabinet in the laundry area of the house. During the entire process, the electronic text files were kept in duplicate, with one copy in my personal computer and another in an encrypted file on the separate hard-drive.

## FIELDNOTES

My shift at *Marbella's* began at 13:30 and ended at midnight from Tuesday to Thursday. On weekends, the shift began an hour earlier and finished an hour later. Friday and Saturday, my day at work began at 12:30 and ended at 01:00. The working hours of the club are described in the figure below, which was produced by performing a headcount every day during a three-week period. As the diagram shows, the club's activity peaked on Friday and Saturday and was at its lowest on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.



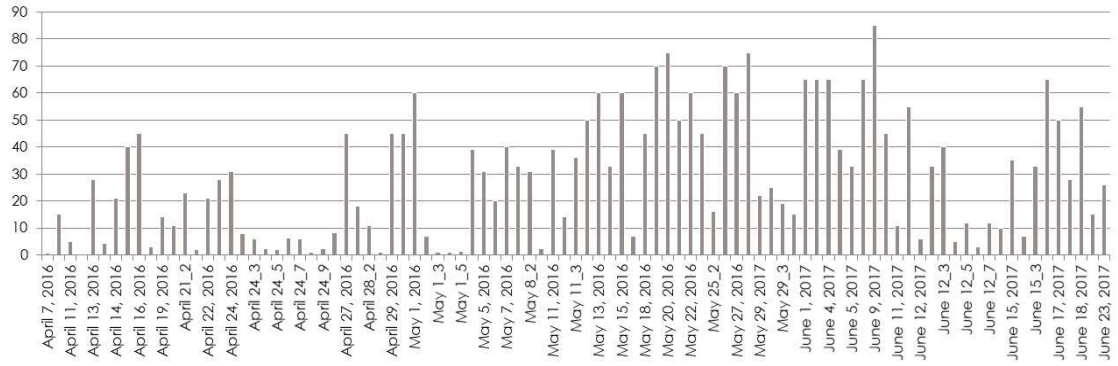
**Figure 3** Club daily activity. Self-elaboration.

Except from the two days two days I did not go to work (Thursday week 8 and Saturday week 10), days in which I made exploratory visits to nearby clubs in order to compare the activities and relationships that took place at *Marbella's* with the types of interactions in these other venues, I generated at least one audio file for every day of fieldwork. The profile and structure of the fieldnotes is illustrated in Figure Four below. In this frequency table, in which the vertical axis measures minutes of recording time and the horizontal axis is each individual file, the shortest recordings are under a minute and the longest recordings are over

80 minutes in length. In total, there were 93 individual files, with a combined duration of 43.8 hours (2,628 minutes).

In order to elicit the descriptions recorded in the field note audios, I took notes on the back of the order slips, usually the last slips in the 50 page pad we were given every two days. For any given shift, the notes for any given night would consist of one or two 6cm by 10cm pieces of paper. Before finishing a pad, I would ask for a replacement pad and keep the one containing my fieldnotes in my person until I arrived home. The notes themselves consisted of a list of words, written in English, and nicknames. To record relevant moments or incidents, I would describe the time of day or the place in the club by using words such as: front door, queue, back, storage, upstairs. Other keywords were colour and unique piece of clothing item to describe customers, and number of drinks to code for intoxication. Words like fight, change, music, or annoying were used to describe behaviours or situations. Once transcribed, these paper notes were destroyed and disposed of in a trashcan located near the bus stop on my way to work.

In general, there were two moments of data collection during a work shift, from arrival to 15:00 and from that time until closing. During the first part of the shift, most of the data collected was on interactions among the staff. These included conversations among waiters, and sometimes conversations between other waiters and myself. Most of the conversations referred to the highlights of the previous shift or to soccer games watched on the TV screens. The other type of data collected was on visible behavioural interactions among waiters, customers, waiters and customers, and dancers-waiters, and customers.



**Figure 4** Sequence and duration of field recording (in minutes). Self-elaboration.

Raw notes were then used to construct dictated tapes the morning after the shift. Care was taken to maintain a chronological structure based on the events written down on the notes. When it was not possible to recall the specifics of the events, the note was simply read out loud and a voice note made to mark this event as forgotten. In this way, the data collected has a logical structure: Each recording follows the sequence of highlights during the entire shift, from beginning to end. Once a week, depending on my schedule, I transferred the data to my hard drive and encrypted everything using Kleopatra pgp.

## **CODING**

Following a grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1994), the analysis involved systematically building over each preceding layer of data in an iterative process of pattern identification and theorization (Brewster and Wills 2013: 198). My approach to this process of inductive analysis was not informed exclusively by the data, but was also based on the ideas derived from a thematic reading list and exchanges with colleagues through presentations in conferences. The purpose of each conference presentation was to showcase the progress made up to that point in organizing the different patterns that were progressively emerging from the analysis of fieldnotes. The information

presented in each one of the four conferences had an empirical and a theoretical component. In the first part, I presented the ideas that were emerging through the codes and in the second part I argued why a certain theoretical approach was useful in making sense of these observations. In general, what can be seen from the titles for each presentation is that the focus of the study remained firm, with the interest fixed on the customer-waiter relationship as it is shaped by the tipping norm. What changed progressively was the theoretical approach used to frame this relationship.

Coding was done through the use of the qualitative analysis software, NVivo. By using this software, I was able to make word queries faster and easier, and to build diagrams that reflect these words in context. Coding in NVivo involves entering each transcription text file individually, by opening a new 'Document' for each file, naming it, then entering the block of text by copying and pasting. To code each transcribed field note recording entry, I used the in-text method, which involved highlighting the passage of interest, right clicking on the highlighted text, and selecting the 'code' option from the drop-down menu. In the emergent window, there is a list of codes previously entered and a button to add a new code, in case the passage cannot be classified in the previous codes, which in the software are called 'nodes'. Once the task of coding the transcribed fieldnotes had come to an end, it became apparent that this coding list simply indexed the different themes in the fieldnotes. This initiated a process of theoretical inquiry, with a particular focus on symbolic interactionism (Goffman 1956; Stryker 2006) and masculinity theory (Messerschmidt 2016), through which the codes were then re-organized.

In the end, this process led to the development of a second coding list. Compared with the previous themes, these codes are more inclusive and reflect a move away from the literature on homosociality and masculinities. While the emphasis remains on the customer-



waiter interaction, this coding list includes items describing instances of workplace deviance, such as stealing, as well as references to the negotiation that takes place between waiters, customers and dancers. Both of these codes are important components of the final manuscript. The first one is part of Chapter Three and Four, and the second one is key to Chapter Five.

The process of code development and refinement continued until the final coding list, which was more schematic and synthetic, was developed by May 2018 for an internal presentation to Criminology students in Utrecht University. This is the coding list that led to the final conclusions presented in the chapters that follow. One of the most important aspects of these first coding schemes is the centrality of the waiter, whose two key characteristics are summarized with two Spanish words: *Trato*, which refers to service quality, and *Picudear*, which describes the power negotiation that takes place between the customer and the waiter.

### **A FIRST GLANCE INTO THE CLUB: *MARBELLA'S***

During the first part of any given day at *Marbella's*, the majority of the people loitering around the club are members of the waiting staff. In the 30 minute period of time that begins the moment the door opens and ends with the arrival of the bartender and the DJs begin to walk in, the only people in the club are the waiters. This is the time when every waiter prepares the tables, arranging them in the way the customers will find them later, when the club finally opens for business.

Arranging the chairs was the activity that marked the waiters' daily cycle. Every day, two hours before opening, we would begin our shift by setting up the chairs, wiping down the tables, and dressing up in our uniforms. Every night, we would end our day at the club

by picking up and stacking all the tables and chairs against the wall. This was a physically intensive activity, which required speed given that we had to do it as fast as possible in order to catch the last bus of the day. It also required skill to build the stack of chairs with the slight angle that kept it from toppling over completely. This is the first thing I learned. I had to take special care when stacking chairs on top of each other, as they could topple over because they were not actually stackable. It has a question of using the difference in height between the legs and backs to build the angle of the stack in the direction of the wall. We did this every day in order to make room for cleaning the floor. The next day, we would undo our work, place them in their original place, and proceeded to clean the tabletops, which were sometimes stuck together because of the spilled beer residues left over from the night before. There were also salt grains and lime juice residue, which, combined with the sticky beer that had dried up from the night before, turned into a gelatinous coagulated slime that covered seat rests, table and chair legs. Only after this was finished, and after we had made sure to remove the lime slices from the stages, picked up all the crumpled up white paper napkins and empty bottles that were left on the floor from the night before, we paused for lunch.

After lunch, all waiters stepped into the customer washrooms to finish dressing up for work. It was usually the steward<sup>3</sup> who made the informal call to line up. Taking our cue from the loud sound of metal coming from the action of closing the latch and safety bolt, each waiter gradually made his way towards the back toilet area. In total there were about 10 waiters, including *talacheros* (stewards or busboys). Without going into specifics, their ages

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<sup>3</sup> Other employees which have not been considered in the lap dancing literature in the past include: the stewards and the *tiquetero* or ticket seller. The stewards are the employees whose sole task involves cleaning up the tables and bar floor, although sometimes they try to wait tables or run errands in order to increase their income. The *tiquetero* is the employee responsible for controlling access to the private area and booths. He takes payment for time in the booths and keeps track of the dancers and customers in the booths. It is this person who sells condoms as requested by the dancers, who arrange with their customers the services they are willing to provide and the price for each service.

ranged from retirement age to early twenties. All of us, without exception, took turns to wash and dress up in front of the bathroom mirror.

Some waiters, like Gustavo and Pedro<sup>4</sup>, stripped down to their undershirt after finishing with the tables and chairs in order to wash down their upper bodies with soap and water. Minutes earlier they had scattered into the streets in search of something to eat, only to return drenched in sweat. The routine involved a considerable amount of time staring at their own reflection in the mirrors. There, they rinsed off their hair, washed their faces, and rinsed off under their armpits. To top it all off, they sprayed themselves and their clothes with as much aerosol deodorant as possible, before finally buttoning up their shirts. Hair slicked back with a heavy coat of hair gel and a shirt tucked into the trousers, they took it in turns to arrange their shirt collars in front of the mirror. Most did not actually do the knot for their necktie themselves, but would just slip a pre-tied necktie over their heads and under their collars.

## **THE OTHER EMPLOYEES**

After the first 30 minutes, the other employees would begin their own routines, progressively adding another layer of activity to an already lively moment. The first one to arrive and the first one to begin working was the doorman, whose routine included cleaning the sidewalk in front of the bar. Using a broom and dustpan, he walked back and forth sweeping up any cigarette butts and assorted plastic cups and trash that had accumulated from the night before. Behind the wooden bar, the bartender would be busy emptying

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<sup>4</sup> Throughout this thesis, I will gradually introduce the names of the waiters who work at *Marbella's*. I have decided to talk about them as necessary, rather than to introduce them all at once, in order to preserve their anonymity.

transferring glass bottles from their brown cardboard packaging into large white, waist-high rectangular plastic bins or coolers. Some bins were full of ice chunks and brown and green glass bottles; others with smaller red and silver aluminium cans. In a country where each beer company markets their product by varying the packaging, bottles and cans become colourful adverts for types of beer and tabletops become polychromatic displays of glass and aluminium cans.

Upstairs, the few dancers that had arrived before opening hours used this time to prepare themselves for their onstage performances. Although they had their own, private dressing room, located on a second story, I knew this included a hot shower because on several occasions I was asked to climb up to the roof of the club, and turn on the water heater after a dancer had complained that there was no hot water in the shower. On the rare occasion that I had an opportunity to visit the dancer dressing room, I had seen how some would simply use this time to relax and talk, either on the phone or with the other dancers.

Once the waiters finished setting up the tables and laying out the table services, it was up to the DJ to announce the beginning of the spectacle. This was not a formal announcement, which in the manner of theatre would involve making three calls before the beginning of a play. Instead, at *Marbella's* the signs were more subtle and only noticeable to the employees. For example, the first indication that the second part of the shift was about to begin was the sound of the latch of the front door locking. The second sign was a little less subtle. Shortly after the metal door was locked with a loud clanking of the latch hitting against a metal stop, the DJ would turn up the volume to the point that normal conversation was impossible. In order to be able to talk to someone at that volume level it was necessary to get close to their ear for them to be able to hear. Then, in the manner of a curtain that distinguished two acts in a play, was a loud burst of music coming from the black

loudspeakers distributed around the place. Almost in sequence, immediately afterwards, the main light switch would be flicked to the off position, leaving only one last remaining source of yellow light from the single bulb positioned over the till. Using a broomstick, the man at the till would turn this off and finally, perhaps taking their cue from the music, the dancers would emerge from the stairwell leading to the dressing room.

### **THE WAITERS IN CONTEXT**

To provide the most detailed description of the setting possible, which can capture the relative prominence the waiters hold in relation to the dancers, all the while maintaining a coherent narrative, I begin with an anecdote. This anecdote is derived from my own first-hand experience of being at the club. It describes an incident that took place nearing the end of the first week I spent in the field, during the time I struggled the most with my newly acquired identity.

It was during the beginning of my second day at work when the manager approached the waiters as they were beginning to queue. The queue is formed by the entire waiting staff standing in a single file, with their backs to the wall, that is reminiscent of a police line-up from the seating area. Much in the same way people in the UK queue for the bus, waiters wait their turn to be assigned to a customer in the queue. As soon as a new customer arrives through the door, even before the waiters are able to see who it is, they begin looking around at each other, calling out their right to take the customer. Once the waiter standing at the head of the queue finally walks away with the arriving customer, the next waiter in line moves up. After serving the order, the waiter who just performed the table service returns to the queue to join the others waiting for their turn, only this time instead of taking the place he held before, he takes a new place at the end of the queue. In this way, without the

customers' knowledge, waters are automatically assigned to an arriving customer simply by the place they hold in the queue.

He had a thick stack of business card-sized papers in one hand. He simply stopped in front of us and handed the promotional leaflets to one of the men. At that point, I was not aware that interactions between bar managers and the waiting staff at *Marbella's* were rare and failed to see that this was an event that I would not experience again in the future. Nonetheless I took notes on this incident because it involved the management and my goal for the first week was to observe and learn from the employees.

Once the manager was immediately in front of me, the queue began to break up. Everyone shifted in their place so that the crowds began to gather around, forming a semi-circle around the head waiter and the manager. I wanted to take a closer look, so I began to consider volunteering my help for whatever they had in mind. I had a vague idea of what it was and this sparked my curiosity. From where I stood, the items in question appeared to be leaflets or promotional fliers arranged neatly into a stack. It was soon apparent to me that the manager's intention was to order someone to hand them out. At first, I assumed the intended target were the regular passers-by. Later, I learned that the preferred place was to distribute them to people walking in or out of the nearest metro station.

The manager did not have to ask for volunteers. Later, I learned from my more experienced co-workers that handing out fliers was one of the most dreaded activities among waiters and that, alongside cleaning the two large mirrors, it was to be avoided as much as possible. Leaving the club implied forgoing tips in exchange for doing a physical activity that entailed sweating under the midday sun without pay. If by chance I had opted to go out to *volantear* or to hand out flyers, I would have been singled out. Everyone knew this task

involved walking out again into the street under 40-degree weather after we had just finished cooling-off, instead of staying in the air-con and working the tables and volunteering would not only have not made any sense because of the physical labour involved, but because it meant that the waiter would have had to sacrifice his first tables of the day. More importantly, without the income earned from these first customers, working during the rest of the day would be practically impossible.

In good fortune, I hesitated and the situation resolved itself. Somebody pointed to someone else, or maybe someone said a name. The point is that soon everyone was looking in the direction of one of the older waiters. The older waiter simply took a step forward, stood in front of the group, and asked for the name of the last waiter to come in to work. An instruction followed: He had to go out into the street and hand them out at the nearby metro stations. I was curious to see the leaflet, so I approached the waiter who, just before leaving, had stopped near the area where most of the other waiters were hanging out, right between the two large oval stages, along the path leading directly from the front door to the stairwell, which is located at the very back of the bar.

### **NAVIGATING THE CLUB IN THE DARK**

Before leaving, the chosen waiter rushed to the back of the club. I watched as he stepped out of sight behind a white door without a door handle. He had walked into the storage room under the stairwell. He emerged in a plain-white t-shirt, having taken-off his work shirt in the room. He proceeded to make his way towards the main entrance, pausing briefly on his way out as he removed his apron, which he must have forgotten. He stood just past the wooden bar, about a metre away from where I stood at the queue, waiting for my turn to serve a customer.

The area where we stood was one of the key visual features of the club. It acted as a sort of foyer or lobby where people paused before fully committing to walking into the club. This area was used by arriving customers as a waiting area. They usually stood there for a few minutes waiting for their eyes to adjust to the darkness after being exposed to the bright light of the world outside, and before scouting with their eyes for the best place to sit. Right in the middle of this nearly empty area, there was a table with two chairs. Since I had the habit of leaning against the chairs located near the main entrance of the club, I was frequently in people's way, so anyone coming in or out would pass directly in front of me.

The queue usually formed in this foyer-like area, right between the wall, the awkwardly placed table, and the space between the small side stage and the main entrance. Sometimes, especially when I was the first one to finish dressing up in the uniform, I was the first one to pull up a chair away from the table and lean it against the wall. For the first thirty minutes of the shift, I sat there waiting for the other waiters to finally finish dressing up in their uniforms. Most of the time, I was the first one in line eagerly waiting for the beginning of the shift, I found this quite surprising because I felt physically drained by the work and yet, no matter how hard I tried, I generally managed to beat everyone else. I knew some of my co-workers had less hours of rest than me, either because their trip home from work was longer or because they had the habit of staying up and having a few drinks after work. Others, did not have to queue and were usually seen scrambling to serve the early birds: regular customers who had a habit of patronizing the club during the opening hours.

Returning to the anecdote, it is also worth mentioning that the place where the waiter had stored his work clothes, that small room under the stairwell located at the back, was actually hidden in plain sight. It was embedded in the stairwell, or rather, the stairwell wrapped around one side and the top of the small room. For the waiters, this was one of the



most important areas in the bar – this was the place where they stored their personal items, including their street clothing. Although it would not have been clearly visible at first glance to an incoming customer, it was large enough that instead of watching the routines on stage, some customers – and I was very intrigued by this – spent most of their time looking at other customers going up or walking down the steps. At times, it seemed as if some customers were more interested in the visits to the private area than the dancing around the pole. Conveniently for these customers, the stairwell was located at the back, between the two restrooms and an area dedicated to stacks of beer bottle cases piled on top of each other up to the ceiling. This was both the area most distant from the stage and where most of the club's tables were located.

My first impression of the club was that its layout resembled the traditional arrangement of a Mexican dining room. During my lifetime, I have visited many houses, and almost every one of them had a similar arrangement. At the centre, there is a large dining table, chairs neatly arranged around it, and a large armoire where valuable china, liquor bottles and cups were kept. At the club, instead of a central table, there was a large central oval stage. To the right and left of the centre stage, there were two smaller side stages. There were chairs all around the central stage, one customer to a chair. There was no armoire, of course, but a large wooden bar on one side with liquor bottles neatly arranged in the makeshift wooden shelving fixed to the back wall.

Standing at the main entrance and looking in, it appeared as if the chairs around the central stage were the only places where a customer could sit, but on the other side of the stage, there were many smaller four-person tables arranged between the smaller side stage on the right and the larger central stage. Each table had enough space for two people, but most had four chairs neatly tucked under each tabletop. Two of these chairs were always

arranged in such a way that they face away from the stage and thus had to be re-positioned in order to have a clear view of the show. On the other side, the other side stage (located on the left) shared a common wall with the bartender's station and the till. Way in the back, behind the till, there was a doorway towards a room lined from floor to ceiling in sky blue tile. This was the bathroom generally used by management and dancers. In order to walk into this space it was necessary to squeeze behind the cashier through the small opening left behind his body and the wall.

I wanted to see the leaflet, so I decided to approach as the waiter holding the flyers proceeded to take off his apron before walking out into the street. From my first days at the club I noticed that most waiters took off the most obvious symbols of their work before going on errands or stepping outside. This was no exception. He was going to walk out with his black slacks and his own t-shirt but realized he had forgotten to take his apron off and stopped himself right before walking out of the door. I asked what he was doing, and he handed one of the fliers to me. Once I had one of the leaflets in my hands, I was able to see the design in more detail. The leaflet had a large picture on the front and a small map on the back. In the front of each one of these small, credit card-sized cardboard leaflets, there was a full-body silhouette of the naked body of a woman holding onto a pole printed in black ink against a white background. The figure's waist-long hair dangled as she looked straight up, revealing the exact shape of her facial features in the silhouette. I could see the outline of her nose, chin, and her dangling hair. She stood in a way that seemed unnatural; she was leaning too far back to be able to remain standing without assistance. This suggested that the support for most the weight of her body came from wrapping an arm and a leg around what obviously represented a pole. Because it was clear that most of the weight of her body was supported by that pole, the figure was able to lean so far back that her long hair draped down

to her waist. If the image had been a picture it would have been an action shot, either taken as she attempted to climb or had finished climbing. Next to the image, there was a name, address and reference to the lap dancing services offered at the bar.

To me, the leaflet did not represent *Marbella's* in any way<sup>5</sup>. With its pristine white background, it had an air of formality rather than mystery or eroticism. White was one of the colours that was actually fully absent from the club's colour palette. At *Marbella's*, there were fluorescent yellows and greens, green sparkles, and occasional reds. These were the colours of the signage, one of the strobe lights, and the cloth used to upholster the sofas arranged against the front wall of the DJ booth.

However, the most prominent colour at *Marbella's* was black. Contrary to what the leaflet seemed to suggest, the chromatic theme at *Marbella's* is not white, but black. Black is everywhere at this club. The private areas are made from black panels on three sides, with a black curtain in the front. The chairs are black, the walls are black, and even the ceiling is black. Every table has a black trim and a black pedestal, and the chairs are covered in black vinyl. This colour is even present in the uniforms: each waiter wears black shoes, black slacks, and a black apron.

In much the same way, contrary to what the flyer seemed to suggest, the physical presence of a man, in the form of the waiting staff, is equally as important as the figure of a woman twirling around a pole. True, all of the customers are male, and the vast majority of the club's employees are also male. But most importantly, when a customer visits the bar it

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<sup>5</sup> In this thesis, I have chosen this fictitious name to preserve the club's anonymity.

is very unlikely that he may see a dancer straight away. If by any chance he had decided to visit the bar early in the day he may not even see a dancer or a routine that included a posture resembling the image on the leaflet. In fact, if the customer visits the bar during the first part of the day (after 2 o'clock and before 8 o'clock in the evening), the customer may find it difficult to find the few dancers among the many male employees loitering throughout the club. As the club opens for business, there are only three dancers in the entire building. It is not until two hours after the beginning of the shift that other dancers can be seen beginning to assemble and loiter at the back of the bar.

The club's stage shows are also starkly different from the on-stage routine appearing on the promotional leaflet. At *Marbella's*, dancers rarely perform pole routines, with the majority of dancers choosing to hold on to the pole to hold on to as they walk around the stage. In fact, the closest thing resembling a dance routine is a slow-paced rhythmic walk around the pole. In my opinion, this rhythmic swaying can be considered a dance only in its most rudimentary sense. During the earliest part of the shift, most dancers do this while holding on to the pole with alternating hands, shifting their weight in the opposite direction, and showing their lack of interest by staring blankly into the distance. For the few customers who visit the club during this time, it is unlikely that they will see a dancer fully undress. Most dancers reserved their routines for the later in the shift, particularly after 8 or 9 o'clock, but the more athletic pole-dancing was seldomly seen since it was performed exclusively by a handful of dancers.

At *Marbella's* it was the waiters who operated as the club's 'frontline ambassadors' (Whaley, *et al.*, 2019: 3) and not the club's dancers. At *Marbella's*, this was mainly because there is a near certainty that the first person to interact with a customer is not a dancer, but rather a male employee. In fact, the relationship between the customer or group of customers

and a single waiter is the result of an encounter that involves the entire waiting staff which more accurately resembles the coordinated assault with which eager salespeople surround a distracted passer-by in a street market. There are two constants during a customer's visit to the club: the waiter's presence at the customer's table-side and the waiter's role in customer-dancer negotiations.

The importance of the waiter's role at the club becomes evident from the moment a customer walks into the club. Therefore, I focused on the moment of a customer's arrival. This is the moment when customer and waiter begin a complex relationship that will continue throughout the customer's visit. First, it is important to note that waiters do not stand around leisurely around the club awaiting their next customer. Instead, it would be more appropriate to say that they lurk, concealing themselves among their surroundings. Either sitting or standing, they wait and watch while they hide in the dark. From their strategic position (most of them are partially hidden as they lean against the wall) they watch in anticipation, waiting for the moment a shadowy figure emerges through the door.

Waiters work on two cues announcing the arrival of a customer: the clanking noise made by the action of closing the metal door behind the customers and the bright flash of sunlight that fills the passageway for a split second each time the front door is opened. During the day, it is the sunlight that seeps in through the open door. At night, it is the light that seeps in from the outside, which is surprisingly brighter than the light inside the club. However, day or night, it is the metallic banging sound of doors opening, or slamming shut, the occasional rattle of glass bottles, which is the indisputable sign that a customer has entered the club. As soon as the customers emerge into the club, they will most likely find themselves surrounded by waiters. This is one of the first things they see, along with the figure of a dancer walking around the stage in the distance. In this way, the experience of

walking into the bar involves more than an interaction with multiple men. It entails walking right through the middle of their group all the while their presence is partially hidden by the darkness.

At this point I want to focus on the interplay between the waiters' behaviour and the club's lighting. During working hours, the club is in a near black-out condition. Outside of the rotating strobes and other dim light sources, the club is almost in complete darkness. And it is this darkness defines a fundamental part of the club's atmosphere: it is a windowless space, completely covered in matte black paint from floor to ceiling. These two factors, the black paint and the lack of natural light, work together to produce a space engulfed in almost complete darkness. This was true no matter the hour of the day, giving the space an eerie sense of timelessness. Whether it is night or day, the entirety of the club is immersed in a hazy darkness.

This atmosphere was created through the interplay of dim lighting, randomly placed and rotating spotlights, as well as the pervasive use of black paint over the walls, ceiling, chairs, tables, stages, and bar area. For a space of roughly 100 to 150 metres squared, the brightest sources of light were the small football-sized red and green rotating strobe light affixed to the ceiling above the stage, television screens, and the neon lights behind the bartender. Once the service lights were switched off and the lime lights switched on at the beginning of the shift, each source of light became a light beacon in a sea of darkness. Once this happened, and the darkness engulfed the space between the television screens, it was impossible to see from one end of the bar to the other.

Walking into the club was particularly problematic for customers and employees alike. Everyone, even the club's employees, had to stop at the door for a few seconds to

allow their eyes to adapt to the darkness. Some, particularly the stewards, had a habit of closing their eyes and taking a few blind steps. To avoid misplaced chairs, they used their feet, kicking in front of them as they walked, in order to probe into the darkness.

The main issue here was that for an arriving customer who was not yet familiar to that day's arrangement of the club's tables and chairs, who was not expecting the near absolute darkness, this represented a challenge, particularly because the club's lighting arrangement restricted his visibility to an arm's length. The darkness made it difficult to walk, to see unoccupied tables, to see familiar or hostile faces, and, most importantly, it made it nearly impossible to spot the waiters standing just beyond the line of sight. This was particularly true Wednesday and Thursday, when the dress code called for a red shirt, but more so on Fridays and Saturdays, when the uniform required that everybody dress in black<sup>6</sup>. For some customers, particularly first timers, the combination of these factors meant that they never had an opportunity to prepare themselves for an approaching waiter.

In summary, there are two aspects of the club's physical environment that define the way *Marbella's* feels to the senses as one steps into the bar for the first time: one is the dense, near-absolute darkness, and the other is the waiters' unexpected presence near the front door. Of course, there are other aspects that accompany a visit to the bar. There is the heavy, rap music, with its rhythmic thuds of the bass drum and bass guitar, which begins to shake and rattle every metal panel that is not tightly fixed onto a wall or the floor. Not all, but many of the dancers perform to the heavy rhythmic tracks of one of the Mexican rap artists known for using the themes and symbolism of narcoculture in his music and videos. It is even in the

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<sup>6</sup> On Mondays and Tuesdays, when most waiters were out on their weekly two-day break, and everyone agreed that there was little money in sales to be made, the uniform was a white shirt.

name, Cartel de Santa (a the name conventionally used to refer to drug smuggling groups and that also references a municipality of Monterrey). So, the DJ is quick to change from the regional Mexican or Colombian folk music he plays early in the day. At *Marbella's* there are two DJs who alternate each day, each one preferring a specific style of music: Colombian *vallenatos* or Mexican *corridos norteros*, and this music is played immediately after their arrival to work and while waiters are doing their chores. However, dancers perform their routines to the beat of hip hop and bass-heavy North American pop music. Minutes before the show is about to begin, the bar fills with the aggressive battle cries of Mexican rap – this was the local equivalent to American gangster rap, with the caveat that it was usually about drug smuggling and feats of bravery instead, as well as drinking and drug usage. However, rather than focusing on the spectacle that takes place on-stage, I want to focus on some of the dynamics unfolding off-stage: the moment when the combination of darkness, layout, and the waiters' presence at the door come together as the customer walks in through the main door.

### **A WAITERS' SPACE**

Even though the routines that take place on-stage and off-stage are separated from each other by the height of the stage, everything that takes place on the stage itself occurs at a distance of about a meter off the ground, they are fundamentally similar. For instance, in both instances there is an element of the theatrical present, both entail the use of routines carefully constructed by club employees to influence customer behaviour, and both are perfected night after night, in an interactive performance that presents the same show night after night.



In this section, I look at the interactions that take place off the stage, between the club's tables, from the perspective of the interaction between physical space and social exchanges, as they compare to the performances presented on-stage by the dancers, as well as the role performed by the club's other employees. By space I am referring both to the layout of the building, to the brick and mortar parts of the club, as well as to the more intangible elements, such as the furniture arrangement, the intensity of light, and the way all of these factors come together in the instance a waiter greets an arriving customer. My goal is to argue that, in a similar fashion to the interplay of spotlights and the dancers' routine on-stage, there is a strong relationship between the waiters' physical presence at the main entrance to the club, the dim lighting and their routine.

In the same way as the on-stage routines begin with the dancers lining up in the space between the stairs that lead up to the stage and the stairwell that leads to their dressing room, the off-stage routine begins with a slow procession that culminates with a group of waiters standing a few feet away from the main entrance. As soon as the waiters have finished having their lunch, they begin to assemble. After having worked there for ten weeks, the only visual cue that I could find other than the time itself, was the presence of the first waiter in the area around the front door. One by one, in a slow and rather unorganized procession driven by habit and the sequence of events, they walk in the direction of the door and take their place in the queue.

The queue<sup>7</sup> is important in this regard because it is a formal organizational device that keeps waiters permanently visible to the customers and other employees. From the moment a customer walks into the club to the moment they leave, they waiters are usually

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<sup>7</sup> The queue is discussed extensively in the section titled 'Navigating the club in the dark'.

lining up only a few steps away from the stage. The degree of involvement between waiters and customers is easily demonstrated by the speed of their response to a customer request. Generally, the only gesture needed for a customer to hail a waiter is to look in their direction. In rare cases, a hand gesture may be called for.

However, the queue is not the only reason why waiters are so prominent. Other factors include their number, the size of the venue, and their uniform. First, the only two groups of employees that have a numerically strong presence on the bar floor are the waiters and the dancers. Secondly, the waiters' prominence can be explained by the size of the building where the club is located. *Marbella's* is a small club, compared to other nearby venues<sup>8</sup>. It allocates no more than seated 200 customers distributed among the chairs located around the stages and the 20 tables sitting four customers at any given time. This means that no matter how small their number, any group of similarly dressed men immediately become noticeable. Thirdly, the waiters' visibility is further compounded by the architectural layout of the space which contributes an additional degree of visibility to large groups. Because the bar is basically one large, rectangular hall, with floor-to-ceiling sized mirrors on opposing walls and some structural columns dispersed around the concrete and red bathroom tile-covered circular stages, groups rarely go unnoticed.

At the same time, waiters also have unrestricted access to most spaces in the club. The only limits apply to the space behind the bar area, the general vicinity of the till, and the storage area under the stairs. Because of this, waiters occupy a place in the spatial

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<sup>8</sup> During the week prior to the beginning of my employment at *Marbella's*, I visited the nearby venues to get a sense of the other clubs in the area. In total, I visited four venues during a single night, spending no more than 30 minutes in each location.

distribution of duties that moves between the backstage and the front stage that gives them direct access to the dancers. It is this place which makes them persons of interest for most customers. A waiter's job involves more than just serving drinks or the development of personal relationships with their customers once the bar has opened for business. Through their interactions with customers, waiters gather detailed knowledge about their preferences and affinities (erotic, alcoholic or conversational) which they can later use to increase their consumption of bar services. However, they also have access to the dressing rooms and frequently visit them in order to call dancers down to the bar. They know which customers the dancers prefer and know and interact with the dancers before they dress for their routines. More importantly, they do more than distribute the goods and advertise the types of entertainment offered at the club; they help in the preparation before any of the dancers even begin their routines. They serve drinks and food to tables and liaise between dancers and customers, as well as help to arrange the tables and clean-up the bar.

Additionally, waiters are the club's only employees with the privilege of having both an assigned area to wait for customers' orders as well as the liberty to roam through the bar at any given time. This is different from what happens to all other male employees, who are either generally invisible to the public, are fixed to part of the club, or are forced to roam around the club. For example, even though their work, and particularly their voice, is necessary for the on-stage performances, the two DJs rarely make an appearance on the bar floor. Rather than emerging from the booth located near the main entrance of the bar, these men select, store and play the music and keeping track of the dancers' attendance always make a trip to the store before the beginning of their shift. Every day, as if they were readying themselves for a long winter, they can be seen carrying litre and a half bottles of pop and crisps. These supplies are visible through the white plastic shopping bags given to them at

the convenience store from across the street where the majority of employees go, after they have finished having their lunch right before the beginning of the first dancer's routine, to grab something to drink and snack on to make it through the entire shift. Therefore, it is likely that, unless they are sitting on some of the chairs adjacent to the entrance to the booth, many customers can go the entire night without seeing who is calling out the names of the dancers.

In contrast, the doorman is rarely seen inside the bar. While he is a continuous presence next to the door on the outside of the club he does not perform the role of a bouncer or security staff in relation to matters that take place inside the club. At least, not at *Marbella's*, where the doorman holds a different role. First, the doormen's role is mainly to call people off the street and invite them to walk into the club. Most days, the doorman is simply talking to another employee while he sits right next to the door. The doormen never check or pat down customers, they never check inside the customers' bags or backpacks, and they never ask for identification cards from arriving customers.

Compared to the doormen, waiters are more flexible and visible. They have both freedom of movement and have access to all areas backstage, but also have the visibility of doormen any time they are present in their permanently assigned space. In fact, it could very well be that other than the dancers, it is the waiters who are the most visible employees in the club. First, unlike other bar employees, waiters wear matching uniforms. Even though this is not actually something defined by the bar but something that the waiters decided for themselves, it sets them apart and makes them clearly visible (unlike any of their customers, who generally wear jeans and t-shirts, they wear matching slacks, long sleeve shirts and ties). More significantly, waiters are also responsible for many activities necessary to the operation of the club, additional to the responsibility of facilitating consumption. This places them at

key locations during the normal operation of the club. They are next to the main entrance, at table-side, at the till, next to the bar, and at stage-side, ready to hail a dancer over for an interested customer.

### **THE CUSTOMER-WAITER ENCOUNTER**

The first instance of the customer-waiter encounter is defined by contrasts. It takes place in the threshold between the club and the world outside, a location that has unique features in terms of location, architecture, lighting, sound, temperature, and visibility. Temperature wise, the threshold is the point where the artificially cooled air comes into contact with the scorching wind seeping in through the door. In May, the street outside is generally a scorching 45°C, while the blast of from the vent that spills its artificially cooled air right at the door keeps this area of the club at a temperature at least 20°C lower than outside. There is also the sudden shock produced by the thumping beats blasting from the speakers, which are only fully perceptible once the door swings open. There is also the intensity of bright sunlight during the day, bright neon lights at night, and near-complete darkness in the club. There is the labyrinthine layout of the main entrance, leading straight into a wall and requiring an immediate left turn into a passageway that ends with another wall and a right turn. And then, there is the near absolute darkness produced by the abrupt encounter of dark and bright.

The customer-waiter encounter takes place in the midst of a clash of opposites: of light and dark, visibility and invisibility, public and private, and cool and hot. The sequence of events that leads to the encounter begins the instant the customer enters through the threshold into the main hall – the bar floor where the three stages are located and where all the activity takes place, except the private performances. To get there, the customer must

take around five or six steps through a passageway, turn twice (once left and then right) and cross two doorways. Like footballers walking out from the dressing rooms into the field through the connecting tunnels, customers must traverse this narrow passageway.

The colour of the walls lining both sides of the passageway is basically a continuation of the colour scheme inside the club. The passageway is formed by two black brick walls. They are completely covered in black paint, from floor to ceiling. It is lined on one side with stacks of empty glass bottles and cleaning supplies. At *Marbella's*, like in other Mexican bars, there is a wall that runs parallel to the outer wall of the building. It is there for privacy. It keeps everything happening inside the bar from being visible from the street. It also serves as a sound barrier keeping the thumping music from spilling out. Both walls run about a metre and a half away from each other forming a double barrier of separation from the street. The rectangular space between them acts as a sort of passageway. It has one door and two thresholds on its two opposing ends. One of these leads out into the street outside and the other into the central hall.

As soon as customers walk into the bar, they frequently come to a complete and abrupt halt. I know this because I watched and experienced this personally on a daily basis. It happened to me each time I had to come back into the club after walking outside for an errand. The first reaction is not to come to an abrupt stop. It is as if the person entering the club suddenly became filled with uncertainty: they take one or two steps into the darkness. They prod around with the tips of their feet feeling for obstacles. It is at this point when the waiters begin their approach. The sign of a customer disconcerted by the darkness is their cue. This is the moment for which they have been preparing. Everything has been meticulously organized in anticipation. For them, everything comes together as they show a gesture of hospitality: a tap in the back, an extended hand, and a special handshake: a slide

of the open palms against each other and a fist bump. For most customers, particularly first timers, this is an unsettling moment. It is not uncommon to see them visibly startled by the approaching waiters. The waiter approaches and gestures. Regardless of the customer's status, whether they are frequency regulars or newcomers, an invitation to sit down is uttered: "¡Pásele padrino! ¿En la pista o en la mesa?"<sup>9</sup>. The customer follows.

### WAITER-BROKERS AND TIPPING *PADRINOS*

If the way waiters organized and structured the customer's experience in the bar by both claiming possession of a customer and also subjecting himself to his customer's authority could be summarized into a single word, this would be the word *padrino*. Like the encounter that takes place as the customer walks into the main hall, upon exiting the passageway, the word *padrino* is more than a phrase used to greet an arriving customer. Together with the word *piojo*<sup>10</sup>, this word is at the centre of the processes through which social interactions are organized. It is also a sort of signpost that identifies the relationship between visibility and social control at the club.

The word *padrino* describes the waiters' main source of income and is used frequently. The first encounter I had with the word occurred the moment I stepped into *Marbella's*. I am certain of this because the goal set for the very first days of my employment at the club was to focus on the use of language, social organization, and club layout. This is the reason why I was open to the most subtle differences in the way language was used by

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<sup>9</sup> Phrase that translates approximately to: Come in godfather! A stage seat or at a table? (recorded in the field notes in the passage with ID Week 4, May 8\_2: 126-129)

<sup>10</sup> At *Marbella's*, employees use the binary pair *piojo-padrino* (lice-godfather) to refer to non-tipping and tipping customers respectively, much in the same way as Sallaz (2002: 4010) describes jackpot dealers in an American casino using the terms 'Georges' and 'stiffs' to refer to tipping and non-tipping customers.

the employees at the club. From the first moment, it was apparent to me that it was not the vocabulary that was different, nor that they used exceptionally uncommon words. I knew most of the words they used and used them occasionally. Most of the words were predominant in the regional variant of Spanish spoken in Monterrey. What was interesting was the way these words were taken out of context and used in club related ways.

Because the word *padrino* was used by waiters to greet customers who they had never seen before, its presence at *Marbella's* seemed simply out of place. To me, its use in the club seemed to mock the world outside in its oblique reference to Catholic morality. This was partly the reason why I made certain that each new word was documented in my fieldnote recordings.

As the other waiters taught me how to be one of them, they shared stories about life in the club throughout the years, revealing their parallel vocabulary. They had a more local word for a lap dancing club, *congal*<sup>11</sup> (this word is defined in the dictionary as a word commonly used in Mexican Spanish to refer to a place of sex work). They had a name for the armed gunmen that visited the clubs to extort money, *la contra*<sup>12</sup> (preposition commonly translated as the word 'against'), and a phrase for clubs known for being points of drug sales, *estar caliente*<sup>13</sup> (traditionally meaning 'hot' or 'dangerous'). They had a code-word for drugs, *mugrero*<sup>14</sup> (an adjective generally used in Mexican Spanish to denotes disorder and filth, but can also be used to refer to junk food), a codeword for cartel member, *malandro*<sup>15</sup>,

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<sup>11</sup> Week 1, April 14: 139; Week 2, April 21\_2: 43; Week 3, April 24: 4

<sup>12</sup> Week 2, April 21\_2: 44

<sup>13</sup> Week 3, May 1: 194

<sup>14</sup> Week 4, May 6: 36; Week 9, June 9: 96

<sup>15</sup> Week 5, May 10: 4



and a word for thieving the customer's possessions, *ganchar*<sup>16</sup> (like *padrino*, this word is also out of context and generally refers to the act of securing something with a hook)<sup>17</sup>.

I have to clarify that the problem was not that the word was foreign to me. Even though I do not have a godfather to use the name with, people in my social circle do and use the word occasionally. The reason for this is that the word has other uses in other contexts. For instance, in the university context in Mexico, it is also a word used to refer to people who hold high positions in the academic hierarchy or in public office and government positions, particularly those who are willing to sponsor their subordinates in order to expand their own personal influence in their organization.

In other words, I was quite familiar with the word even if I had not met anybody who had referred to this social relationship in years. However, among bar employees, the word was used extensively both in informal conversation as well as to refer to work related matters. At first, I had the perception that I had a sense of the word's meaning, but I was not certain of its precise meaning until later, when I had become more familiar with club interactions and routines.

This is the reason why, from the moment I began hearing the word, I focused on usage in context, documenting specific examples with an emphasis on the interaction: people involved, subject of conversation, use of gestures, and connotation of the word. Later, after fieldwork had come to an end, and as the transcription process had begun, I returned to my

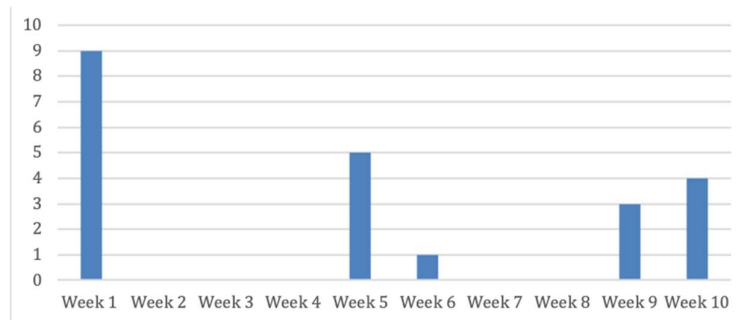
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<sup>16</sup> Week 7, May 25\_2: 1

<sup>17</sup> Here I want to express my gratitude to the members of the CRN 6 Law and Society Association (LSA) for their valuable feedback, particularly Dr. Oralia Gómez-Ramírez for drawing attention to the question of language use at *Marbella's*.

notes in order to determine what it was that the waiters understood as a *padrino*. Everyone in the club used and understood the word. Gradually, as I turned the recordings into written text, then coded and classified according to the frequency of the words used, one of the most obvious meanings became apparent. It came to symbolize the transactional relationships in the club.

Overall, the term appears 21 times in the text transcriptions of the field note recordings, an entire ten-week period of recordings. Yet, as Figure Five shows, the word is present throughout the ten weeks of fieldwork. Particularly relevant is the attention given to the term in the first week of fieldwork<sup>18</sup> when I recorded a reflexive note dedicated exclusively to the term, describing its usage and attempting to construct a definition based on this. Moreover, the frequency with which the term appears is consistent with the three key stages of data collection: entry into the field, interactions and exit from the setting. This is important because it provides a clear indication of the moments in which this figure became an object of interest and a subject of reflection.



**Figure 5** Histogram of frequency of appearances of word *padrino* in field note transcriptions. Self-elaboration.

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<sup>18</sup> Week 1, April 16\_2

During the first weeks at work, the subject that drew my attention, and that consequently predominated in the fieldnotes, was the waiters' practice of approaching arriving customers immediately as they crossed the threshold. This practice seemed to suggest that the word could be used universally, without any specific meaning other than gender (in Spanish every noun is gendered, and, in this case, gender is denoted by the ending 'o' in *padrin-o*). Generally, each time a waiter approached an arriving customer, the word was used. Given that this interaction had taken place at the precise moment they emerged from the passageway that separated the main entrance to the bar from the street outside, word use could not be defined by the specific traits of the customer. Because waiters were pressed by the eagerness of their co-workers to approach a customer as soon as possible and relinquish their place to the waiter holding the place behind them in the queue, waiters had little time to study the arriving individual in search of clues denoting spending power or generosity. If the visibility in the club did not allow any visual clue other than group size to be apparent, what motive did waiters have to substantiate their use of the word *padrino*?

The obvious problem is that in the scenario in which the word is most frequently used, the conditions in which the interaction in question takes place work together to obscure any indication of what the word means. These conditions include the speed at which the interaction takes place, as well as the poor lighting and the way each waiter is assigned to a customer by the place they hold in the queue. This also means that because of these factors waiters are also incapable of predicting what kind of customer they are being assigned to based solely on the customer's appearance. This is important because it is an indication that, at least in this specific case, the use of the word does not depend on the customer's appearance, and that the waiters' use of the word is not descriptive but strategic.

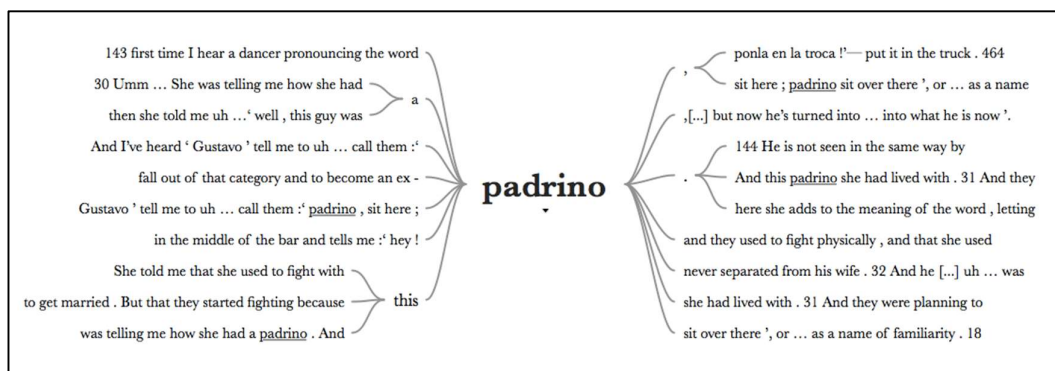
## THE MEANINGS OF *PADRINO*

At *Marbella's*, the word *padrino* possesses several different but related meanings. Analytically, these different uses can be classified into two broad groups: one which includes all descriptive uses of the word, which are based on evidence of previous behaviour displayed by the individual being described, and another one which is of a more strategic character, which is not necessarily based on the traits of the individual in question. The differences between these meanings are subtle, and are only discernible in context.

In the first case, for example, one instance where the word is used is in the frequent conversations that waiters have with other club employees, particularly other waiters and dancers. Sometimes, the word was used to refer to a person who was particularly appreciated or esteemed in relation to the others. Other times the word was used to describe specific customers, particularly those whose tipping practices were considered favourable to customers.

In the second case, the word is a means of describing people, based on their willingness to participate in an exchange of money for favours. For instance, there were moments when the word was used to solicit a favour or gift from someone else. This was a way of flattering the other. If a waiter chose to ask for a cigarette from somebody else, instead of going to the store and purchasing a pack of cigarettes himself, he used the word *padrino*. This word was also used when a waiter needed smaller denomination bills or coins, and was unwilling or unable to ask the cashier. On such occasions, it was common for them to approach other waiters and ask them to break a bill into a smaller denomination by first addressing that waiter with the word *padrino*.

I have summarized the word's usage in Figure 16 (below). The diagram is the graphical output of a word query done through the entirety of the field note transcriptions. It was constructed through the qualitative analysis software NVivo.



**Figure 6** Word tree of the key word *padrino* in field note transcriptions. Self-elaboration.

Figure Six illustrates the relationship between the different connotations, and the use in a variety of contexts, given to the word *padrino* at the club – excluding the reflexive notes recorded on the first week (Week 1, April 16\_2). Firstly, the diagram shows how the word *padrino* describes a type of customer: the tipping individual<sup>19</sup>. Secondly, the word also describes a social hierarchy. The *padrino* is a social figure that holds social prestige for both waiters and dancers to the extent that these customers are spoken about and described admirably for their ability to establish rapport with waiters, but especially with dancers. A known *padrino* has the power to effortlessly draw everyone's attention to himself: as soon as they walk into the club, waiters and dancers make sure to make eye contact and smile, their chosen waiter will usually make a gesture that involves hugging or prolonged touching, and their table is visited repeatedly by both dancers and waiters. Even for customers who are

<sup>19</sup> 'then she told me': "well, this guy was a padrino [...] but now he's turned into... into what he is now". (Week 5, May 14: 151)

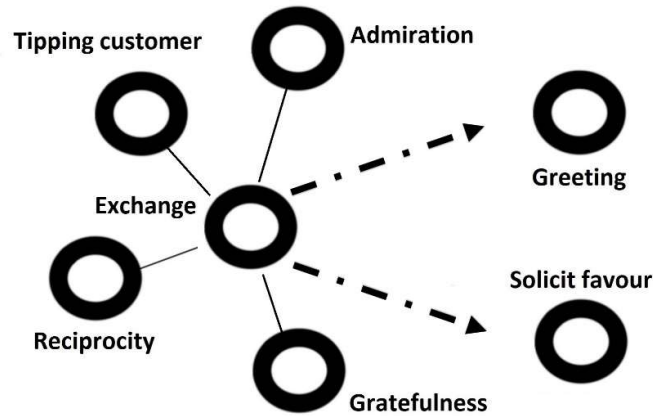
there for the first-time, the *padrino*'s presence becomes obvious. Thirdly, for both waiters and dancers, the term is used to describe their relative success on any given night<sup>20</sup>. Both dancers and waiters make claims over their regular customers, particularly when they are high tippers. In this way, competition among waiters unfolds in terms of rival or competing claims over certain *padrinos*, and waiters use the word to express their interest or to assert their right to serve a specific customer. Additionally, the diagram includes excerpts from the notes regarding instances in which the word was used in the context of an order given to me by a manager<sup>21</sup>, who instructed me to take a wheel and tyre from the bar and place it into the back of a pick-up truck parked outside. In this sense, the first indication is that the term is a noun that defines the *padrino* as means to soften or tone-down the severity of an instruction.

It is important to note that despite having multiple meanings, all of the different connotations of the word *padrino* share a single, unitary theme: in talking about a *padrino*, club employees are simply referring to a master meaning, associated to the customer's tipping behaviours. The *padrino* is not the dominant figure who deserves special attention because he is a man of means and wealth. Rather, in the most general sense, the customer is a *padrino* because he is willing to tip in exchange for the waiters' efforts and services. In other words, for bar employees, particularly waiters and dancers, there is a direct financial benefit in being associated to a *padrino*: the possibility of earning the highly sought-after tips in exchange for their services. This idea can be expressed in the diagram below.

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<sup>20</sup> "Gustavo tell me to uh... call them: padrino, sit here; padrino..." (Week 5, May 13: 17)

<sup>21</sup> "in the middle of the bar and tells me: 'hey! Padrino..." (Week 9, June 9: 463)



**Figure 7** Relationship between the different meanings associated with the word *padrino*. Self-elaboration.

As shown in the diagram presented in Figure Seven, which was developed to illustrate the point being made in this section, at the centre we have the figure of the exchange with the high-tipper. On the left-hand side, we have all other connotations which are descriptive of certain traits expressed by an individual. In contrast, on the right-hand side, there are those connotations in which the word is used as an expression of expectations, a form of anticipating someone else's behavioural displays. Whereas other connotations are descriptive, the second way of using the word, when the waiter approaches a customer at the door or when a waiter asks someone else to do them a favour, can be characterized as strategic. Given that there are no visual cues available to the waiters that provided the waiter with a point of reference to justify the use of the word, and no necessary evidence that would provide certainty that another employee will perform a favour, these two uses are qualitatively different from the others.

Even though it would be logical to assume that waiters employ visual appearance as an indicator of a customers' spending disposition and tipping propensities, as other studies have previously found (Rusche and Brewster 2009; Brewster and Wills 2013; Sallaz 2002),

at *Marbella's*, this is only the case in the descriptive use of the word for two reasons. First, waiters at *Marbella's* cannot rely on their customers' appearance nor on their behaviour to assess their customers' financial standing or spending capacity because neither of these aspects are clearly visible at the time of their encounter. While these visual cues may become visible once the customer has entered the club, because the initial greeting takes place as soon as customers cross the threshold into the club, this is not possible. In fact, waiters are often seen grumbling or nodding disapprovingly when, by chance, they are randomly assigned to a known non-tipper: a *piojo*. When this happens, they have no other alternative but to continue to work with that customer until the end of their visit.

To make sense of how these two different connotations, and to explain how they interact with one another, it is necessary to introduce a conceptual framework capable of capturing the relationship between social norms, language, and behaviour. In the next section, I discuss the related concepts of indexicality and citationality and their use in the analysis of gender norms. The idea here is to argue that the word *padrino*, which is conventionally associated with certain meanings, is transposed into the world of the club to summon a specific social norm based on the bond of mutual benefit that underlies the tipping relationship.

## **INTERACTIONAL DYNAMICS, GENDER AND SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS**

One of the outcomes resulting from the preliminary analysis presented in the previous section pertains to the importance of customer-waiter encounter. It is the highlight of the waiter's daily routine. Before every shift, waiters spend hours setting up the club, cleaning it and dressing up for this moment. During this time, they talk about their customers and decide the order they will begin working.



In the course of learning how to behave during this interaction, other waiters taught me how to address the arriving customer. On multiple occasions, I was told to touch the customer on the back, to start a conversation and to offer seating alternatives before walking in any direction. Most notably, I was also instructed to refer to the customer by using the word *padrino*.

Initially, the use of the word seemed to be out of context. At first, I was inclined to think of this as an expression of respect or honour, but there were other better suited ways of accomplishing this. Why did waiters refer to their customers in this way and not as *caballeros*, or gentlemen, as would be fitting in a setting that presents itself as a gentleman's club? After all, even if the tipping customer was gifting money to waiters and dancers as a *padrino* would to godsons and goddaughters, a more fitting approach would be to refer to customers in a way that affirmed their place in the club's social world.

During the process of transcribing the fieldnotes, it became evident that other, similar words were also in use. Much like the *padrino*, there were discrepancies in how these other words were also being used in the club relative to the meaning that was familiar to me. In thinking about this evidence, the first thing that became apparent was that the disagreement between club and external use was an indication that these were not words created exclusively for the club. These seemed to be repurposed to describe something unique to the club. The words were clearly understandable to me as an outsider, so it seemed to me that club employees, and particularly waiters, were adapting words and creating a vocabulary to talk about what mattered to them and make sense of their world.

What all this means is that this vocabulary is subject to misunderstandings. By using words that are understandable in other contexts to talk about the social relationships that

exist at *Marbella's*, waiters create a situation where individuals unfamiliar with the club and its language would be confused, but where having cognates is also an advantage. Such an approach to the use of the word is suggestive of a more strategic role that could be linked to the practices observed among hospitality and service industry employees (Azar 2011; Brewster 2015) and lap dancers in similar settings (Frank 2005; Egan 2003; Brewster 2003; Egan and Frank 2005; Pasko 2002; Enck and Preston 1988). The *padrino* is a word used by employees when referring to the tipping customer, and as such, it is a reference to their role in the club and the main source of their income.

As a result, making sense of how all of these elements come together around this word and the customer-waiter interaction is critical for any analysis of club social organization. For this reason, from this point on, I will now concentrate on developing a more detailed analysis of the empirical findings presented so far. Centrally, my goal is to determine the significance of club language use relative to the waiters role and relationship to their customers. As a starting point, I assume that there is a direct link between the club's social organization and the way waiters talk about their world. In this way, the word *padrino* is part of a larger system of club-specific vocabulary which describes key relationships and roles present the club.

To be clear, this is not meant to be a discussion exclusively about the semiotics of club vocabulary. While it is important, this semiotic analysis of language is just the starting point. The core of the argument developed in the thesis actually rests on the analysis of non-verbal forms of communication, such as gestures and bodily practices. In this way, the method of analysis used here sets the pace for the analysis that will be developed in other chapters.

In order to help me think about the way the word *padrino* interacts with waiter gestures, to determine how it interlocks with other club practices, and to clarify how these elements set the foundation for the development of the customer-waiter relationship, it is necessary to introduce two concepts. The use given to these ideas in this thesis is not new or unique. These ideas have been used in the past to analyse the appropriation and redeployment of other forms of social practices or symbols.

It is important to note that the notions discussed here have a central role in the broader scheme of the thesis. The central concern of the thesis pertains to the relationship between prostitution, social control and workplace organization and it is through these ideas that I link these different aspects of club activity. They are both the tools used to deal with interactional data as well as the conceptual means that aid the transition from an analysis of language to an analysis of other social practices.

Additionally, it is through these concepts that my project connects to the literature of one of the running themes that cuts through the entire document. On the one hand, the majority of the interactions described in the document take place in a club that restricts access to men. The majority of the interactions described in the document take place entirely among men, mainly waiters and customers, or between male employees. On the other hand, the club is also organizationally gendered. There are also multiple descriptions comparing the way the club is organized for waiters to the way it is structured for the dancers. While every effort has been made to also include descriptions on the workplace interactions that take place between waiters or customers and club dancers, the gendered structure of the club defined the terms of my access to interactions. For this reason, gender is, without a doubt, an important aspect of this analysis and it is necessary to clarify in detail how my work deals with the gendered aspect of club interactions.

## **A FRAMEWORK FOR THE ANALYSIS OF INTERACTIONS**

Making sense of the way the word *padrino* fits into the club's social order posed several conceptual challenges that need to be addressed before presenting the particular theoretical approach chosen to aid in this analysis. In fact, making sense of the word, both in terms of its place in the context of the first encounter between customer and waiter, and in the context of my understanding of its meaning outside of the club was one of the most challenging tasks faced during the writing and analysis process of this project. This is because the concept needed to be sufficiently capable of explaining both linguistic and gestural forms of communications, as well as to be flexible enough to be able to interface with other theories, particularly as the analysis transitioned from the micro-interactional to the organizational aspects of the club.

Ultimately, the goal was to produce an analysis capable of explaining how waiters determined the form of a social relationship by referring to their customers as their *padrinos*, to explain how they then transpose the meanings produced by this relationship to other club interactions and finally to make sense of how these meanings relate to the waiters' role in the club. In the end, the conceptual approach I make use of achieves this by linking social practices to norms. Furthermore, in making sense of the waiters' role in the club, which is the axis that articulates the club's other actors, customers and dancers, this approach also speaks to the club's hierarchy.

## **MASCULINITIES, PRACTICES AND HEGEMONY**

For the naïve reader, particularly if there is a lack of familiarity with the Latin American context, knowing that the word *padrino* is used to refer to club customers may be inconsequential and, more importantly, its link to gender may be doubtful. However, the

word is the cornerstone of the relationship between the customer and his waiter. For experienced waiters, this is an unavoidable part of club etiquette. For novice waiters, it is the means by which they can approach habitual customers and present themselves as knowledgeable.

The significance of the word lies in the way it links club social relations to the world outside. Its use is important because it is the vehicle that allows waiters to take control of their relationship with their customer. In doing so, they reconfigure the terms that govern their exchanges, repositioning themselves in relation to their customers. The term is an expression of the processes that structure the club's social world, a process that can be brought to light through the concepts that will be introduced in this section.

The *padrino* is the expression of the social system that holds the club together, that keeps everything working and that defines the place that waiters occupy in the organization. The word *padrino* can be thought of as a signpost that signals the presence of rules on how people should behave. If the word were being used according to convention, the expectation would be for it to be used by a minor to refer to an adult that has taken a paternal role. In the club, when used by a waiter, it becomes a term of endearment that is obviously excessive and out of place. When used by club waiters, the word becomes a signpost that denotes a sense of intensity, closeness and dependence. It signals to an arriving customer that his presence and behaviour in the club is regulated by the same set of rules that would have been in effect if the word had been used in its original context. So how did I arrive at this understanding?

Before moving forward, I first need to talk about the theoretical traditions that made this understanding possible. In this regard, the first thing that I should say is this approach is

informed by the debates around role theory, gender stereotypes and the work of authors like West and Zimmerman (1987) and Connell and Messerschmidt (2005). In order to avoid readings of the theory of hegemonic masculinity that reduce gender to static stereotypes (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Messerschmidt 2016), or that substitute gender roles with static configurations of practices (Christensen and Jensen 2014), I adopt an approach that focuses on the processes that assign meaning to these practices. Where the static approach would look at the meanings assigned to certain groups of practices, and then use the presence of these practices in a given setting as an indication of a given type of masculinity, my approach involves thinking about the mechanisms that make these practices meaningful.

Before any attempt is made at characterising any given behaviour, I look at the symbolic associations made by the participants themselves. My role is to look at the way different practices are brought together to create meaning and then to see how people react towards these behaviours when they are redeployed in new situations.

This is particularly important because the descriptions included here include details that may compel some readers to conclude that waiters or customer behaviours are an expression of a specific identity. Given that the club is a business that cater to male heterosexuality, and that the subject matter of conversations between customers and waiters is on the topic of sexual behaviours, it would be easy to conclude that these practices are consistent with known tropes. However, proceeding in this manner is contrary to an inductive approach. This is not a study about the way club employees or customers understand or reproduce the ideas and behaviours that exist outside of the club. The objective here is to look at the way the collective actions of customers, waiters and dancers produce new meanings that are then used to signify their own roles and actions.

## HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY

In their now classical work, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) addressed some of the criticisms that had been made to the concept of hegemonic masculinity. In their response, they updated the way the concept is defined and reaffirmed the emphasis on the idea that gender is the product of social practices. In this iteration, their formulation highlighted the relational character of gender practices, particularly between men and women, but also in relation to other masculinities. They defined it as the ‘pattern of practices (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men’s dominance over women to continue’ (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 832).

The concept of hegemonic masculinity dates to the 1980s. Its origins can be traced back to the convergence of feminist theory and research, gay rights movements, and research on boys and men in schools and the workplace (Connell 2002: 90). As (Hearn and Parkin 2001: 5) explain, the concept of hegemonic masculinity is a response to structuralist approaches that either reduce masculinities to stereotypes or conceive gender as the result of a static social order. In shifting their approach to gender from role expectations to practices and behaviours, and introducing the domination of men over men, they broke away from an absolute and historically-static understanding of patriarchy. Instead of patriarchy, their analysis pointed to hegemony and legitimation through consent as opposed to coercion or domination by force (Messerschmidt 2008: 105).

The concept of hegemonic masculinity has produced an abundant amount of research, some of which has looked at change in the practices associated to masculinity in a neighbourhood located in the outskirts of Mexico City and in Southern Mexico (Gutmann

1997a; 1997b; 2005; 2006; 2013), as well as the relationship between hegemonic masculinities and non-hegemonic masculinities (Roberts 2012; Ricciardelli, Maier and Hannah-Moffat 2015; Aguirre-Sulem 2015). It has also been subject to criticism, pertaining to the conceptual rigour of the theoretical work itself (Hall 2002; Ellis, Winlow and Hall 2017) as well as the way it is adapted to empirical analysis (Messerschmidt 2016).

Scholars that have noted that this propensity to build profiles or stereotypes is the result of a problem with the way the theory builds a link between the everyday, practices and behaviours aspect, and the broader sociological dynamics of hegemony (Beasley 2008; Howson 2008; Hearn *et al.* 2012; Hearn 2012; Howson, Beasley and Augoustinos 2013). The problem here is that the concept of hegemony adopted by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) takes on different connotations at different times (Beasley 2008; Hearn *et al.* 2012). Instead of addressing the problem of consent (Bocock 1986; Adamson 1980; Howson 2008) in the realm of the micro-interactional (Jackson Lears 1985), the approach has been to think about hegemony as a structural question (Hall 1996), the interaction between groups and institutions (Hearn 2012) or to avoid the discussion as a whole and assume that hegemony is equivalent to domination.

During the years, multiple authors have proposed alternative solutions in order to address these shortcomings including, for example, Connell (1996: 159) who acknowledges that ‘the relationship of bodies to social processes is difficult to analyse, [and is] constantly a sore point for theory’. The problem is, however, that the solution is to assume that individual interactions are not confined to the individual but ‘may well involve large-scale social institutions’ (Connell 1996: 159). This explains why, from this approach, there is a propensity to assume the large-scale legitimation processes that produce hegemony are scaled-up versions of the interactional dynamics that exist between individuals. This results



in finding a solution in dominance and subordination rather than in the mechanisms that drive consent in interactions.

Among other approaches, the alternatives range from perspectives that reject the concept as a whole, choosing instead to produce different theoretical frameworks to analyse specific practices such as violence, to perspectives that seek to reformulate, extend or clarify the theory. Winlow and Hall (2009), for example, take the first route. In their discussion on the relationship between gender and violence, they take a critical standpoint towards the concept of hegemonic masculinity. As an alternative, they propose a psycho-social approach that relies on the work of Bourdieu on habitus (Winlow and Hall 2009: 287).

A different option to this slash-and-burn approach, involves working with the conceptual and empirical progress made by the hegemonic masculinity literature, albeit with a critical persuasion. This is the approach taken by Gutmann (2006) in his ethnographic work on the changing meanings associated to masculinities in Mexico. This author introduces the notion of contradictory consciousness to explain the process by which rival world views come to coexist simultaneously in the mind of individuals as they confront a changing social reality. Through this notion, this author makes sense of discontinuities, or the presence of practices that would otherwise contradict meanings associated to a hegemonic configuration.

In contrast, a different approach involves addressing the lack of clarity with regards to the way the notion of hegemony is understood (Beasley 2008; Hearn 2012). The concept of hegemony is important because it addresses the problem of social reproduction: it provides a solution to the question of how certain ideas and world views gain traction as socially-accepted forms of explaining the world. Within the framework of hegemonic masculinity, this notion addresses the problem of the legitimacy of certain practices.

The problem with the way some of these discussions have been framed is that they have minimised the importance of the interactional aspect of the theory. Instead of attempting to resolve the disarticulation between practices and hegemony by starting with the interactions, from an inductive perspective, the approach has been to think about the macro-sociological dimensions of the problem first and then to apply these explanatory framework to the analysis of micro-interactions. One important exception in this regard is Gutmann (2006) (discussed above), but further research is necessary.

### **A MICRO-SOCIOLOGICAL AND INTERACTIONAL APPROACH TO GENDER**

Up to this point, the solutions proposed by authors such as Hall (2002) and Beasley (2008) have dealt with the concept of hegemonic masculinity at a theoretical level. In contrast, the approach I take belongs to a different tradition. This is an inductive study, and as such, the theoretical backdrop of the analysis is driven by the empirical findings themselves.

The evidence detailed up to this point shows that the *padrino* is a key part of the customer-waiter encounter. A deductive approach would involve looking at the theory to make sense of the word. This can be exemplified through the work behind the notion of homosociality (Bird 1996) which seeks to provide an analytical framework for the study of same-gender, non-sexual interactions, provides a good example of an approach that ostensibly espouses the concept of hegemonic masculinity but then degenerates to a gender stereotype analysis. According to Bird (1996: 121) the key characteristics that define hegemonic masculinity are: ‘emotional detachment’, ‘competitiveness’, and ‘objectification of women’. It is these meanings that according to Bird (1996) are perpetuated in homosocial interaction. In this point of view, while there may be different personal views or notions of

masculinity, and these may deviate from the 'hegemonic norm, nonhegemonic meanings are suppressed due to perceptions of "appropriate" masculinity' (Bird 1996: 127).

In contrast, my approach is to focus on the discrepancies between the way the word is used by waiters and the way I would have preferred it to be used, then using a concept to make sense of this disparity. In perceiving that my way of using the word added to an already existing cacophony of uses, I chose to make sense of this cacophony by looking at the other practices that come into play, identifying the role these practices have in reconstituting the original meaning of the word.

The conceptual approach taken here as a reference point is heavily informed by the work of Judith Butler (1990; 2011; 2015) on gender performativity. It is through Butler's (1990; 2015) work that I address the dissociation between the two fundamental components that constitute the hegemonic masculinity framework. The idea is that the micro and macro come together every time a normative point of reference is summoned in an interaction; each time the word was used inside of the club.

In order to think about the way social practices and norm enforcement come together, I use the appropriation and redeployment of behaviours (Livingston 1990; Kulick 2003; Brickell 2005) as a guideline. Much in the same way as gendered practices are used to summon certain gendered meanings in order to performatively reconstitute the instance of summoning as sexual, 'materializing particular subjects as sexual subjects' (Kulick 2003: 139), my approach is to avoid characterising these practices in any specific way and to focus on describing the process by which power is negotiated and the mechanisms that give rise to the hierarchies.

## INDEXICALITY AND CITATIONALITY

While the concepts of impression management (Goffman 1956) and emotional labour (Hochschild 1983) have both been used in the past to analyse the customer-dancer relationship, in this thesis I want to take a different approach. As it is clear from the literature discussed in earlier sections, these two notions have contributed to our understanding of the interactional process by which dancers exercise control over their customers' behaviour. However, because these concepts focus mainly on the interactional dynamics developed by the dancers, and the emphasis is placed on the displays themselves and not the process by which these displays come about<sup>22</sup>, little is known about the mechanisms of meaning construction, about the origin and the associations necessary to give rise to the behaviours used to encourage tipping among other employees, particularly waiters. Given that the evidence discussed earlier in this Chapter indicates that the word *padrino* holds a fundamental role in all of this, a conceptual framework that is capable of making sense of the strategic use of language and behaviours becomes necessary.

Here, I want to briefly summarize certain aspects of Judith Butler's work on performativity and citationality (Butler 1990; 2011; Salih 2002). Butler's work is credited for having adapted and redeployed the concepts of performativity and citationality into gender studies (Hollywood 2002). According to this approach, gender can be understood as an act of appropriation and re-presentation of practices and their associated meanings, of

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<sup>22</sup> Chapter One includes an in-depth discussion on this subject.

their adoption and redeployment into new contexts (Butler 1990; 2011; Salih 2002). In other words, gender is a process of appropriation and the means by which certain meanings/types are evoked and transposed into new situations or instances (Nakassis 2013; 2012).

Fundamental to this approach to gender is the notion of citationality, which occupies a liminal (Turner 1982) space between difference and the same (Nakassis 2012: 627). Citationality refers to an act of repetition that combines the old and the new. It describes the process by which meanings are summoned into new interactions in order to signify elements employed in a new context. In his study of brand semiotics, Nakassis (2012) explains that the citational can be illustrated through the metaphor of quoting in legal writing, where summoning or referencing an excerpt of a legal document in the context of another instance of discourse can be seen as an appeal to an ‘authoritative or exemplary position’ (Nakassis 2012: 626). Citationality understood in this way involves more than repetition; it brings together different semiotic events, linking or joining different layers of meaning. ‘By linking together multiple semiotic events, citations weave together multiple ‘voices’ and identities that inhere those distinct events into one complex act’ (Nakassis 2012: 626).

One of the key properties of citationality is indexicality. Indexicality is the mechanism by which at least two semiotic moments are brought together without dissolving the difference that sets them apart (Nakassis 2012: 626). Indexicality is the referential bond that ties two voices or identities together. A performative act involves indexical signs that bear the same meaning across all semiotic events (Nakassis 2012: 628). This occurs when certain objects are designated to invoke specific meanings by certain authoritative figures in specific instances or “baptismal events” (Nakassis 2012: 628). By referencing the same meaning through these baptismal instances, these signs are both an appeal to an ideology and an expression of its material reality.

At the same time, gender is also a social norm, in the sense of the regulatory ideal, which is understood as a ‘regulatory practice that produces the bodies it governs, that is, whose regulatory force is made clear as a kind of productive power, the power to produce—demarcate, circulate, differentiate—the bodies it controls’ (Butler 2011: 2). Like the act of quoting in legal writing, gender involves summoning this regulatory ideal in a way that both signifies and produces bodies. In ‘Undoing Gender’, Butler (2015: 42) explains that subjects are simultaneously prior to and the result of the norm. They predate produced by the norm. One of the important aspects of social norms, speaking from a Foucaultian perspective, is that it cannot be reduced to the instances of its application. Conversely, it cannot be considered independently from those same instances. Social norms constitute forms of ‘regulatory power’ that ‘shapes’ subjects that conform to it, the subjects upon which it exercises its control and restraint, while at the same time it produces those very subjects (Butler 2015: 41). A social norm is a form of signifier, it ‘allows for certain kinds of practices and action to become recognizable as such’ (Butler 2015: 42), to become recognizable or ‘intelligible’ (Butler 2015: 42). At the same time, a norm can be thought of as the point of reference that serves as the basis for normalization (Butler 2015: 51). Butler (2015) cites the work of Francois Ewald (1991) on norms to underline that in the Foucaultian sense, the social norm is a type of reference point against which behaviours are given meaning. In this way, subjects become understandable in relation to this point of reference. Identity is defined relationally, in terms of that against which it is compared.

As we have seen, these ideas are relevant to this discussion because, at least according to Azar (2007: 382), one of the key themes in the literature on tipping is the idea that consumers derive pleasure ‘not only from consumption, but also from positive feelings and, therefore, are willing to forgo consumption (by giving up money) in order to obtain

such feelings'. That is, that one of the drivers that explain tipping behaviour pertains to the negative feelings associated with non-conformity to norms, as well as the positive feelings consumers derive from norm conformity. In this sense, tipping has been characterized as a social norm (Azar 2004; 2005; 2007; 2009; 2011), subject to enforcement by customer-contact employees.

With this in mind, in this Chapter, I want to argue that the notions of citationality and indexicality, as well as the ideas on social norms, can be applied to the analysis of waiter behaviour at *Marbella's*. In this argument, I rely heavily on Butler's (1990; 2015; 2011) understanding that bodily acts are semiotic events to argue that the waiters' use of the word *padrino* to refer to their customers, as well as the gestures, behaviours and topics of conversation they employ in their interactions with them, can be thought about as semiotic events, capable of producing that which they describe.

## **TIPPING AND A REFERENCE TO THE CATHOLIC SENSE OF SHARED PARENTHOOD**

The linguistic and behavioural strategies employed by *Marbella's* in their interactions with their customers can be brought to light through the concept of citationality. At *Marbella's*, the word *padrino* is the link that articulates two semiotic universes, one associated to customer tipping practices in the club and another associated to the connotations the word holds outside of the club. Through its use, *Marbella's* waiters perform a citational act, bringing together these two universes together in a new context. The word *padrino* becomes the normative point of reference, the ideal set forth by the waiters to delineate the types of appropriate behaviour for their customers. However, as the evidence on the connotations held by the word *padrino* outside of the club shows, this does not entail

the construction of new meanings. Instead, this citational act is possible because of the normative character common both to the instance of enunciation (its use in the club) and the normative connotations held by the word. To see why the word *padrino* can be characterized as a means by which a specific behavioural point of reference is summoned in the context of the club, a citational act that brings a social norm into the relationships, it is necessary to determine what connotations the word holds outside of the club.

In this regard, it is important to note that in Mexico, as well as in the broader Latin American context, the word *padrino* is conventionally associated with the relationship of shared parenthood established through the Catholic rite of baptism (Kemper 1982; Scott 1972; Mintz and Wolf 1950). The *padrino* is a word that describes a specific relationship of reciprocity, a relationship established through the institution of *compadrazgo* –a Spanish term used to describe a relationship of co-parenthood or sponsorship (Mintz and Wolf 1950) and that has been found to permeate throughout Mexican society (Kemper 1982).

At the same time, the word *padrino* can also be used to refer to relationships not associated with baptism. Hilgers (2011) and Scott (1972), for example, talk about similar relationships being widespread in urban contexts. According to Kemper (1982) the dyadic relationship formed by the social bonds acquired through *compadrazgo* has acquired dimensions that extend beyond the role of guidance and spiritual sponsorship. It is a relationship of mutual assistance that deepens, strengthens and increases the social capital of those who assume its norms of interaction (Kemper 1982: 25). The functions provided by *compadrazgo* include: ‘mutual assistance, aid from patrons to clients, homage from clients to patrons, and ‘defensive’ protection against quarrels and illicit sexual affairs’ (Kemper 1982: 26). And, for the urban population, research shows that this relationship is used both to strengthen relationships within the family unit and the same socio-economic status and to



expand their social bonds with friends and co-workers of sometimes different socio-economic standing (Kemper 1982: 21).

At the same time, there is evidence suggesting that these relationships can also develop from ‘non-political social networks’, particularly among the inhabitants certain communities in Mexico is by (Hagene and González-Fuente 2016: 12). In fact, these forms of social organization are seen as legitimate means of gaining access to public goods, (Hagene and González-Fuente 2016). It is a means for the ‘less privileged to influence not the social programs and the principles of distribution, but distribution itself’ (Hagene and González-Fuente 2016: 7).

To summarize, in the same way that it does for *Marbella’s* employees, the word *padrino* is conventionally understood to describe mutually beneficial exchanges. In other words, while its connotation outside of the club is not associated to tipping but to relationships of mutual benefit and reciprocity that are governed by a social norm, the use of the word in the club is similar both because it involves the exchange of money for a service, as well as conformity to the tipping norm. In the club, the word endows an interaction with a connotation equivalent to the relationship that binds potential voters to vote brokers and a child to a co-parent.

In other words, it is precisely because of how prevalent the word is that waiters can use the word to address arriving customers without the need of having had any previous interaction with the customer. As customers walk into the club, they have a sense of the meaning of this word because it is widely used to refer to relationships of reciprocity, as a result waiters can appeal to these external connotations and remain confident that they will have a sense of the type of interaction that may ensue. When a waiter uses the word, it is

extracted from its original field of meaning and transplanted into the world of the club. It is through this process of re-interpretation that the word comes to describe something that is not yet a reality, something that is only potentially there. It is a process that gives purpose to the different components of a social phenomenon and, in doing so, reshapes its new field of application. As the literature on tipping behaviours shows, tipping is a social norm enforced interactionally. Similarly, the relationship of mutual reciprocity described by the word *padrino* is also regulated by a norm; one that involves familial ties acquired through baptism in the catholic custom. It is not just the word that describes the relationship between a child and a male co-parent, but the word that describes a benefactor. Because in both cases the word is indexical to the principles and ideas that bind a widespread form of relationships of reciprocity, it serves as a bridge that connects nascent in-club interactions with well-established social forms. It is a means by which waiters can express their willingness to be a part of a relationship of mutual benefit that works in similar ways to its most well-known forms. And, this is a willingness that is announced to the customers as soon as they walk in through the door. In the next section, I will argue why transposing these principles and ideas into the club holds benefits both for the customer and the waiter, concluding that, in the context of the interactions taking place at *Marbella's*, this word takes on a new performative dimension.

The word serves as a recognizable point of reference; it is a type of signpost that defines a place and a role for both the customer and the waiters. It is that which brings certainty to a moment characterized by the clash of the disoriented customer and the expecting waiter. For the customer who is walking into the unknown, it offers the assurance of a welcoming gesture and a reference to a familiar figure, the relationship of mutual benefit that binds godparents to their godchildren.

## SUMMARY

Through the ethnographic evidence discussed in this chapter, I have determined that the use of the word *padrino* is a central element in the first customer-waiter interaction, where it is used to address arriving customers, especially customers who have never visited the club in the past. It makes its first appearance after the customer has been welcomed into the club, just at the moment he is finally led in the direction of the stage. Based on this evidence, I have drawn the reader's attention towards the other interactional instances where the word *padrino* is also used. In this way I have also identified other instances where the word is employed to address another employee to ask for a favour or to ask for a gift.

In contrast, I have discussed how waiters use the word to speak about high-tipping customers in their own conversations with their co-workers, a context in which it is possible to see the prestige ascribed to the word. For example, when speaking of their economic success with their co-workers, waiters and dancers attribute their higher-than-expected income to the tips received from a particular customer. One way of discussing someone's success on any given night is by counting the number of *padrinos* that a given employee had the opportunity of serving. Similarly, when a known tipping customer walks in through the door, waiters will identify themselves as their preferred server by simply saying: "Es mi *padrino*", he is my godfather.

The basic argument offered here is that these two, clearly distinct connotations are brought together through the property of indexicality. I have argued that waiters use the baptismal connotation to citationally summon the principles that bind the *padrino* to the godson in a relationship of mutual benefit and reciprocity. Each time the waiters use the word *padrino*, they summon the tipping norm in the club to set the limits of conformity for

arriving customers. In addressing arriving customers as *padrinos*, waiters define expectations for their customers and position themselves as the figures responsible for enforcing compliance to these expectations. In this way, the waiters' use of the word *padrino* also conforms to the idea of performativity.

The key to the indexical and citational dimension lies in its point of reference. In Mexico, as well as in Latin America the *padrino* describes a relationship of reciprocity associated with the Catholic social form of co-parenthood. In its most general form, it describes a relationship established through the Catholic rite of baptism, through which other family or community members acquire a shared responsibility for caring for a new born child. In this way, this Chapter holds a critical role in the construction of the overall argument of the thesis. The findings discussed here are important because they speak to the waiters' normative role. To the extent that the waiters' strategic use of behavioural and linguistic cues is directed aimed at influencing their customer's tipping practices, waiters can be considered as norm enforcers, as figures of social control. As such, their responsibilities exceed the task of serving tables and taking orders, as described in the literature on tipping in restaurants, and the service and hospitality industry in general, waiters are responsible for regulating customer behaviour.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE TIPPING NORM, EMPLOYEE OVERSIGHT, AND WAITER STRATEGIES

In the previous chapter, I argued that *Marbella's* waiters develop and employ citational strategies in order to encourage their customers to tip in a way that is reminiscent of the behaviour displayed by dancers in Anglo-American clubs. In doing so, these employees are responding to their financial drive to maximize tips. At the same time, they develop strategies to ensure norm compliance, which are themselves shaped by the opportunities available to them as a result of the club's organizational structure. In light of the evidence, in this chapter I focus on the question of employee oversight in order to elucidate the contradictions that characterize this role. My interest focuses on the objective, organizational, factors that give rise to the strategic use of words and gestures as cues to encourage customer tipping.

#### THE SYSTEM OF CUSTOMER OVERSIGHT

In the introduction to the discussion on tipping practices, I referred to earlier work discussing the relationships that develop between employees, businesses, and customers in the customer-service industry (Whyte 1963). To summarize these concepts for this new discussion, I refer to the fundamental characteristics of service occupations. As the reader may recall, in earlier chapters I described a triangle of interaction between waiters, customers, and the business. As the diagram in Figure 18 (below) shows, one of the features that characterize the role held employees in service occupations is that they are simultaneously bound to the business where they work as well as to the customers they serve.

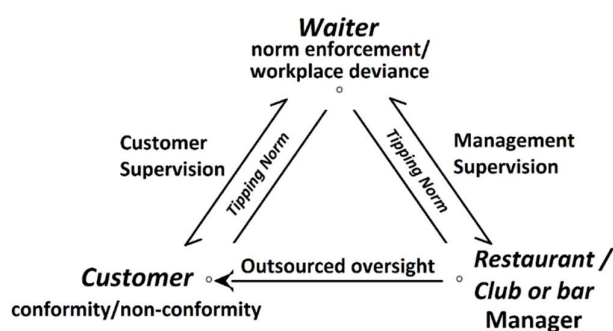
The tipping system can be thought of as a mechanism through which businesses outsource employee supervision to their customers (Sallaz 2002: 405); businesses that emphasize personalized interaction between customers and servers through tipping are able to lower their operation costs. Previous research has also found that restaurants that include service charges in their pricing receive lower customer online ratings (Lynn and Brewster 2018). It is through the tipping system that the business can use managers to control the more overt and visible aspects of their employees' obligations, such as efficiency and accuracy, while at the same time ensuring that customers can evaluate whether they are in-fact delivering the more personal aspects of service (Whaley, *et al.*, 2014).

The tipping system also operates in the opposite direction. It is a means for customers to supervise their servers' work as well as a mechanism that delegates customer supervision to the waiters. Through the tipping norm, managers ensure that restaurant customers pay for the services they are provided. As the literature on the social psychology of tipping has thoroughly demonstrated, servers occupy a fundamental role in ensuring customer conformity with the tipping norm. It is the waiters who furnish the social cues that trigger tipping behaviours. The research on tipping through social experiments clearly shows that through the use of gestures, servers have been shown to manipulate customers and to ensure conformity with the tipping norm (Brewster and Mallinson 2009: 193).

As a result, for waiters, the task of enforcing the tipping norm involves the use of both rewards and penalties. In terms of rewards, the evidence from social psychology shows that waiters have a variety of strategies at their disposal which they can use to increase tips. But this is not all. They can also penalize customers who fail to tip. The evidence collected by authors like Rusche and Brewster (2009) shows that waiters also have alternative strategies through which they can address their customers' non-conformity.

This means that waiters occupy a central place in the tipping system. They are both regulated by and enforcers of the tipping norm. Their work is maintained under constant supervision through the tipping norm, and they are subject to the oversight and accountable to their customers, as much as they are the figures responsible for keeping their customers paying and consuming. Because of their constant and direct interaction with their customers, any failure to deliver a service is immediately noted by the customer and is subject to being potentially penalized.

Depending on the business model, industry and management style, there can be variations in the ratio or composition of oversight. For some businesses, the core of service delivery may be subject to person-to-person supervision in the customer-waiter interaction, where customers can verify the product's consistency directly, all the while evaluating waiter efficiency, knowledge of the menu, friendliness, and attentiveness. For other businesses, oversight takes the form of a shared system of supervision in which certain aspects of service delivery are left to the customer where others are controlled by floor supervisors. This is what Sallaz (2002) refers to as the question of split loyalties created by a system of employee control that relies on two sources of oversight: the floor manager and the customer.



**Figure 8** Conformity and non-conformity with the tipping norm. Self-elaboration

In Figure Eight, I have re-drawn the diagram depicting the relationship between customers that originally appeared in Figure Two, emphasising the direction of the relationship in a way that clearly illustrates the split system of surveillance. This is why the left-hand side clearly represents customer surveillance and the right-hand side emphasizes management surveillance. Fundamentally, the diagram in Figure Eight illustrates the waiters' centrality in a chain of supervision that places them simultaneously as subjects and objects of this oversight. The complexity of the waiters' position is represented by the bi-directional arrows that connect waiters to customers on the left-hand side of the image. In the relationship labelled 'Customer Supervision', we see how, parallel to the control exercised by servers on their tipping behaviours, customers exercise control over the service they receive, while they are encouraged to change their tipping behaviours through the use of social cues and gestures. Similarly, the image also shows how the system does not necessarily imply that management ceases to supervise customer-contact workers. Instead, managers continue to supervise certain aspects of service delivery such as correct product delivery, efficiency and food safety as well as more labour related issues such as nonattendance, uniforms, and work schedules.

### **THE IMPLICATIONS OF BUREAUCRATIC AND NORMATIVE CONTROL**

The effects of this dual system of employee oversight have been previously discussed by Rosenthal (2004). Writing from the discipline of management studies, this author frames the problem of agency in the workplace and its relationship to deviance as it pertains to customer-contact workers. According to Rosenthal (2004: 602), there are three different types of social control at play in the customer-service industry. The first two are technological and bureaucratic. The third one refers to discursive or normative forms of workplace regulation, which Rosenthal (2004) denominates disciplinary or cultural forms of



social control. The first one describes the use of technology for surveillance, whereas bureaucratic forms of social control refer to impersonal rules or regulations (Rosenthal 2004: 607). By discursive, normative, or cultural forms, the author identifies disciplinary forms of control directed at extracting emotional labour from the workers through discursive means that try to identify the role of the employee in the workplace with the work of the individual in some area of the private sphere (Rosenthal 2004: 605-607). It is through the latter that organizations seek to colonize workers from within, by seeking to instil in them values, attitudes, and beliefs through the standardization of work processes (Rosenthal 2004: 607).

Additional to this, Rosenthal (2004) explains that customer-contact or service workers are subject to different combinations of these forms of control rather than to a uniform system of regulation (Rosenthal 2004: 605). These combinations change depending on the line of work. As a result, organizations can shift the emphasis they place on speed or quantity of customers served, towards an approach that centres on the development of a more intimate relationship with the customer or vice versa, depending on their industry. On the one hand, there is the case of call centre employees who are prompted to manage a large volume of calls in the shortest amount of time. On the other hand, there are organizations where the emphasis is on quality. Such is the case for servers in the restaurant industry.

In the case of the restaurant industry, this system of oversight has important implications. In this industry, Rosenthal (2004) argues that the predominant form of social control emphasises its employees' capacity to harness their own emotional state and to use it strategically to increase their income. This means that the service industry has specialized in making use of their emotions as part of the services provided to the customers, for example by demanding that employees provide service with a smile or by acting upbeat and friendly.

One of the implications of this, according to some authors who have studied this type of social control, is that normative mechanisms of workplace oversight have foreclosed all options of agency for the worker, leaving exhausted, and burned-out employees (Rosenthal 2004: 601-602). To give an example, Rosenthal (2004: 602) refers to Hochschild's (1983) work on emotional labour, which focuses on the toll service work takes on customer contact employees. Alternatively, other scholars have argued that such a system produces docile employees, with interests indistinguishable from the interests of management (Rosenthal 2004: 602). For these employees, the principles and values of the organization have become their own. In both instances, the rationale is that in the process of harnessing employees' emotions and transforming them into a service which is then offered by the organization, organizations can also achieve employee compliance, either by leaving them emotionally drained and exhausted, and thus powerless and incapable of resisting, or by blurring the line that separates the organization from its employees and thus rendering them incapable of recognizing the antagonism that divides workplace and employee (Rosenthal 2004: 610). This basically means that in both of these approaches, the possibility of workplace agency is foreclosed.

In contrast, the general argument espoused by Rosenthal (2004) is that, contrary to these two previous approaches, the possibility of instances of autonomy in the workplace is not completely eliminated by the use of normative forms of oversight. Instead, the demands placed on customer-contact employees by customers through instances of individual and personal interactions (Rosenthal 2004: 608-609), can result in the development of relationships of loyalty between customers and their servers which may run contrary to the interests of the business. According to Rosenthal (2004: 608-609), depending on the intensity of contact with the customer demanded by their job, workers are able to develop

different strategies to deal with their customers, according to their self-defined interests. Two studies that have undertaken empirical studies which consider this possibility are Brewster and Wills (2013) Sallaz (2002).

In a study addressing the relationship between agency and rule enforcement among blackjack dealers, Sallaz (2002: 396), explains that this overlap occurs because of the intricacies involved in customer-contact work. Since customer-contact employees are subject to the simultaneous oversight of customers and employers and receive the majority of their income from the first, employees can sometimes form alliances with either customers or managers which violate the interests of the other party. In this study, Sallaz (2002) describes a situation where employees cooperate with shop-floor supervisors against non-tipping customers.

The findings reported by Sallaz (2002) show how, in the process of aligning the interests of the tipping customers to their own, employees develop strategies which can run contrary to the rules of the organization. This is consistent with the findings reported by Brewster and Mallinson (2009). Brewster and Wills (2013: 197) refer to Brewster and Mallinson (2009) to explain that at the decision between rewards and penalties, the possibility of choosing whether to 'extend (or withhold) hospitable behaviours' is an expression of workplace autonomy. In the case of the actions described by Rusche and Brewster (2009) and Brewster and Mallinson (2009) there is the use of discriminatory practices to enforce the tipping norm, including the use of racial prejudices to determine the type of service that will be allocated to certain customers. Such practices run contrary to the interest of the business, since they are illegal and the business itself could be held accountable for allowing such behaviour to take place. Brewster and Mallinson (2009:

1056), for example, mention two cases of lawsuits filed against American restaurant chains on the grounds of racial discrimination.

To summarize, the evidence shows that customers tip for various reasons, among which there is the need to reward service. However, there is also strong evidence to show that customers also tip to conform to the tipping norm. The tipping norm is a mechanism of social control and a system that structures social relationships. In choosing tipping over other types of incentives, such as commissions or rewards on productivity, businesses are also choosing to prioritize certain aspects of their employees work over others. Simultaneously, by choosing the tipping norm over other forms of rewarding their employees' labour, businesses are also choosing one form of organizational structure over others. Because this type of personalized service conditions a waiter's income to their capacity to obtain their customer's trust, it is a system that fosters the development of personal bonds between customer and employee. As the studies discussed above show, the tipping system is a system of oversight in which the capacity of each agent to enforce the norm is mediated by amount of control retained by the business as well as the intensity of the bond between customer and waiter. Because a waiter's income depends on the customer's perception of the waiter, the tipping system forces employees to develop creative approaches to the enforcement of the tipping norm. That is, the degree to which a waiter can deal with customers who refuse to comply without antagonizing them, the waiter will be able to maximize his income. In the context of a system of shared oversight that produces split loyalties (waiters are loyal to the tipping customer and to the business to different degrees), this can also produce instances of deviance in which the waiter chooses one loyalty over the other.

In the following section, I analyse the evidence collected at *Marbella's* through the use of these ideas. Particularly, my focus is on the intensity of the customer-waiter

relationship over the relationship between the waiter and the business. To do this, I first compare the intensity of supervision given to dancers as opposed to waiters. Subsequently, I consider the proportion of the waiters' income that originates in customer tips as opposed to the proportion of their income from other sources, especially funds received directly from the club.

### **THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WAITERS' CUSTOMER SUPERVISION AND DANCERS' BUREAUCRATIC SUPERVISION**

To show how the ideas discussed above apply to the club, in this section I compare the mechanisms used to supervise *Marbella's* waiters and dancers. Beginning with the dancers, it is important to note that, despite the lack of a formal work contract and being paid in cash at the end of they, are subject to various bureaucratic (Rosenthal 2004) forms of control and supervision. Dancer supervision begins the moment they arrive at the bar and continues throughout the day, when, periodically, other employees hold them accountable to the order in which their performances on stage take place and their place in the club at any given time. Throughout their shift, each dancer is continuously evaluated, their number of customers assessed, and their general level of alcoholic intoxication observed.

At *Marbella's*, management supervises the dancers by means of a strict method of time-keeping which is made possible by the cycle of on-stage presentations. At the beginning of every shift, each dancer sets her place in the timesheet that regulates the sequence of presentations by registering with the DJ the moment she finishes changing into her dance attire and is able to demonstrate her readiness to dance by being present on the bar floor. The on-stage show begins every day at three o'clock. This is known as the beginning of the *variedad* in club jargon. This means that at the end of the musical interlude that had been

playing randomly over the loudspeakers, one of the dancers will take the central stage or one of the side stages (this will continue approximately until nine o'clock, when the manager will order the use the other two stages). After she finishes, the DJ plays two songs and another dancer takes the stage.

From opening, at two o'clock, and until closing at midnight, there is continuous music on the loudspeakers. There are exceptions, in extraordinary cases, for example when the DJ is not in the cabin or a song track is corrupted, or perhaps a dancer failed to appear on stage, or when dancers refuse to go up on stage during the intermissions, when every dancer is obliged to return to stage and stand there alongside the other dancers for the duration of three songs. Every three dancers, there is an intermission called *presentación* in which the DJ calls all the dancers to the stage at the same time for the purpose of ensuring that all dancers who are not working, either performing a private dance or booked in the private areas, are kept busy.

Every time a dancer steps onto the stage, she is obliged to present a routine consisting of four songs, with each song lasting for approximately three to four minutes. In total, each dancer stays on the stage for about 15 minutes. During the last four minutes, the dancer presents a *momento sensual* or *destape* (each DJ uses a different choice of words to refer to the third song and stage of the routine where the dancer will transition into a more slow-paced dance before becoming naked). It is during these four minutes that the dancer will progressively take some of her clothing off. Depending on the dancer, and the time of day, the degree of undress will vary. If there are few customers on the premises, some dancers will simply remain fully dressed. In contrast, if it's around nine o'clock, it is most likely that the dancer will disrobe completely. After each dance, there is an intermission of two or three more songs. After the intermission, another dancer goes up on stage. Patronage usually

reaches its peak at nine o'clock and the bar stays full until an hour before closing. As the hour approaches midnight, the number of customers falls dramatically. During peak hours, the manager will open the side stages. First the stage furthest from the front entrance and finally the last stage, closest to the entrance. Intermissions will also disappear during peak hours, until the moment where there are four dancers on stage at any moment. This is obtained by having two dancers on the main stage and a dancer each on the side stages. It is in this way that the music and the presence of dancers on stage defines the temporal order of the space.

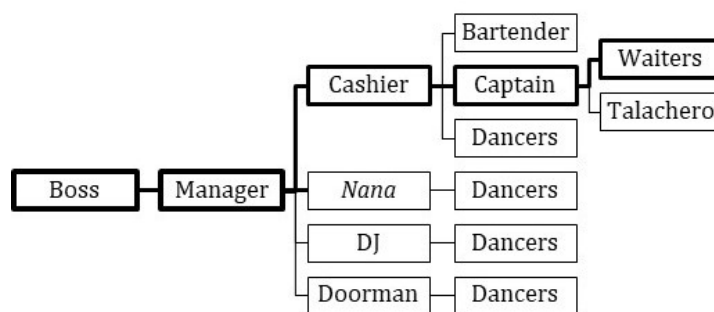
While I was employed at *Marbella's*, there were two occasions when the Manager instructed the captain to remind all waiters that dancers were obliged to walk on stage during the intermission or *presentación*. He warned us that for every dancer who refused to go on stage during the presentation, the waiter responsible for that customer's table had to pay for the dancer's time. This instruction seemed to be a response to the resistance dancers were showing to going up on stage. With this, the manager made each waiter a supervisor responsible for the dancers sharing a table with one of their customers. Their role consisted in keeping dancers from giving customers free time by staying at their table without consuming alcohol, or by staying at the customer's table for too long without asking him to go upstairs, particularly during the stage presentations. A *presentación* is the moment when all dancers who are not *ocupadas* (upstairs performing a service or doing a private dance) go up on stage during the duration of four long songs, for around 20 minutes. The strict rule during this time is that no dancer stays seated (either with a customer or by herself) unless the customer has paid the 4 *promociones* (private dances), with a total cost of \$240 pesos (£9<sup>60</sup>), necessary to keep her at a table. Otherwise, she has to be on-stage waiting for a customer while the DJ peddles her stage name and repeats the cost of a private dance.

Another mechanism used at *Marbella's* to oversee the dancers' work is through the use of a system of financial penalties by which managers reduce a portion of the dancers' salary according to the hour at which they arrive at the bar. There are two posted signs on the back of the entrance door to the dressing rooms, the area where the dancers leave their personal belongings, shower, undress and change, do their makeup, do their hair, eat, and take a break from the day's work. The top sign is a letter-sized sheet of plain printer paper, with an array of more than 30 rows and five or six columns. The first column has the legend 'name' and each row down has the name of a dancer. In total there are 21 rows with names, some of which I haven't heard before at that bar. The following columns, to the right, are marked with '1st', '2nd' and successively until sixth. In the second column, under the legend '1st' are marked dates with the current month, June, the year 2016. Each dancer has an assigned date, which corresponds to the date of their monthly health check-up. Under this schedule there is a bright yellow sign, probably made from stiff cardboard or paperboard, on which someone has used a permanent marker to write down hours and money amounts in the form of a matrix. The column on the left has a heading labelled 'afternoon' and the one on the right has one which is marked 'night'.

It is on this chart where management lays out the rules according to which the salary is paid out to the dancers. Each row has an hour. For example, in the space labelled according to the afternoon shift, beginning with three o'clock and increasing in 30-minute intervals, each column shows an amount. The highest amount corresponds to three o'clock. and the amount ascribed to this time is \$400 pesos (£16). From there, the amounts decrease at intervals of \$50 (£2). In the bottom row, there is only a warning: After 17:30, no salary. After 18:00, no entry.



For waiters, the mechanisms used by management to supervise their work are significantly different. Compared to the way time is kept for the dancers, *Marbella's* waiters are subject to a more flexible system. For example, management does not only tolerate waiters' tardiness, but accepts delays of up to one hour without requiring them to be reported to a supervisor. This is possible because no one registers the exact time of arrival of each waiter and the bar does not have a graduated system of monetary penalizations in place to punish waiters. If waiters choose to leave early, they must ask for permission and pay the \$50 pesos (£2) daily salary they are given at the beginning of the shift together with \$100 (£4) (\$150 with one of the cashiers) pesos to use for change. This attitude is in stark contrast with the approach taken towards the dancers, for whom there are strict rules on time management. First thing they have to do after arriving to work is to register their name at the door, and the time they take to change into work clothing is also registered by the DJ who then schedules their turn on the stages.



**Figure 9** A system of bureaucratic social control: workplace hierarchy and chain of command at *Marbella's*. Self-elaboration with information from Rosenthal (2004).

In terms of mechanisms of supervision, accomplished through the chain of command, the waiters' situation is also less restrictive. Unlike the dancers who are subject to supervision from a variety of employees, including waiters, DJ, doorman, and manager, *Marbella's* waiters are basically supervised only by a limited number of employees: the

cashier, bartender, and captain. Additionally, this chain of command (Figure Nine) is only concerned with the financial aspects of the waiters' work. As a result, the main responsibility for waiter supervision is left to the customers. This means that *Marbella's* management focuses exclusively on controlling the waiters' access to the product, while every other aspect of their work is transferred to the customers. It also means that customers have no control over the dancers' work; while, in contrast, they have complete oversight over the service quality aspect of the waiters' labour at the site of the customer-waiter interaction (Rosenthal 2004).

For the waiters, this means that the tone of their relationship with the cashiers and bartenders is set by their role. Since they work as a team to ensure that every order placed at the bar has been paid for before it is given to the waiter and that the pricing reported in each order slip is correct, they are both viewed negatively by the waiters. This is particularly the case because this is not a one-dimensional relationship. Like the exchanges described by Sallaz (2002), where shop-floor deviance was tolerated by casino supervisors, at *Marbella's* the superior's interests are not necessarily and un-problematically aligned with the organization and cashiers are known to short-change the waiters and bartenders are known to take drinks from customers' orders.

This is the reason why, every time a waiter approaches the till, the cashier will double-check the price-per-item column on the slip. If a waiter has made a mistake, the cashier will either charge the waiter the difference or give an instruction to return the difference to the customer. I know this because after the boss decided to lower the price of beer bottles on Monday and Tuesday, lowering the sale price to waiters from \$23 to \$20 (£0<sup>80</sup>), and defining the resale price at \$20 instead of \$24 (eliminating commission on the sale of beer), I mistakenly charged a customer \$24 pesos (£0<sup>96</sup>) and wrote \$23 pesos (£0<sup>92</sup>)

on the order slip. Seeing the mistake, the cashier immediately asked me how much I had charged the customer and, realizing my mistake, I admitted to it. He accused me of having intentionally deceived the customer. He said I had overcharged the customer in order to keep the money, so he ordered me to give the money back to the customer.

To summarize, in her analysis of the organizational structure and social control in the context of the service and hospitality industry, Rosenthal (2004) argues that the specificities of the system of oversight used to regulate the work of customer-contact employees create conditions for workplace agency. In the service industry, customer-contact workers receive most of their income directly from their customers, yet, at the same time, the organization outsources oversight tasks to those very customers. In the study undertaken among casino dealers by Sallaz (2002) a similar arrangement was shown to have implications for employee loyalty. In that case, croupiers developed strategies to encourage players to become tipping customers, to favour and improve the odds of tipping customers, and to penalize non-tipping customers.

Using this insight, I argue that compared to the amount of effort given to supervising the relationship between customers and dancers, at *Marbella's*, waiters are not only given the liberty to set their own schedules. Dancers must answer to the doormen and the house-mum, the DJ, the managers, and the waiter, as well as to the cashier, but the waiters are only supervised by cashiers, the captain, and bartenders. While dancers' work at the customer table is under constant monitoring by the waiters, as well as the stewards, who ensure that the dancer does not spend time with a customer free of charge, waiters work at the customers' table is only under the customers' supervision.

While all of these factors are favourable to the shift in loyalties away from the business and towards the customer, there is another condition that needs to be considered. Additional to the minimal supervision of the customer-waiter relationship, and the emphasis on the use of the hierarchy to supervise exclusively the financial aspect of the waiters' work, there is the question of waiter income. That is, the development of relationships such as those described by Sallaz (2002), Rusche and Brewster (2009), and Rosenthal (2004) depends on the development of a relationship of financial dependence in which the responsibility for paying the waiters' salary is transferred directly to the customer. To investigate this possibility, in the next section I consider the waiters' sources of income, as the origin of the funds would tilt the waiters' loyalties in the direction of either the club or the customers.

### **PIECEWORK PAYMENTS**

*Marbella's* waiters are rewarded for their labour in three ways. These include: the tip for gendered services, rounding up to the nearest multiple of five, and the payment they receive as a commission on sales. In the previous section I concluded that in order to consider the effects of waiter income on waiters' role and workplace obligations, it is necessary to determine the degree to which waiters depend directly on their customers for their payment. In this section, I consider each one of these methods individually, identify their relative importance in relation to the other sources of income, and determine the customers' direct involvement in making these payments. To organize the discussion, I first focus on the practice of rounding and commission on sales of drinks since these two payments take place simultaneously in a way that makes them indistinguishable. In this discussion it is important to note that, despite the marginal amounts of money involved, these two schemes are fundamental in shaping the customer waiter relationship.

Waiters frequently receive both payments, commission and the rounded-up amount, as one lump sum in the same transaction. Every time a customer pays for a drink, the customer rounds up the amount to the nearest multiple of five and, without having knowledge of it, also pays the waiter's commission on the sale of the drink. This means that for every beer bottle purchased, the waiter receives \$2 pesos or £0<sup>.08</sup>. Half of this amount, \$1 peso, is the payment awarded to him for the sale. The other half is a small tip or gratuity that results from rounding up to the five-peso coin.

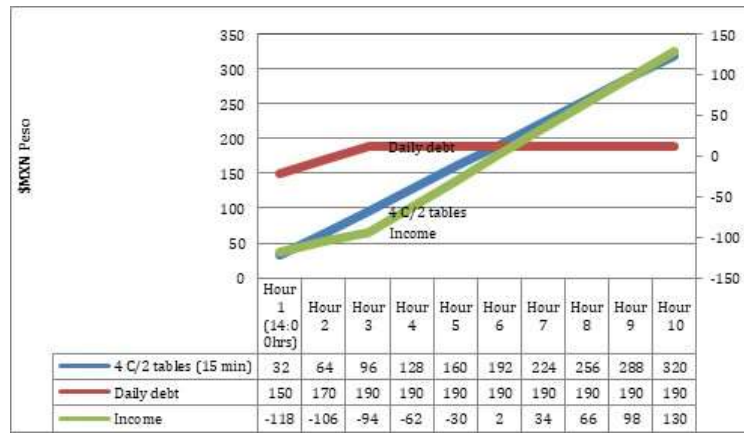
If we ignore the income received through rounding-up temporarily and consider the system of payment through commission in isolation it is possible to see that, in order to function, this form of payment depends on a special pricing scheme. For the most commonly consumed beer, the *Tekate* light which is served in a brown 250ml bottle, the public price at *Marbella's* is at \$24 pesos or £0<sup>.96</sup>. However, unbeknownst to the customer, each waiter pays \$23 pesos (£0<sup>.92</sup>) at the till. This means that, on any day except Mondays and Tuesdays, the commission is of either \$1 peso (£0<sup>.04</sup>) when it is a beer consumed by a customer or \$5 pesos (£0<sup>.20</sup>) per drink when it is the dancer who orders the drink and consumes it at a customer's table. Because customers at *Marbella's* have an overwhelming preference for beers, as the shift progresses, waiters gradually accumulate funds at \$1 peso increments – that is, they earn a commission on the sale of each drink.

A similar pricing scheme applies to drinks ordered by dancers when customers invite them to sit at their table. At *Marbella's*, both dancers and waiters receive a portion of each drink each time a dancer accepts an invitation to chat with a customer at the customer's table. Every time a dancer orders a drink, the waiter earns the equivalent of £0<sup>.20</sup> from the difference between the price the waiter pays at the till and the price he charges the customer. The prices for the dancers are slightly different from the pricing system used for the

customers. Where customer pricing applies only to beers, for dancers it applies to all drinks. Whether or not a dancer orders the most commonly consumed drink - a light beer in a 190ml bottle - a waiter earns the equivalent to a \$5 peso (£0.<sup>20</sup>) commission.

To ensure that waiters are motivated to participate in the system, *Marbella's* gives waiters priority on the sale of alcohol. Although they are not the only employees who can serve alcohol, since the bartenders and the stewards are also allowed to sell drinks, the club has certain organizational features in place to favour the waiters. For bartenders, for example, it is the limited number of seats available at the bar, which are often occupied by dancers, who often use bar seats to wait for customers. For stewards, the opportunities to sell alcohol are limited by the fact that they are excluded from lining up at the queue. Since they are not part of the turn system, they are not assigned to arriving customers and can therefore only sell alcohol if luck is on their side and a customer confuses them for a waiter.

At first glance, the system appears to discriminate against the development of strong customer-waiter relationships as it places greater emphasis on the quantity of drinks sold. However, if the other sources of income are considered, it becomes immediately clear that rather than prioritizing quantity over quality, the club is actually looking for the development of a more intense relationship between customer and waiter. This is because the rate is not high enough to pay for a day's work, and because it is the customer, and not the club, who actually pays the commission. In other words, by making the tipping system the predominant source of the waiters' income, the club renounces completely to all its financial obligations with its employees.



**Figure 10** Daily break-even point. Self-elaboration.

The histogram in Figure Ten provides a visual illustration of what the arrangement of payments through commissions means for the waiters. It shows how the break-even point, the point at which they break free from their debt and can begin to make an income, is only reached by the middle of the shift. The red line (labelled Daily debt) represents the cost involved in working at the bar, while the blue line (labelled 4 C/2 tables) represents profit from commission. The green line (labelled Income) reflects the difference between the two other values, or the waiter's income. The diagram is plotted under the assumption that each waiter has a constant number of customers who consume standard drinks at a steady rate.

On any given day (except Monday or Tuesday), if a waiter is assumed to have two tables throughout the day, with four customers each consuming a beer every 15 minutes, after the first hour, the earnings amount to \$32 pesos (£1<sup>.28</sup>) in commission. An hour later, the amount of profit doubles and so on. If this rate of profit were to continue, the break-even point occurs until his sixth hour on the job, at which point his income is \$2 pesos (£0<sup>.08</sup>). An hour later, the income is \$34 pesos (£1<sup>.36</sup>) and so forth. If the waiter were to continue to the end of the shift working at the same rate, his total earnings for the day amount to a hypothetical \$130 pesos (£5<sup>.20</sup>), of which he needs to set \$120 (£4<sup>.80</sup>) aside simply to be able

to travel to work the next day, given that the district where the club is located is not residential. On our daily walks to the bus stop, I had inquired about the neighbourhood, discovering that the majority of waiters live in the same general area at least two hours away from the club. As a result of this decision to set such a low rate on the sale of alcohol, waiters are forced to focus most of his attention to their other two sources of income: rounding up and the tipping system.

The first thing that needs to be said about the rounding-up and the tipping system is that they are not independent from each other. Instead, waiters use the rounding-up system strategically, as a means of predicting a customer's tipping intentions. In other words, by looking at a customer's willingness to round-up, a waiter has a way of measuring his customer's disposition to tip. Because of this, rather than delivering service blindly, without any certainty of the customers tipping practices, *Marbella's* waiters can react to the customer's tipping intentions immediately after the customer has ordered the first drink, changing their approach accordingly. Every time a waiter delivers a drink, the customer has an opportunity to engage the server in conversation and request changes to the service delivery. It is common to see customers asking for napkins, limes, and to see servers walking around and removing any empty bottles left on tables., and, when this happens, customers will use the rounding up to reciprocate.

Thanks to customer's rounding up their change, waiters can identify tippers or *padrinos* and non-tippers or *piojos* soon after their first order is placed. This is fundamental. In the restaurant industry, for example, Brewster and Mallinson's (2009: 1060) study of discriminatory practices among waiters noted that the tipping system is a source of uncertainty for customer-contact workers. The reason for this is that 'tipping occurs after a service has been provided' (Brewster and Mallinson 2009: 1060). At *Marbella's*, however,



unless a customer asks explicitly to put his consumption on the tab, every order must be finalized at the moment it is delivered to the table. This means that, soon after the customer arrives at the club, the waiter has dispelled a large amount of uncertainty from the interaction. Even after the very first order, the waiter is already aware of the customer's choice in drink, the rate at which he is drinking, as well as the banknote denominations being used in every transaction.

### **THE NEED FOR AN ADDITIONAL SOURCE OF INCOME**

In the previous section, I argued that the income waiters receive from commissions on the sale of alcohol, and the extra money they make from their customers' practice of rounding up, is insufficient and that money is a constant source of concern. This explains why waiters' financial worries are a frequent subject of conversation and is clearly apparent in how they monitor their own performance obsessively. Each time they receive money in a transaction, they check and double check the amounts. As they stand in the queue, they can be seen counting their money time and time again. Every time they return from serving a table, they count their coins and their bills, going to the extreme of writing down the balance on the back of their notepads. Each time they are at the till, they have exchanges with the cashier, particularly when there are bills waiting to be paid. Although this rarely develops into fully blown arguments, the frequency with which these exchanges take place contributes to a constant state of anxiety.

Money was also always a subject of conversation<sup>23</sup>. This can be seen in the exchanges I had with other waiters. For example, on 7 May 2016, as we waited for the first customer to

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<sup>23</sup> Week 7, May 28: 154; Week 4, May 4: 173-175

arrive, I sat next to Diego, one of my co-workers. Since it was a slow day, we decided not to stand in the queue, but to sit at the table located immediately in front of the main entryway. He asked me how I was doing and if I was finally making ends meet. I told him I was still struggling. He agreed, adding that he was struggling as well. I asked him if he owed any money to the woman who Pepe had mentioned the day before—a woman that ran an informal loan service at the bar<sup>24</sup>. Both Pepe and one of the busboys had agreed that they start by asking for small amounts but then “find it easy and they’ll ask for more money. [...] And soon you’re owing \$4,000 pesos [£160] and you’re having to pay \$300 pesos [£12] a day. It becomes difficult to make the payments because that’s what they earn per day—around \$200 or \$300 pesos”<sup>25</sup>. Diego, without much to add, simply said he was having a hard time making the payments and asked me if I had already fallen for it.

A related concern that was also part of our conversations was the subject of internal tips. By the end of every shift, most waiters will have paid around \$90 pesos (£3<sup>60</sup>) out of their pocket in tips. About \$50 pesos (£2) of the total amount will go to the two busboys. This money is paid out to them under the logic that they help the waiters, either by picking up glasses and bottles from tables or by stacking the cases away when they are filled with empty bottles. One of the busboys only receives \$20 pesos (£0<sup>80</sup>) because his duties relate less to waiting practices: he is mostly in charge of cleaning the washrooms and floors and only stays around for the first part of the shift to clean one last time and collect a tip. The bartenders on the other hand receive a tip for the speed at which they can fulfil orders and for preparing cocktails. It is this tip which is responsible for provoking most of the chatter.

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<sup>24</sup>The loans are given at 20-day interest periods. A \$1,000 (£40) loan in 20 days costs \$200 pesos (£8) (Week 7, May 28: 155-158)

<sup>25</sup> Week 7, May 28: 157-158

Waiters know that bartenders receive tips from customers sitting at the bar, and there are rumours that they also receive a fixed salary. So, generally, the approach is to try to prevent each other from tipping more than the norm, which to them implies that everybody else is obliged to match the tip.

When tipping or debts were not the subject of our conversations, we spoke about their expenses at home and their side projects to make extra money. An incident that took place nearing the end of the ninth week<sup>26</sup> at *Marbella's* serves as an illustration of this. On that day, Rodolfo (who was working as a waiter on that Wednesday but also doubled as the bartender every other day) received a call early in the shift. It must have been around three or four o'clock, since the first customers had just arrived. I saw him pick up, but the music was too loud to hear anything, even for him. He ran to the storage room under the stairwell and closed the door behind him. When he came out, he was already removing his apron and he had taken off his tie altogether. On his way past the queue, Pedro stopped him. "What happened?" - somebody asked. "My daughter fell. I've got to go and give money to my wife. They're gonna take her to the doctor", he replied. After he returned, he informed me that his wife had come to the bar to ask him for money because his daughter had been convulsing after the fall. The very next day, June 10<sup>27</sup>, Rodolfo mentioned that his daughter had been admitted into the hospital and that he had stayed with her the entire night, after I asked him about the incident that had happened on the previous day. From the field notes:

The captain mentioned his daughter being in the hospital the whole night and him having to pay \$1,100 pesos [£44] just like that: \$600 pesos [£24] for the doctor visit and the rest for medicines. This incident was just alarming - I mean, out of nowhere,

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<sup>26</sup> Week 9, June 9: 151-158

<sup>27</sup> Week 9, June 10: 74-79

an emergency: \$1,100 pesos. [This is what]<sup>28</sup> these guys are making - maybe that much per day, maybe a little less. But evidently they live on a day to day basis [...] I heard that he had asked the other cashier to borrow \$600 - \$500 pesos and Beto was going to take it to him, but the cashier forgot and so the guy didn't actually get the money (Week 9, June 10: 74-79).

Money was also the underlying concern when other matters were discussed. On Week 4, for example (see footnote 42), Diego had an argument with Beto while we stood in the waiters' queue. Diego wanted to take collective action. During that week, he had been talking to every waiter individually. He was trying to organize all the waiters. He wanted to ask the manager to return to the pricing system on Mondays and Tuesdays that allowed for a commission to be paid out to all waiters on the sale of beer—something that had changed on that same week under the argument that the bar was losing customers to competition. Diego's argument could be summarized as follows: customers are only paying the cost of the beer and waiters are simply losing money when they go to work.

Together, these different examples testify to the financial circumstances under which these employees work. They also show how at *Marbella's*, waiters are completely dependent on customer gratuities. Waiters cannot depend exclusively on the money they earn on the sale of drinks but rely instead on the tips they receive from their customers. Rather than being an additional, complementary income, the tips are the main source of their livelihood. In fact, it would not be possible for waiters to survive if they were forced to work only for the money earned from reselling drinks at the club. This money would not only be insufficient to cover a family's living costs, as it is only enough to cover their own transport and food costs, as I experienced first-hand.

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<sup>28</sup> In passages, words in brackets were added during transcription to improve intelligibility of my verbal descriptions.

## THE TIPPING SYSTEM

In order to make a living, waiters depend completely on customers' tips. This means that rather than working on commission and maximize quantity over quality by serving more customers or forcing the same customers to consume more and faster, they prioritize quality of service. To maximize his income, an efficient waiter would direct his interactions with a given customer towards either of those two goals. Up-selling the type of drink does not work at *Marbella's* since only beers have a \$1 peso commission and selling beers by the bucket does not carry any additional incentive.

Not all services are equal in the eyes of customers. Services involving the time needed to serve a drink after an order is placed, accuracy in fulfilling the order or the temperature of the drinks (which are preferred when served chilled in ice) are rewarded<sup>29</sup> but these are relatively less important when compared to the rewards received when waiters initiate conversations with their customers, avoid controversial opinions, use gestures which increase physical proximity, and succeed in making their customers laugh. At *Marbella's*, this involves the use of the same gestures as their customers, or by ensuring that the dancers a customer is interested in, will comply to his requests without the need for customer intervention.

Additionally, waiters also operate as the customers' point of access to some of the dancers. Before providing a concrete, empirical example, it is useful to consider an average interaction as a point of reference. The first component of this interaction is the greeting. It

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<sup>29</sup> On any given day, the tip for serving a drink or for finding an adequate table is \$2 pesos per instance—every time a drink is served (the equivalent of £0.1).

is then that the waiter employs the first strategy: a pat on the back and a welcoming greeting that includes the word *padrino*. Once the customer has entered the club, taken his assigned seat, placed an order, and paid for the first drink, the waiter assesses the customer's tipping intentions. Every time a waiter serves an additional drink, the customer may choose either to demand the full change to be returned to him, in which case the waiter proceeds to take a one-peso coin from his apron or allow the waiter to keep the change. In this way, the customer gradually assumes the role assigned at the moment of their first encounter or refuses to tip and becomes a *piojo*.

Whether a customer has opted to give or refuse the change for the first drink, or has opted to ask the waiter to issue credit for the tab, the waiters' duties involve offering the option to place a request for a dancer to join him at his table. If the customer chooses a dancer, and the waiter knows will not be available or is not willing to provide the service, the waiter will offer alternatives along with a summary of other customers' impressions on the dancers that are available. This involves engaging the customer in a conversation whereby the waiter expresses similar opinions about the dancer in question. From the fieldnotes:

It seemed that one of the guys was waiting for the man to go and get a service. And that's what the guy wanted. In this case, it was a shorter guy with a beard and a black shirt and hat. This guy—who seemed to talk a lot—was the one interested in a service. He went up to me and asked me: “okay, tell me about the dancers. Which ones are there? I've seen some, they're okay. I'll just go up and get a private service” (Week 5, May 11: 90-92).

In this way, the interaction can be divided into two different instances. First, there is a detailed exchange on the dancers, in which the waiter expresses approving opinions about the customer's taste in women. Secondly, on this cue, customers will then begin to ask about a dancer's services. Waiters encourage this because they know the dancers' work schedules

and routines. By being first-person participants of table-side conversations, they know which dancers draw more interest and are knowledgeable about their services, personalities, and whether or not dancers are willing to allow physical contact. Because they have full access to club facilities, they can always approach the DJ and inquire about the schedule for stage performances. From the staff controlling access to the private area, they also know whether or not a dancer is working in a private booth, the customer she is working with, the time she has spent there, as well as the types of services she is doing and the amount of time left for her service. From the staff controlling the dressing rooms, waiters have access to information on whether a dancer has showered or is showering, has taken a break to eat or not, and whether she has taken any breaks yet that evening.

In all, the waiters' place in club hierarchy makes them the only employee capable of having the access, knowledge, and mobility necessary to intervene with a dancer in favour of a customer. This is why, throughout the shift, they can be seen relaying messages between customers and dancers. In other words, the waiter's role also involves negotiating prices for customers and providing information about dancers when necessary. Frequently, waiters use their insider knowledge to guide their customers. Sometimes this involves suggesting certain dancers over others, other times it means that customer choices are reinforced. When this happens, and dancers accept a customers' invitation, allowing them to interact publicly with dancers or to obtain sexual favours, the tipping norm dictates that waiters should be rewarded financially.

My own experience waiting tables at *Marbella's* provides an accurate illustration of this. It was a Wednesday<sup>30</sup> and the customer who had walked into the bar was not interested

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<sup>30</sup> Observations were made on June 8, 2016 but recorded and labelled the next day.

in me despite my efforts to show him to a table. He had another waiter in mind and asked directly for him. It was a regular customer who, very much like another customer on that same day, had reacted to my greeting by asking for his habitual waiter specifically by name. It was Diego's day off and by coincidence I was the waiter to greet patrons. The first customer—who had chosen to sit at the stage—seemed distracted. He spent his entire time at the bar looking at his smartphone. The second customer, in contrast, immediately referred to Diego as his *mesero estrella*<sup>31</sup>—his star waiter—and challenged me to match him. He said he did not habitually allow other waiters to serve his tables, but that he would give me a chance. His approach was to immediately begin by giving me instructions. He wanted beer, brought one by one, and to pay at the end in one lump sum<sup>32</sup>. I counted a total of eleven beers (at \$24 pesos each, so \$264 pesos in total or the equivalent of £10.60, at an average rate of 15 to 20 minutes per drink for around three hours and thirty minutes in total).

Unlike the previous customer, however, this customer spoke to me about more than just drinks. It was dancers he was interested in. He revealed his interest by simply giving an opinion about a dancer's body and then asking if I agreed. My response was, as usual, to entertain the customer by saying something to the tone of: "She looks good! What do you think about her?" But I knew that with this response the conversation would not develop further. It was my subtle way of changing the topic. I had nothing else to say about the dancer and most customers would not be interested in simply talking about another dancer. After changing the topic, usually, my reaction would have been to excuse myself and continue working, but this customer was different. Instead, he opted to take back the lead: "Me las he

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<sup>31</sup> Week 9, June 9: 178

<sup>32</sup> Because every waiter has to pay for any product in order for the bar to fill the order, this instruction had the implication that I would pay for his drinking until the end of his stay, when he would refund me the money.



llevado a todas”<sup>33</sup>, he said—I’ve taken all of them to the private areas. Showing incredulity, I asked if he was serious. “How was it?”, I added. From that point on, each time I returned to the table, he would point to the dancers and evaluate them: “Well, with her the service is really good”, he repeated several times. Moments later, he interjected: “¡Ey! ¡Pregúntale cuánto me cobra!”—Hey! Go ask her how much!

To comply with his request, it was necessary to obtain more than an amount. This was not a direct question about price; it was his way of asking me to negotiate. The first dancer he chose, Kylie, simply refused. Tell him to come himself, she said. Fearing that this would be an insufficient response, I pressed on, insisting that the customer was shy. There was no change. I returned to the customer and informed him that she wanted him to ask her personally. He replied he had changed his mind and that he was interested in a dancer who was on the stage and whom I knew about but had never spoken to. I approached the stage and gestured for her to come closer. “Pregunta que ¿cuánto le cobras por un privado?”—He wants to know how much you charge for a private dance? I asked. Her response was to ask me who was asking. I pointed to the customer, she looked and then she said that her price was \$300 plus the condom (£15 pounds approximately plus the condom). I returned with this new information—which up to that moment I ignored—and informed the customer. - “¡No! Doscientos. ¡No voy a pagar trescientos! ¿Quién es? ¡Ve otra vez!” – No! Two hundred. I am not paying three hundred! Who is she? Go ask her again!<sup>34</sup> After going back and forth one more time, and her finally settling on \$250 pesos as her best price, he stood

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<sup>33</sup> Week 9, June 9: 186

<sup>34</sup> Week 9, June 9: 242

up—leaving me talking—and instead approached her personally. He went back to the table only to finish up the last drops in his drink. I asked him what she had said, he said he had agreed on a price and then quickly left to catch up to her. She was already waiting for him at the foot of the stairs. They went up together and after some time he returned and settled his bill. And, just to restate the obvious, I did not receive any tips.

The next morning after the shift, as I recorded the notes, I reflected on my decision to continue with the negotiation in representation of the customer. It was troubling to me. It was not just that I was haggling, but that I felt that if I had tried to stop, I would have given him a reason to bring my masculinity into question. This is why I did not like that he later approached me to say that he appreciated my effort but that he would stay with his *mesero estrella*, I underscored feeling uncomfortable taking the part of an intermediary. It was not only about the money, or my interest in receiving a tip. I felt uncomfortable because I felt that if I chose to quit, I would be judged by this customer, possibly by other waiters. I also felt uncomfortable because of the sexual nature of the negotiation. This was not a mediation only motivated by material interests, it was mediated by gender and notions about sexuality.

This example provides a clear illustration of the *padrino's* preferred topics of conversation. This is a frequent customer to the club, who knows the waiters by name and who is talked about among the waiters. He is the embodiment of the *padrino*. He knows that at *Marbella's* the waiters' performance and knowledge of dancer services are subject to supervision by the customer. He knows his role and holds me accountable to his expectations. At the same time, he is also in control of the conversation. He defines the themes and expresses opinions about the dancers. Even though he does not explicitly say that he wants me to agree with his opinions, I cannot contradict him. This is the reason why

even though I cannot follow his conversation, I am forced to follow his lead and entertain him.

### **MASTERING THE TOPICS OF SEX**

Additional to the technical aspects of table service, and to negotiating in favour of their customers, in order to receive a tip from their customers, waiters have also discovered that their income depends more on how customers respond to certain cues than on the quality of their service. Frequently, waiters encourage each other to use certain words and act in specific ways towards their customers. They do this by using themselves as models, showing each other how things should be done to appear friendly, in ways that very much resemble the behavioural displays shown by their customers. In other words, waiters have discovered that it pays for them to behave and talk in ways that the customers find familiar.

Waiters strive to build the customer's trust, to be attentive and sympathetic to their interests. To further clarify how waiters constitute *strategies*, it is useful to return to the literature on touching and its relationship to tipping behaviour. At this point, I want to introduce the concept of mimicry, an idea that has been examined in relation to restaurant tipping practices (e.g. van Baaren *et al.* 2003 and Kühn *et al.* 2010)). Like other studies in the Social-Psychology approach to the investigation on the effects of touch on tipping, van Baaren's (2003) study was designed around two social experiments which were undertaken in a restaurant setting. The first experiment consisted of testing the effects of mimicry, which in this case is basically defined interactionally: a waitress repeating a customer's order back to them. In the control condition, nothing was said. In total, the sample included 30 dining parties in each of the two conditions, all of whom were unaware of the experiment. In the second experiment the waitress was also asked to write down the customers' responses and

a baseline was established to compare the average tip obtained outside of the experiment. In both cases, the researchers obtained significant results indicating that mimicry had a positive effect on tip size in both the naïve and non-naïve conditions. In this way, van Baaren *et al.* (2003: 394) conclude that ‘mimicry increases both liking and interpersonal closeness’ and that this may in turn ‘make [*people*] more benevolent towards the person who imitates them’.

In the second, more recent study, Kühn *et al.* (2010) study the effect of actors mimicking the actions of two interaction partners. Compared to the previous study, where the behaviour in question involved the servers repeating the order back to the customer, in this case the study focuses on measuring the responses elicited by observing others change their postures either from a first person or a third person point of view. Mimicry in this case is defined as the action of imitating the gestures performed in the context of an interaction. This imitation is done sequentially, immediately after the other participant in the interaction performed the gesture. In this case, the experiment consisted in the authors recording 14 pairs of female actors, who were recorded on video while having an interaction. In half of these interactions, the actors were instructed to mimic the actions of the person with their back to the camera, and in the other half they were instructed to not mimic the gestures but instead respond with a different gesture. The gestures included crossing their legs, fixing their hair and placing their hands on their lap. One of these participants was instructed to stand with their back to the camera. This produced 14 video-clips which were then played back to 129 female participants, half of whom had to take the first-person point of view of the person with their back to the camera. For these participants the experiment required that they subject themselves to an analysis of their brain electrical activity and that they evaluate their perception of the interaction. The evaluation results indicated that the persons viewing the footage reported positive feelings when the interaction involved mimicry.

Both studies speak to the effect of using similar gestures interactionally. The strength of their findings relates to the difference between their chosen method of measuring the observed effects of mimicry. The first study is based on the findings obtained from first-person responses elicited interactionally, while the other focuses on the perceived effects of mimicry on an observer. However, despite their differences, they add to an already voluminous body of literature linking the use of bodily gestures to positive effects in controlled interactions. As these authors show, emotional or interpersonal closeness is produced using similar speech acts and of non-verbal bodily movements.

To demonstrate the applicability of these concepts to the interactions that take place at *Marbella's*, I first need to return to the two strategies discussed above: ensuring dancer compliance and appealing to the customers' affinity towards identity by performing similar gestures. Even though one of these strategies is verbal and the other non-verbal, both share a fundamental similarity: they are both appeals to a common identity. Each time a waiter shares the customer's opinion about a dancer, he is taking a step in bringing himself closer to the customer by eliminating differences. The same applies each time a customer expresses an interest in summoning a dancer, and the waiter is capable of negotiating with the dancer favourably. This can be demonstrated through the vignettes on my own experience at the club, particularly the ones collected near the end of fieldwork<sup>35</sup>.

Waiters provide personalized services, making sure that they have memorized the customer's preferences and tastes. All of this is achieved by mimicking the customers' gestures and mannerisms, which is one of the first lessons a novice waiter receives from his

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<sup>35</sup> Week 9, June 9: 178-265 and 309-315 and 337-341

co-workers immediately upon joining the club pertains to the value of mimicry (van Baaren *et al.* 2003). While these behaviours - expressing heterosexual desire - are economically beneficial to them. As a result, waiters employ these ideas situationally, establishing reciprocal, long-term relationships with certain customers.

To maximize their income, waiters must become likeable. That is, like the dancers' attentiveness, sympathy and the willingness to have physical contact, waiters also employ strategies that improve their standing with a specific customer. Like dancers, waiters also strive to please their customers. One way of accomplishing this is by exploiting their knowledge of the customers' preferred topics of conversation. This involves focusing their exchanges on the topics they know customers prefer: dancers' bodies, willingness to participate in certain sexual acts, and on information about the rates they charge for each sexual service.

In Table Ten, I have assembled a selection of passages taken from the fieldnotes, which capture interactions in which the topics of conversation drifted towards the topic of dancers' bodies, the possibility of obtaining sexual favours, and the role imagined for the waiters in this context. This information was obtained by being directly involved in the interactions, once having gained access into this social world by adopting the role of a novice waiter. As the data listed in Table Ten shows, this strategy allowed me to have direct access to the subjects on which the customers were interested. These conversations took place at the tableside, either after a customer's arrival, after placing an order or as a direct result of the customer hailing me to his table.

<b>Waiter</b>	<b>Semiotic act</b>	<b>Situation</b>
Myself (Jorge)	Customer expresses a view that portrays	In a conversation with a customer in his early twenties, he chooses to stand between the stage and the bar, holding a

	dancers' sexual services as privileges (Week 5, May 13: 272-276)	beer in one hand. After asking a dancer for a private dance, he returns and calls me over. He asks: a) are there regular customers and do the dancers charge them less? b) are dancers and waiters sexually involved?
Myself (Jorge)	Although he is already interacting with a dancer at his table, the customer chooses to haggle for her services through the waiter (Week 3, May 1: 147-278)	While serving a lone customer seated next to the front entrance, I notice that he is wearing flip flop slippers and a baseball cap.  After opening an account and spending all my personal funds in financing the customer's drinks, I ask him if I can close the account. He invites me to sit by his side and asks how much a dancer earns for every drink she consumes with a customer. After I offer a number, that amounts to the payment a waiter has to make if he is to lose the dancer's paper stub valid for one drink (which she exchanges at the end of the shift for money), he corrects me and explains why it is not possible. He then proceeds to make an offer: I should serve him ten drinks at regular price, and he will instead give the dancer \$20 pesos (£1) cash and the same to me.
Myself (Jorge)	Customer complains after talking to dancer directly (Week 3, May 1: 309-310)	My response is to refuse, but I fear upsetting him. To soften my refusal, I point out that the dancer is not drinking fast. Finally, he closes the account but keeps ordering from me. After the football game being broadcasted on the monitors finishes, one of the customers asks about the dancers and their services. My response is to inform them what I have been told: that private dances are \$60 pesos for the duration of one song and \$120 pesos for the duration of three songs. I conclude by telling them that for specifics about services they need to ask the dancer personally. The customer then approaches a dancer while I am still at the table. He quickly returns and I can see that he is upset. After asking him, he informs me that "it is too expensive" and sits back down.
Myself (Jorge)	Customers demand sexual information about dancers as part of their interaction with waiters. (Week 3, May 1: 69-70)	While serving a table of six or seven men nearing the end of the shift, a customer approaches me to ask what is included in the VIP room. I reply that for \$200 (£10) pesos they can have access to a private room with couches and a pole for 30 minutes or an hour for a rate of \$300 pesos. Nothing else. He asks if the price includes dancers and I reply that he has to talk to the dancers and ask them personally.
Myself (Jorge)	Customer attempts to negotiate a dancer's services (Week 7, May 28: 424-428)	A couple of customers try to obtain information about the dancers by telling me that they will come again and ask for me. In exchange they say they want tips about which dancers are willing to perform sexual services, like oral sex or vaginal intercourse, for less money. I tell them that I have not spoken to the dancers and their response is that "I should talk more to them".

**Table 3** Customer fantasies invoking heterosexual desire. Self-elaboration

Table Three summarizes a few of the multiple incidents where the preferred topic of conversation was linked to sexuality. To give an example, there are the conversations that took place both on 13 May and 28 May (Table Three), where it is clear the common interest is sexuality. In both cases, the topics chosen were dancers' sexuality and the fantasy that sexual privileges are being exchanged between customers and waiters. First there is the incident registered under May 28. It refers to two customers, one of which wanted to know about the sexual privileges I could secure for them with the dancers. For these customers, the role of the waiter entailed negotiating with the dancers for the customers. They were particularly interested in obtaining sexual favours for free. This is the same fantasy expressed by the customer on May 16. In both of these cases, it is clear that the customer holds the waiter to be a bearer of information on dancer sexuality.

It should also be underscored that there is no evidence to indicate that the idea that these customers were expressing originated from the same source. First of all, the two exchanges take place with customers who appear to be from different backgrounds. The first incident involves an older regular customer and the second a young customer. Secondly, during the time I worked at the club, I never saw these customers together. It is also important to note that both interactions took place on different days of the same week, and that the only connection between these customers was their choice of club and their willingness to work with their assigned waiter. As a result, all of these factors are an indication of the prevalence of these ideas among customers.

The validity of this assertion is also supported by the fact that two customers take a similar approach when inquiring about the specifics of the sexual services performed by the dancers in a completely unrelated incident which took place days later (May 20). In contrast to the interaction registered under May 13, which was limited to a short question and answer



session consisting of two questions, the exchange involving these other two customers actually documents their response to my inability to give them the answers they are looking for. Like in the other cases discussed, in this situation my reply was that they had to speak to the dancers personally. For these customers, however, this response was not enough. To tell them that I did not have the information, was not sufficient. They wanted to know about the sexual practices that dancers were willing to perform and wanted me to find this out for the next time they visited the club.

This demand for information on dancers' sexuality has a counterpart. Table Four below lists several incidents in which customers themselves offered unprompted information about their sexual experiences, about their own objects of desire and about the sexual services they say dancers are willing to perform. As the examples show, customers freely offer information about their sexual lives, sometimes including graphic descriptions of sexual practices. In doing so, these customers invoke more than the sexual interactions themselves. Instead, they by invoking these images, these customers are able to make heterosexual moments of interaction out of their service encounters. This is because these interactions take place in the context of tableside conversations, as waiters (in many cases me) perform their work routines: serving drinks, cleaning table-tops, picking up empty bottles and taking new orders. Taken together, the cases reported in Table Four offer an indication of the type of responses customers expect from the type of interactions presented in Table Three.

Table Four lists multiple examples of customers expressing their desires without inhibition, as well as referring to their own sexual prowess in relation to dancers' sexuality. Under April 23rd, for example, there is an incident of a customer who chooses to refer to a dancer in terms of her willingness to perform oral sex. Similarly, labelled under May 14th

there is description of a customer talking about a dancer, whose name he did not recall, in terms of his desire for her body. He speaks about her in relation to her legs and his belief that she works as a cheerleader for a football team.

<b>Waiter</b>	<b>Semiotic act</b>	<b>Situation</b>
Myself (Jorge)	Customer boasts about his knowledge on the dancer's sexual services. (Week 2, April 23: 62-63)	While serving a table, a customer asks about a dancer.  During our conversation, he mentions that she is willing to perform oral sex, confirming Gustavo's story.
Beto	Waiter refers to his customers' conversation topics dismissively (Week 5, May 11: 41-43)	Expecting little business, the manager decides to dismiss everyone, except Beto and me.  Because the bar is nearly empty, Beto initiates a conversation as we lounge around while we wait for the first customer to walk in.
Beto	Waiter turns a sexual joke into a serious matter and offers advice (Week 4, May 8_2: 43-48)	He says the job "no tiene ciencia" (it is not difficult to grasp). I ask him topics he talks to the customers about. he replies "pendejadas" (nonsense). "All you have to do is talk to them, play with them and they will give you money".  As we prepare for the beginning of the shift, a dancer walks into the club. As she walks by, she brushes my shoulder and says: "Your head shines!". Beto, who was sitting at the next table, broke out in loud laughter. He says: "Well, you have to touch it, otherwise te va a hacer ojo" – she is going to jinx you. I smiled, to which his response was to say publicly: "if she wants sex, that's what they're for. Just don't fall in love". Gustavo then reacts by pointing in Pedro's direction and saying: "or give her gifts".
Myself (Jorge)	Customers use body features or willingness to perform sexual favours as the way to refer to dancers (Week 5, May 14: 42-91)	When asking about dancers, customers remember their stage names and features about their body. They also ask or refer to the sexual services she is willing to participate in.
Myself (Jorge)	Customer talks about dancers services and showcases his sexual prowess (Week 6, May 20: 307)	While waiting for a dancer he asked for by name, customer talks about having returned from having sex and having had sex the previous night and reviews the dancer's sexual performance in relation to the price. He also asks questions about the dancers I know, wanting to know which dancers I recommend.

**Table 4** Offering images of heterosexual desire. Self-elaboration

As the evidence cited above shows, waiters are not only exposed routinely to the customers' preferred topics of conversation in the course of their interactions, but they are also expected to participate and contribute with new information, reinforcing their customers' portrayal of themselves, the waiters, and the dancers. In the course of their work, waiters are often exposed to stories about the specific services performed by certain dancers, so when they are asked by a customer who they are trying to entertain to complete the narratives being constructed, it becomes natural for them to contribute. It is in this way that these stories gain a strategic dimension, becoming subject to citation, as the information they collect from other customers is brought into a new use in a new context. Additional to being a means of demonstrating intimacy with a dancer, these stories are redeployed by the waiters in order to maximize their tips.

In other words, this strategic use of conversation is the result of a self-reinforcing process. First, the information is acquired directly from the customers' own conversational inclinations, which generally tend to assign a role to club employees in relation to their own sexual desires. That is, there are certain premises to the customers' behaviour: there is an assumption of heterosexuality, an assumption that waiters are willing to listen and participate in stories about the customers' own sexual performance and experiences with dancers, and an assumption that waiters are not only interested in the dancers, but are actually involved in sexual relationships with them. Because of this, customers share their experiences freely and waiters are able to gather information. The second dimension of this self-reinforcing process takes place the moment another customer approaches the same waiter with a question about the same dancer. At this point, the waiter can use the information acquired previously to create rapport, obtain more information, and possibly receive a tip. Because all information can potentially be used with other customers, waiters who have been employed

longer, will also have access to a greater number of opportunities to engage customers in conversation, work with a greater number of dancers, will also have access to a more detailed number of facts about a greater number of dancers, and will thus be able to furnish more meaningful information to prospecting customers, develop a stronger rapport with their customers, and will also have a greater opportunity to collect more information.

### **FANTASIZING ABOUT CONTROLLING DANCER SEXUALITY**

Part of the conversational approach to encourage tipping involves reinforcing customer fantasies. These are fantasies that customers hold and express as part of their conversations, which portray waiters as the figures who have absolute control over dancer sexuality. In these fantasies, waiters obtain free sexual favours and can instruct dancers to perform certain sexual acts, and make discounts to certain customers, on command.

While these ideas are common, and many customers express similar perceptions of sexual behaviour in the club, there is no evidence that any of these preconceptions are true. In other words, the claim I want to make is that information about the dancers is exchanged between customers and waiters in a process that excludes the dancers completely. During the ten weeks I was employed at *Marbella's* I only once witnessed a dancer exchanging information about the sexual favours she is willing to perform, and the tone of the conversation was more about whether or not she wanted to drink alcohol and about her refusal to perform sexual services, and not about the customers' preferred topics regarding the type of sexual favours they can perform, such as anal sex and fellatio. However, waiters frequently play with the idea of having access to very personal information about the dancers which would only be possible if they themselves were physically involved with them. While it is true that there are multiple rumours about this subject, the reality of the club seems to

indicate that they are, more often than not, only fantasies which, when talked about in public, make the waiters appear as if they were in control of the dancers' sexuality and thus able to ensure dancer compliance with full certainty.

This is, of course, not the case. To illustrate this contradiction, I want to return to the fieldnotes and discuss an incident that took place during week four. Dated May 8, it is part of an interaction that took place before the beginning of the shift, while preparations were taking place. On that occasion, one of the first dancers to arrive, Karime, chose to utter a comment about my hairless head as she walked into work. By chance, I had been sitting near the stairs, and she walked next to me as she went towards the dressing room. Immediately after her comment, Beto, who was sitting nearby, gave her comment a sexual connotation. Seeing that I showed no reaction, he turned the comment into a monologue about dancers' sexuality. Finally, the exchange ended with all waiters participating in a round of public mockery directed towards Pedro: a waiter sitting nearby revealed that he had given presents to this dancer. All of the waiters sniggered in unison.

While not completely obvious at first sight, the waiters' reason for their reaction is linked to the anxieties elicited by the contradiction in question. As the dancer walks in, and jokes with the idea of wanting to touch my head, the comment's implicit sexual undertones are immediately brought to the fore by the more senior waiter interjects in my name and demands that she fulfil her proposition. He speaks in a way that seems to convey having full knowledge of the dancer and what she is willing to do. However, when he points a finger in the direction of Pedro, there is anonymous laughter. The joke is revealed. By introducing another waiters' name into the equation, the falsity of the entire monologue becomes apparent. Behind the playfulness of Karime's gesture, which in a way reveals the hierarchical imbalance between dancers (who proposition) and waiters (who become objects of their

sexual advances), there is a reality: Karime is not under Beto’s control and she has the power to reject an unsuspecting waiter who failed to see the joke and took her seriously. To Pedro’s dismay, she is not under waiter control and does not accept waiter propositions.

Like the May 11th incident reported in Table 11, the May 8th case shows a dramatic contrast when compared with the incidents collected in Table Ten. These are two drastically different scenarios because they present a different image of the waiter. No longer do we see a waiter disinterested and dismissive of customers’ choice of conversation topics, as in Beto’s response (May 11th). Similarly, these incidents present an image that is far from the Pedro who gives presents to a dancer.

Table 12 (below) lists several incidents in which waiters spontaneously approached me and initiated an unprompted conversation. In all five cases, the waiters involved speak of themselves and of others in the terms defined by the customer in the aforementioned May 16th incident.

<b>Waiter</b>	<b>Semiotic act</b>	<b>Situation</b>
Pedro	Waiter recounts a story about receiving money from a girlfriend who is interested in him (Week 3, April 29: 134-152)	As we are lining up, Pedro approaches. I ask him about the money he needed. He had previously told me that a girl he had met had offered him a loan. He tells me that he only received \$1,000 pesos, half of what he had asked for. As evidence he shows me a text message on his mobile. The message read: “do you need the cash?”, with the word “cash” in English. He said: “well you don’t have to pay me, but you have to go out with me”. He made sure to underline that he did not feel any attachment to his friend.
Pedro	Waiter shares a story about a friend whose living expenses are covered by his partner (Week 3, April 29: 144-152)	Pedro shares the story of a policeman. According to Pedro, the partner of this friend of his was worried about his well-being. She felt he was in danger because of his profession, so she asked him how much he earned per day and assured him that she would pay him instead. So, he quit his job and in exchange she gave him \$1,000 pesos a day from his partner to sit at home “playing video games” and having a car for his personal use.
Pedro	Waiter shares a story about his sexual life to give me	Pedro shares a story about a woman he was planning to visit the night before. He told me that he asked her for

	advice about dating a dancer (Week 3, April 28: 64-66)	\$2,000 pesos and that she had agreed to loan him the money only to later tell him that he did not have to worry about paying her back. He then suggested that I could date a girl from the club without asking me if I had a partner. He added another piece of advice: I had to watch myself “because there are always problems with the girls”.
Gustavo	Moments after a new dancer arrives at the bar, the waiter walks up to where I am standing and stands in front of me. He looks back and tells me that he is going to stare at the new dancer’s breasts. (Week 7, May 26: 286-287)	Shortly after the manager walks in followed by two young girls, I watched them stand near the door and stare at the stage. Gustavo approaches me and asks me who the new dancers were. I inform him that I don’t know and that I didn’t hear what they talked about. As he begins to walk, that he is going to stare at her breasts. As I watch him I realize every employee stopped what they were doing and watched her perform her first routine.
Gustavo	While lining up and waiting for customers, Gustavo pulls out his mobile and shows me pictures of a girl (Week 7, May 29_3: 28)	Gustavo approaches me and shares a story about a girl he is seeing. He explains that he does not want to tell her where he works. He shows me pictures of her and explains that she was willing to sleep with him after having bought her only one beer.

**Table 5** Invoking customer fantasies. Self-elaboration

The waiters depicted in Table Five are far from powerless or incapable of securing dancer compliance. The individuals the waiters are describing in each of the incidents included in Table Five have access to dancers’ sexuality, like in the case dated April 28. They are not the waiters who avoid looking at the stage, but individuals who have no inhibitions: they stand and openly stare at dancers on stage, uttering the sexual acts they want to perform (May 26). In other words, by speaking about dancers in much the same way as their customers do, waiters can reconstruct themselves and their place in the club. They are no longer subject to the dancers’ whims, but subjects who have the power to determine the way dancers will make use of their body. By speaking like their customers, they become their customers and thus endow themselves with the power to finally resolve the main obstacle that prevents them from maximizing their tips.

## THE NEED FOR A CONVERSATIONAL STRATEGY TO INDUCE TIPPING

While it is true that one of the main reasons why waiters learn and re-deploy their customers' preferred topics of conversation is the need to encourage their customers to tip, by building rapport with them, the terms of this relationship are not defined entirely by these two parties. On the contrary, because dancers are ultimately free to decide whether or not they want to work with a particular customer, a waiters' depiction of himself, and the dancers, may be shown to be false the moment a dancer refuses to comply. In this way, a waiter's accountability to the *padrino* depends centrally on their success at achieving or constructing the appearance of being capable of ensuring dancer compliance.

For waiters, the problem of dancer compliance can only be resolved strategically. That is, waiters deal with a situation that can potentially antagonize the customer, and risk their potential tip earnings, by using their conversational resources. In the fieldnotes, there are numerous instances where a dancer's refusal has immediate effects for the waiters. During the ten-week period I was employed at *Marbella's*, the norm for most dancers in the club was to choose carefully which customers they chose to interact with, being particularly selective about which services they were willing to perform. In this ten-week period, I documented a total of 22 interactions where customers asked dancers—with whom they had not interacted with previously—for a service<sup>36</sup>. Out of those 22 interactions, there were eleven cases where the dancer refused to either drink with the customer or to interact with the customer completely. For the waiters, receiving a negative response from the dancers is

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<sup>36</sup> There are many more interactions with customers who asked me directly to call a dancer over to their table or to let her know that they were interested in a private dance, but most are only mentioned briefly. In contrast, I chose these 22 incidents because they are described in greater depth, particularly identifying the name of the dancers involved.



problematic. For them, not being able to summon a dancer to a customer's table is tantamount to losing a tip, but because they are accountable to their customers. This is why waiters eliminate the possibility of such a scenario by directing the customer's attention towards more compliant dancers. This is also why waiters respond to dancer refusal by questioning the dancers' motives to be in the club: "Si no quieren jalar, ¿¡Pa' qué chingados vienen!?" –if they don't want to work, why in the hell are they here! From the field notes again:

I told her that he had been waiting for her all night. She replied that she didn't want to go because even though he had a lot of money, he also had a terrible smell. I joked we could give him a mint (Tuesday May 10, 2016)

As the passage shows, such a refusal has direct consequences for the waiter. Every time a dancer refuses to serve a customer, and the waiter is the customer's emissary, a waiter is forced to say no to the customer. This is the reason why, with my own best interest in mind, I insist. Knowing the customer will further intensify his pressure on me to obtain dancer compliance, my joke reveals my role in the negotiation: I represent the customer's interests.

In this way, we can see that for the waiters, a dancer's refusal to comply has financial and job related consequences. Financially, there is the impact of losing tips. In terms of his work-related obligations, it increases the workload. To give an example, I want to continue discussing the interaction introduced above. In the following journal entry, dated May 16, I again return to describing the interactions between this customer and the dancers. On this occasion I noticed that he chose to take a seat at a table which is close to the wall and to the back of the bar. His actions form a pattern: he orders a soft drink, which he drinks slowly throughout the night and he begins to go through a list of the dancers that he wants to interact with. He decides who he is interested in and based on who is available, he commands: "¡tráimela!" - bring her to me! On this date, however, I write down that all the dancers he

commands me to call are reluctant. His tone changes and the request turns into a command. He shows interest in Kassandra, who says she does not want to drink. Karime, on the other hand, dismisses the invitation by saying he has bad breath. Anabella, however, promises to interact with the customer but conditions her answer. She says he has to wait until she becomes available.

On week four, this same customer visited the bar on Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday. On Tuesday, Beto was the waiter who greeted him as he entered the bar. He informed him that at that time, the bar only had three dancers as it was Mother's Day – a holiday celebrated on 10th May in Mexico. He decided not to stay and instead returned the next day. On Saturday of that same week, he returned. Again, on this occasion, it was my turn to serve him, but instead I asked Pedro, his usual waiter, if he wanted to take over. Again, I recognized the same pattern of behaviour, as the waiter soon appeared with Karime and pulled up a chair for her indicating that she should sit with the customer.

As these examples demonstrate, for some of *Marbella's* customers, being able to interact with a dancer of their choosing is a key part of their experience in the club. In consequence, because it is not uncommon for dancers to refuse to comply with customers' demands, and particularly because the waiters' tips depend on dancer compliance, waiters have to develop strategies to work against a negative evaluation of their service. Because the problem of dancer agency lies outside the realm of factors that *Marbella's* waiters can control, they are forced to only promote dancers who they are certain will be willing to work with their customers. That is, in addition to the communicative strategies that waiters use to build conversational rapport with their *padrinos*, by making sure their customers find the topics of conversation interesting and entertaining, they also have to draw the customer's attention in the direction of particular dancers.

Overall, the effectiveness of this strategy is due, in part, to the fact that the majority of customers, with few exceptions, will also express an interest in talking about their dancers during their visit. Even if they do not summon a dancer to their table, and even if they decide to not acquire a private dance or service, one of the defining features of *Marbella's* customers' relationship with their waiters is their desire to talk about the dancers. Such conversations include requests for information, which waiters then use to emphasise certain dancers over others.

### SUMMARY

In the first part of this chapter I discussed the link between workplace agency and social control in the context of waiter strategies used to induce tipping in the service industry (Rosenthal 2004). Using the analytical framework offered by Rosenthal (2004), as well as the findings of other empirical studies, particularly Sallaz (2002), I focused on two key factors: the proportion of the waiters' income that is derived from customer contributions and the system of oversight over the customer-waiter relationship. Through the concept of mimicry, I explained how waiters select topics of conversation which allow them to establish a more intimate relationship with their customers. These involve setting up exchanges about the dancers and their services, and then expressing opinions that resonate with the ideas expressed by the customers.

Subsequently, after sifting through the empirical data collected at *Marbella's*, I concluded that these two organizational factors have an effect on waiters' loyalties. At *Marbella's* waiters in a peculiar position: while they are simultaneously supervised by and enforcers of the tipping norm; they are not equally loyal to the business as to their customers. Instead, because the tipping system favours the development of a type of rapport based on

the use of conversational strategies through which waiters seek to present themselves as having identical interests and desires as their customers, waiters develop a sense of loyalty to their customers.

The image that begins to emerge from this analysis is not of waiters as subordinate servers, but as bearers of dancer sexuality and figures of social control associated to the clubs, who, at the same time, seek to encourage tipping by presenting themselves as intimate friends of their customers. At *Marbella's*, the tipping system is the driving force behind a process of mimesis, by which waiters present themselves as customers, as gatekeepers, while at the same time they are defined as figures of social control. Waiters are not only table servers; they use their conversational abilities to present themselves to their customers as figures of power, both sexual and organizational. But this is not all. Additional to the use of non-verbal cues, waiters also use gestures and non-verbal behaviours to further reinforce this appearance. This is, instead, the central theme in the chapter that follows.

## CHAPTER 4

### BODY AND TERRITORIAL GESTURES

This chapter focuses on the circumstances that give rise to the development of non-verbal strategies to induce customer tipping. In a sense, it is a continuation of the argument developed in the previous chapter which confirms the findings reported in previous studies on tipping (Paulsell and Goldman 1984; Stephen and Zweigenhaft 1986; Hornik 1992). This reference to the tipping literature in restaurants is possible because *Marbella's* waiters are customer-contact employees who depend on tipping as the main source of income and are thus supervised by the tipping norm, much in the same way as restaurant waiters. Even though it is not a restaurant, its employees serve similar functions and are bound by similar relationships to their customers. However, unlike the conventional approach to the effects of touch on tipping, and on norm conformity, which emphasizes the feelings of proximity produced by gestures involving physical contact (Lynn and Kyrby Mynier 1993), here I use a conceptual framework that focuses instead on the relationship between the body and territorial behaviour. I argue that the club's internal space is subdivided and defended by customers and waiters. I also show how, in their willingness to protect these shared notions of territorial boundaries, waiters establish a relationship of identity with their customers.

#### BODY AND TERRITORY

While the lighting conditions that permeate throughout the club would make it impossible to use graffiti to make territorial claims, *Marbella's* customers and waiters make use of other strategies which have an equivalent purpose. Like graffiti, these strategies also depend on visibility. However, unlike graffiti, these practices do not require the use of

special tools or implements, but can instead be constructed with the use of the customers' own bodies, items carried on the customers' bodies, or items found at the club. This relationship between body and territory is not new, but has instead been discussed in the past in the debates around the concept of manspreading (Jane 2017; Ringrose and Lawrence 2018). While conceptually different, the arguments used in that discussion highlight the relationship between the human body and the interconnected concepts of boundary, territory, and identity (Ley and Cybriwsky 1974; Holloway and Hubbard 2000; Tyner 2011).

Rather than attempting to use the concept of manspreading to analyse the behaviour observed at *Marbella's*, my goal is to use this concept as the theoretical link that makes it possible to open a discussion about the relationship between bodily boundaries to the concept of territoriality. That is, rather than being the centre of the argument, the concept of manspreading is meant to simply set a precedent, to operate as a conceptual bridge, from which to construct the argument that I want to make here, which pertains to the sense of having a boundary around the body and the use of extensions of the human body, such as possessions, to make territorial claims.

Jane (2017: 459) defines manspreading as an expression of male sexism and entitlement in the way men occupy places in public transport. It describes a manner of sitting, with legs spread wide in a way that invades the surrounding space, spilling over the boundaries of neighbouring bodies. Manspreading involves an expansive occupation of the space surrounding a body, in this case of a man, that reduces the space available for other bodies by claiming it for its own use.

Manspreading is a function of splaying—or the sense of entitlement that underlies the need to occupy the area around their body—has been understood in terms of 'genitalia

displays'. The concept is based on a gendered distinction as to how space is occupied by men in relation to women. Where men can occupy neighbouring space, there is a different standard an imperative in place for 'girls and women to adopt constricted and closed positions' (Jane 2017: 462). Longhurst (2003: 55), for example, refers to the concept of 'bodily space' in relation to the experiences faced by pregnant women's bodies. As Longhurst (2003) has pointed out in the past, '[p]regnant women are often treated as though they are little more than containers for unborn children [which] leads to pregnant women's stomachs being subject to public gaze and often touch' (Longhurst 2003: 55).

If we compare this to the concept of territoriality, the most obvious difference is that the ideas around manspreading assume a gender binary, assigning a different relationship with space to each of the two genders according to an underlying relationship of domination of men over women. What happens at *Marbella's*, however, is not just a question of domination between genders, but a question of how the club's employees and customers interact with each other, how they use their bodies to define identity and belonging or exclude each other. This is the difference between the outright domination of men over women described by the concept of manspreading and the idea of spatial competition through identity markers. The idea here is that the concept of territoriality places this behaviour in the context of identity and group rival claims.

Nevertheless, despite these conceptual differences, the notion manspreading opens the possibility of thinking about territorial claims, articulated through the use of touch and gestures reminiscent of touch, in relation to the boundaries surrounding the human body. This idea makes sense because the human body is literally the space where identity and territory naturally overlap. Like territorial markers, instances of contact in front of an

audience can also be viewed as expressions of identity and the absence of such contact as an affirmation of difference.

## **EXPANDING THE CONCEPT OF MIMICRY: CITATIONALITY OF BODILY ACTS**

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, my goal is to show that waiters at *Marbella's* have developed strategies to establish a common identity and purpose with their customers. These strategies exploit the relationship between territory, touch, and identity and involve the use of visual cues by waiters to show their customers that they share a common understanding of their sense of space.

This is why, having shown the overlap between touch and territory, it is now necessary to demonstrate how the concepts of citationality and indexicality can be applied to the analysis of gestures and behaviours. At the beginning of Chapter Two, I described the moment an arriving customer walks into the club, drawing the reader's attention to the instance when waiters' use the word *padrino*, allowing him to choose his place in the club but placing themselves as his guides and gatekeepers to the inner world of *Marbella's*. In Chapter Two I discussed how the word is employed citationally to summon a social norm of reciprocity and introduce the arriving and naïve customer to the rules of the club. In that description, I also mentioned that the interaction included a pat on the customer's upper back and a unique handshake, but failed to fully discuss the relevance of this gesture in relation to the discussion on citationality and the word *padrino*.

To fully grasp the relevance of the gesture in relation to the discussion on citationality and indexicality, it is first necessary to return to the definition of these two related concepts. Citationality can be understood as an 'discursive act that links two or more discursive events



(minimally itself and another, or even itself and a figuration of itself) within the same semiotic frame, in this case, within the same sentence' (Nakassis 2013: 56). Citationality has been employed in the analysis of gender, where the citational act can index a social norm, bringing it to new life in a new context.

When discussing the use of the word *padrino* at *Marbella's*, I argued that it constituted a citational act that indexed a connotation of the word that exists beyond the club. At *Marbella's*, the use of the word can be seen as a means of praising a customer's potential tipping practices before the customer has a chance to express them. It serves as a reminder of what is expected and of the norms of the club that operates on the assumption that the customer is already aware of what the word means in other contexts. Like the word *padrino*, which indexes a relationship of reciprocity, the pat on the customer's back used by waiters is also a citational act. However, unlike the *padrino*, this citational act is not associated with the tipping norm, but to the way territories are demarcated at the club.

### **A CUSTOMER'S TERRITORIAL DISPLAY**

To understand how a pat on the customer's back can be a citational act that summons a common territory, it is first necessary to remember that the club's internal space is further subdivided by the club's customers in ways that are understood by their waiters. This is accomplished without the need for any form of separation or boundary that would physically enclose any given area of the club. On the contrary, there are no internal walls, panels, partitions, screens, curtains, booths, barriers, fences or other such features to create separate zones. The only thing that separates the stage from the rest of the bar is its height and the only thing that separates a stage-seat from the other seats is a distance of half a metre between the back of the chairs and the rest of the tables. In fact, this is the distance that separates

every chair from the surrounding chairs, making it nearly impossible to walk around when the bar is full. Even the bathroom is open to prying eyes, as it lacks any sort of door or other form of barrier to block visibility—that is, excluding the toilet stalls which have doors and metal dividers.

However, despite the lack of any sort of object to serve as a physical barrier between tables and chairs other than half a meter in distance, customers divide the club's internal layout into a strict grid-like array of separate and distinct individual territories, that encompass the table and its chairs. The barriers that separate each one of these individual territories are not imaginary either. Instead, what happens is that customers use their own bodies, or objects which act as extensions of their bodies, to demarcate the territories, relying on the understanding that the boundaries are simply understood. It is important to note that these boundaries are not necessarily visible until another customer or a waiter inadvertently violates the territorial claims of a given customer. To provide an empirical illustration of what these territorial divisions actually look like at the club, I want to draw the reader's attention to the incident that took place during week three<sup>37</sup> (notes April 27, incident April 25). This interaction took place late one evening, on one of the busiest days of the week. There were two customers, one of whom had a bottle opener in his keychain, so every time he finished his drink, he would take out two bottles from the bucket in front of him, clean the ice water off them and open both – handing the opened bottle to his companion.

According to the fieldnotes taken that day, it was the customer's awkward posture which had initially drawn my attention. To me, it seemed as if he was about to topple over.

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<sup>37</sup> Week 3, April 27:84-94

However, he had been managing to keep himself upright. This achievement may have been perhaps a consequence of how far his foot was away from his body, but it may also be explained by the fact that he had just arrived at the club and that he did not appear to be intoxicated.

In retrospect, I believe that his posture can be partially explained by the place they had chosen to occupy while they watched the dancers' routines on the stage, although it is true there were other customers sitting around in their general area who had not chosen to sit in this manner. Because in this club customers do not tip dancers while they are on-stage, and because touching a dancer is permitted and dancers generally allow it, many customers prefer to sit directly at the stage if a seat is available. For these two customers, this had been the case and this meant that they did not have a table in front of them and that, unlike the customers sitting at a table, their drinks, table service, and their other temporary-bar possessions were sitting side-by-side with the possessions of the customer sitting next to them. In other words, the arrangement they had chosen was similar to what would happen if they were sitting at a bar, except the bar was made of brick, significantly shorter, and that instead of a bartender, there was a dancer moving suggestively around a metal pole.

Rather than sitting straight and laying his elbows on the stage, the customer in question had shifted his entire body in the direction of his companion, turning his back to the customer to his left. His back was hunched over and his left elbow rested on his left knee. I noticed that his body was slightly twisted in the direction of his companion. When they spoke, it was this customer who took the initiative. Every time he made a comment, he turned his head rapidly towards his left (the direction of his companion) and would move his left hand without lifting his elbow from his knee. Both men sat with legs wide open, but the more

active of the two managed to have his knees the furthest apart – in the direction of his companion.

If these customers were sitting next to each other, their posture would undoubtedly be consistent with the notion of manspreading. Firstly, the knees were positioned as far as possible from each other, and the entire weight of his upper body rested on a single elbow. Because the majority of his body weight was not supported by the chair, but by one knee, a significant amount of energy had to be spent to balance himself. Indeed, he would occasionally gesture towards his companion for emphasis. On occasions, he had to shift his weight around because his elbow had slipped off from his knee. Secondly, their knees were as wide apart as possible, in such a way that, if they were sitting side-by-side, their legs would surely have overlapped and they would have to rest one leg on top of the other's leg.

However, because they were not sitting side-by-side but face-to-face, this could not be an expression of manspreading. Rather than being two rival vertices of competing territories, the bodies of these customers worked as a single unit. If their seating arrangement could be pictured from above, and a continuous line were traced following their bodies, it would be possible to see that their bodies worked together to mark the boundaries of the area between them.

In other words, the bodies of these two customers were working together to mark a boundary that physically separated the space between them from the surrounding area of the club. This was their space, since it would have been impossible to walk between these two customers without disturbing one of them. His body was the boundary that set the limits for the space between them, and since they had decided to place the bucket of beers in the centre of this safe space, it functioned as a marker that symbolized their territorial claim.

The behavioural displays described in the above example provide an ideal visual illustration of how territory and body interact at *Marbella's*. In this case, the customer's body has literally become the boundary that divides their space from the rest of the club. Having shifted their bodies in order to face each other, these two customers have become the two guards that protect the territory between them. Like a flag that identifies the space as theirs, they have placed a bucket at the centre.

### **EMPIRICAL EXAMPLES OF HOW TERRITORY CAN BE DEMARCATED THROUGH INANIMATE EXTENSIONS OF THE BODY**

While the example above provides an obvious illustration of how customers establish the boundaries of their territory by using their bodies directly, this is not the only way this is done. At *Marbella's* customers use their own personal property and other objects in the same way they use their body to make territorial claims. This includes practices such as placing a hand over a drink or placing a foot over a chair, objects can be used to establish a claim over a table, a chair, or a particular area of the club.

The point that I want to make is that despite having chosen a very unique, and perhaps exaggerated, way of sitting, the customers described in the above example are not alone. Even though they may not be adopting an awkward sitting posture, with wide open legs and elbows resting on one of their knees, they use other approaches to symbolize the same thing. Much like the customers discussed in the example above, other customers often use their own personal possessions or objects found at the club to serve as extensions of their body and demarcate the limits of their territory. In the actions of the customer in the previous example, we see a gradual progression, from the boundaries around the human body, to the space that can be delimited by using the body as a physical boundary. In the same manner,

this use of objects can be used for smaller territories on surfaces that would be either too small to define with the body or where the customer's absence would make it impossible to use the body to mark their territory: for example, the surface area of the customer's table when he is away, a backpack used to signal that a chair is occupied by the customer and his companions, or a chair used to signal that a table is occupied and that the customer will return soon. This also applies to the items that can be located on these objects, in such a way that the act of leaving an object on a table can constitute a territorial claim.

In the fieldnotes documenting my daily experiences, there is an incident that illustrates this idea quite eloquently. This incident takes place nearing the end of my employment at *Marbella's*. From the fieldnotes:

[Later] I went and tried to pick up the bottles that were empty on his table and the guy starts arguing with me, telling me that I should leave the bottles there. [H]e said, "why are you picking them up?". I said, "well, I've been told to clean up the hall". And he said, "leave them there, just leave them there!". And I said, "well they're empty". He said, "no! I told you to leave them there! Why do you have to clean them up?". And I was like, "okay, I'll just put them down", and I just kept on walking. [...] I wasn't gonna confront the guy.

But it was the oddest behaviour and [...] I was sure why he was doing it. It's because if he has some empty beer bottles there, it looks like he's been drinking a lot. And even though he's not consuming [...] he's trying to be left alone. He's trying to stay there without spending money [...] or he was hoping to draw attention [...]. (Week 9, June 9: 378-381).

This behaviour was not unique. At *Marbella's*, customers are fiercely protective of their things. The point I want to make here does not centre on the attitude of the customer itself, but on the implicit sense of territory that can be seen in this interaction. Customers use a territorial language that consists in the use of their body, and their personal objects, to make territorial claims. They demarcate their territory by placing objects on tabletops and by arranging these objects symbolically.

To give another example, I want to refer to another interaction involving a customer whose regular waiter, Beto, had failed to show up to work on that day. Building rapport with this customer had involved a considerable amount of effort for me. As it was common for customers who regularly patronized *Marbella's*, during the earlier part of our conversations I had to listen to his opinions about the dancers he thought were most attractive, having to reply every now and then to his questions about whether or not I agreed with him. This customer spoke about the dancers by referring to their appearance: hair, height, body shape, and clothing colour. Seeing that, without much effort, I had finally achieved a level of intimacy with a customer, I decided to join the customer outside and to continue our conversation while he finished his cigarette. From the fieldnotes:

So anyway, the man came back and [...] told me —while [we were standing] outside—that he was going to leave his backpack at the table, unattended.

And I said: “well, just ask me. I’ll put it in the storage room. Whenever you come back, I’ll give it to you. Just ask me”. And he said, “no, leave it there. It doesn’t matter. No one is gonna take it. I’ve told [Beto] and [Beto] says that nobody takes it... that here nobody will steal anything”. (Week 8, June 5\_2: 613-614)

Rather than an expression of blind confidence or trust on Beto’s promises, the customer’s words are premised on a common understanding of how the space is organized and an unspoken sense of shared purpose: based on the overlap of the waiter’s and the customer’s territory, and the understanding that as a waiter, I will protect the customer’s belongings in exchange for a tip, he expresses disregard for the possibility of theft. For this customer, there is no need to ask any favours from the waiter. It is not even necessary to mention to anyone that he will step away from the table. Because, in the course of the interaction, sufficient evidence has surfaced to indicate that we share a common language, the customer assumes that the transfer of the responsibility for guarding the table and the items on the tabletop to me can be done without having to say anything.

The importance of the table as the centre of a customer's territory can also be illustrated through the practice of saving tables. At *Marbella's*, customers cannot have access to certain services at their table. Aside from having dancers drink at the customers' tables, the club also offers dancer services which require access to other areas of the club: this is the case with all dances and sexual services, which take place in the private area. As a result, each time a customer decides to have a dance or a sexual service in the private areas, he is forced to be away from the table he was assigned to without having any one else to guard his drink and save his place at the table. For some customers, the solution is to pay their final tab before deciding to ask a dancer to join them, or before sending a waiter in their name to do it for him, for a *servicio* or a *privado* (Spanish words meaning service and private which are frequently used interchangeably to refer to a sexual service or a private dance). More frequently, customers choose to ask the waiter to 'save' their table. From the fieldnotes:

And so, he finally said, "I'm gonna go ask the girl in pink". And he went up to her and asked her [for a private dance] and they left [together to the private areas]. So, I put a napkin on his beer bottle. I covered the open end of the bottle and I [...] waited [for him]. (Week 9, June 9: 373)

As this example shows, the table itself holds a symbolic meaning at *Marbella's*: like the customer's own body, the table is also central to the customer's territorial domain. Like before, in this case the boundaries around the body are also transferred to the table, particularly the tabletop. Like the customers who use a bucket of beer to mark the centre of their territorial claim, in this example the marker involves leaving a full bottle on the table and placing a white napkin over the mouth of the bottle and wrapping it around the upper part of its neck.

In the fieldnotes, there is another example that is representative of this behaviour. The incident in question takes place during a week in which waiter competition had been a source



of stress for me. During my first weeks at *Marbella's*, I had spent the greater part of my time trying to establish rapport with my co-workers, but had only achieved marginal results and was feeling rather discouraged both by the pressure of sustained attempts to take customers away from me and the pressure from waiters like Gustavo, who insisted I should not allow this to continue. This interaction takes place during the busiest part of the shift and involves a group of three customers who arrived together during the latter part of the night.

As the detailed nature of the description shows, I had paid relatively more attention to these customers' behaviour. To me, these customers appeared to have been consuming alcohol long before walking into the club. From where I stood, I could see the signs that signalled intoxication: loudness, continued attempts to break club etiquette and touch dancers' bodies, and ignoring the waiter's assigned seating arrangement, instead choosing to pick their own place at the stage. Because earlier that day I had had an argument with Gustavo, I had chosen to not intervene the moment I saw that he was picking up a customer's drink to make room for this group of customers. From the fieldnotes:

While [Gustavo] was serving the older man – [the] one I had served [days earlier] and had given me a tip — came over and he said: “well that’s my chair!”. And [Gustavo] said, “well, there was nothing there, so it can’t be you chair”. And [the customer] said, “well, I had my beer bottle there”. Then [Gustavo turned to Diego and me] and said, “there weren’t any glass bottles there, were there?”. I didn’t [answer]; I just looked at him. [I knew] someone picked them up in order to sit these guys together. And so basically, I saw how [Gustavo] got into an argument with this older man who insisted on getting the money for his beer. And [Gustavo] finally had to go [...] to the cash register and get some, get another beer, and bring [it] to the man. (Week 4, : 155-161)

In this vignette, we can see a customer transferring onto an object the boundaries of his own body, and then using it to make a territorial claim. In this case, the customer uses a bottle on the tabletop and the backrest of a chair, which he balances on two legs and leans against the edge of the table, as the symbols of his territorial claim. Even though I later found out had

simply gone to the washroom and had only been away from his table for a short amount of time, he had used the napkin on the mouth of the bottle to symbolize his presence.

When asked directly by their customers to hold their place at the club, or when they have made arrangements for a customer to visit the private area, waiters make use of objects to make territorial claims in the name of their customers. In doing so, they acquire the same privileges as their customers, re-drawing or re-affirming the boundaries their customers have set by making use of the same symbols to save the customer's place. This involves the use of the beer bottle with a napkin wrapped around the mouth of the bottle and, of course, the use of a chair to symbolize that a table is occupied by tilting it in such a way that the back of the chair is leaning against the edge of the table and the full weight of the chair is balanced only on its two front legs, while the back legs are in the air. Another way of doing this, which is exclusive to the waiters, involves writing their names on the tab and leaving it inside the napkin holder. In this way, someone walking up to the table would avoid sitting there in order to avoid being charged for the open tab.

To summarize, one of the key arguments in this section has been to link the use of the body and other objects to demarcate territories. By arguing that the boundaries around the body can be transferred to other objects, for example the tabletops, I have laid out the building blocks for the second part of my argument: the way waiters' appropriate and re-deploy the gestures used by their customers is shaped by how customers transfer the territorial boundaries of their bodies onto the surface of their table. As the examples I will consider below show, like their customers, waiters at *Marbella's* also use the area around their customer's table and chair as the boundary for their territory, particularly in the context of waiter-on-waiter competition and when they are faced with the challenge of claiming a tipping customer for themselves.

## APPROPRIATION: THE USE OF OBJECTS TO MAKE TERRITORIAL CLAIMS

In the examples discussed in the previous section I argued that waiters share a common understanding of customer territories and that customers see waiters as agents of their interests. However, while the examples discussed above show how waiters and customers make use of the same practices to demarcate their territory, they fail to explain how *Marbella's* customers and waiters come to develop this common understanding. In this section I argue that this is accomplished through displays of waiter-on-waiter competition. The idea is that at *Marbella's*, competition among waiters involves the appropriation of their customers' bodily displays of touch and identity in order to use them strategically against each other. Like the customers, who use touching to establish rapport, social proximity, and make claims of identity and territoriality in the process, waiters cite their customers' behavioural displays.

To give a clear sense of how this comes into being, I first need to further discuss the types of symbols at work in these interactions. In a manner that resembles the practice of leaving a partially full bottle of beer with a napkin wrapped around the mouth of the bottle or tipping the backrest of the chair against the edge of the table, waiters use objects to establish their territory. These include using the presence of the table services, like napkins and napkin holders, beer bottles and buckets, as well as saltshakers and lime slices as the markers through which their territorial claim is made. It is a system of symbols in which the items placed on the tabletop by a waiter signify the right to continue serving beverages to the customer throughout his visit to the club.

In practice, these behavioural displays can be seen in the interaction that took place on April 15. The background to this interaction can be summarized by stating that the club

had devised a scheme by which waiters at *Marbella's* had to supply the basic items used for table service themselves. Given that their income did not allow for a consistent supply of cups, salt, limes, and napkin holders, every now and then, waiters had to improvise. Among the waiters' priorities were always the limes and salt. In the bottom of the list there were cups, saltshakers, and napkin holders. This is why on this occasion, to serve limes, Beto had taken the initiative of manufacturing a container himself. He fashioned it by cutting a white, disposable cup in half, which he filled with lime slices.

The incident in question took place on April 24 and involved a table I was serving. After welcoming a customer who had just arrived at the club, I showed him to a table, served the first round, and received a tip. Immediately, I watched how Beto approached the table, placed new limes and napkins on the table and introduced himself. After several exchanges, Beto then picked up the customer's drink and table service and relocated the whole ensemble to another table, closer to the stage. He served another drink and, instead of taking a payment upfront opens a tab and placed tab inside the napkin holder, with the quantities facing the customer.

For most waiters, this basic table service routine consists in welcoming the customer to the bar, providing options of the places available at that moment, such as the tables with a more direct view of the stage or a place around on the stage itself –preferably at the centre of the stage. Once the customer has taken a seat, the routine then involves taking the order and proceeding to fill the order at the till and then the bar. Only then will the waiter return with the table service. It is a routine employed by all waiters, although there are variations depending on their workload.

This is the reason why the behaviour displayed is not about efficiency, but about territoriality. Beto's actions are also not driven by the customer's rate of consumption. This is why, from the perspective of efficiency, what he is doing in this interaction is utterly pointless. From the technical aspect of service delivery, there is absolutely no reason to duplicate the table service. Particularly when a customer's visit may only be a couple of hours long, there is no need to give the customer two sets of paper towels, saltshakers and slices of limes. There is already a table service in place at the customer's table, with a sufficient supply of napkins and limes, so there is absolutely no need for any of these items. In fact, because of the limited surface area available, adding anything else onto the table is actually counterproductive because the abundant condensation that collects under the beer bottles will begin to pool on the table, soaking any used napkin the customer may have discarded. Because all beer is chilled in ice, the simple act of leaving a bottle on a tabletop produces a puddle that collects at the centre, dampening everything within its reach. By bringing more napkins, more limes, and by making more trips to the table, he is allocating scarce resources to the customers who have no use for them.

This is also the reason why this behaviour resembles the customers' practice of claiming their table through personal objects more closely, instead of being a gesture associated with the waiters' tasks. Each extra napkin holder brought by a waiter to a table that already has a table service becomes a flag, a type of makeshift marker. It is the equivalent of a graffiti writer's work being defaced by a rival group. It is the mark of rival territorial claims among the waiters. This is also true for items waiters may change or modify in such a fashion that they stand out to other waiters, such is the case of the bottle with a napkin wrapped around its neck. This is why Beto's behaviour bears the mark of citationality. Like the *padrino* customers do out of their own accord, Beto uses objects which

he places on the tabletop as the symbols which set the boundaries for his territory. These objects become the markers for his territorial claim because he placed them there, and even fashioned them himself.

Now, it is important to note that Beto's actions are also not about collaboration and mutual assistance. Generally, when waiters are not interested in serving another waiter's customer, and the waiter in question is busy with another customer, it is common practice to simply ignore the customer's pleas. Once the assigned waiter becomes available, the other waiters will simply point in the customer's direction to indicate that the customer needs attention.

Compare this to the behaviour shown by some of my co-workers on three different incidents that took place on the same day, on May 28<sup>38</sup>. In the first incident Beto approached one of my customers<sup>39</sup>. I knew this particular customer stood out from the other customers because he had chosen to drink whiskey instead of beer in a bottle, the drink of choice for *Marbella's* patrons. Seeing that he seemed restless, I made my way towards him only to see Beto hurrying in his direction, taking advantage of the fact that he had just visited a table

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<sup>38</sup> Week 7, May 28: 41-54

<sup>39</sup> After what seemed a one-week grace period immediately after I started working there, and for the entire duration of my employment at *Marbella's* after that, it was common for other waiters, particularly the most experienced ones, to attempt to take over tables I had been serving. Frequently, this happened when, for any reason, a customer was left unattended and he chose to call the first waiter in sight to place an order. Sometimes, like in the incidents described here, it was obviously a deliberate and conscious attempt to increase their customer base. On many occasions, other waiters would approach me to complain, expressing frustration at their powerlessness to stop this.

In the end, the solution was to carry on with the research and avoid any confrontation. This, in turn, took an emotional toll on me and, nearing the end of the fieldwork, I felt like I could have lost my temper at any moment.

near the customer. Not knowing how to react, I stopped a few metres away and watched him have a brief exchange with the customer.

To me, it seemed logical to wait until they had finished and then walk up to the customer to ask him what he had ordered and to let him know I was available. I did. He simply replied that he had not ordered anything. Since this was one of a handful of customers I was serving, I thought that the entire incident had been caused by me being distracted. I decided to keep a closer eye on the customer. But this was not the end of it.

Later, Beto again approached another one of my tables. The customers at this table had something that made them stand out from the rest of the customers around them. This time, however, it was not because of the drink choice but because of the number of customers that were sharing his table. This time, the waiter's approach was also more brazen. Without being summoned or without the need for any excuse, he simply appeared at the table. Unlike before, this time I made sure I watched the customers' every move. As I stood at the queue, I watched how Beto approached them in a manner that resembled the way customers gestured when they approached a dancer they were interested in. He had a wide smile and was gesticulating energetically. It was a brief encounter, but, in the end, he finally placed another napkin holder, salt shaker, and a cup of limes on the table.

After the earlier experience, this time I had made sure that I included extra limes and napkins in the table service. I had also been particularly attentive to this table, keeping a persistent watch over the table and the people around it. This is why the waiters' intentions were obvious and the outcome was particularly disheartening for me. Despite my efforts, his strategy was already in motion. After a brief exchange, which included a few words and a pat on the back, Beto left only to return and serve their next round of drinks.

The next incident I want to use to illustrate waiter-on-waiter competition involved a waiter who I saw as an ally. This was the youngest and most novice waiter, with whom I had found a gatekeeper who would frequently turn to me to tell me the tricks of the trade and who would sometimes share his lunch with me. I knew that he was generally available to chat, and I frequently shared my frustration with him when I made a mistake, when a customer was rude, or when I gave a customer the wrong change. He would frequently share his own frustration when another waiter would become competitive with him, so I usually turned to him to share my frustration when a table was taken away from me. Unlike Beto, Pepe, and Pedro, who were well known among the other waiters for their frequent attempts at taking over their customers, Gustavo was younger and less experienced. Like me, he had been working at the club for less than a year and was known for being less aggressive and a bit shy.

This is why I felt particularly betrayed when he had served a customer who had allowed me to wait his table on two consecutive days<sup>40</sup>. This was not any customer. I knew that Gustavo was aware that this customer had become a regular of mine. He had previously talked about him with me. Yet, on this day, like Beto, he approaches unannounced and engages the customer in conversation.

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<sup>40</sup> In this example, even though I was aware of the need to avoid confrontations in order to preserve the rapport I was slowly building with my co-workers, I also knew that at *Marbella's* (as expressed by Gustavo every time he would approach me to vent about losing a customer) the competition for customers was not only about money. To Gustavo, these were conflicting territorial claims that needed to be resolved by responding in the same manner. Rather than assume a loss, it was necessary to challenge and reclaim the customer.

By expressing his anger and fantasizing about what he could do in response, Gustavo was not only using our conversation to release his frustration. Instead, he was also giving meaning to these incidents. It was through our conversations that an emotion, anger, and confrontation, were established as the ideal response to their actions.



This had been a particularly bad day and I was angry at seeing them laughing together. Shortly after seeing Gustavo serving the next round, I decided to confront him by telling him that I had originally served the table. Wanting to downplay the tone of my actions, I told him he could keep serving the customer. His response, however, was perplexing. At first, he apologized. Later, he stopped talking to me and began to avoid me. By the end of the shift I realized that from that moment on, Gustavo would not only challenge my claim to this specific customer, but to every other customer who he felt interested in.

While the tone of this example is similar to the others, this incident gives perspective to waiter-on-waiter competition. There is a norm at *Marbella's* which dictates that as long as customers are not bound to a waiter by debt, and the customer is willing to allow it, any customer can be served by any waiter. In this way, waiter-on-waiter competition at the club becomes a process that has a territorial dimension, that produces new ways of symbolically marking a territory, and that forces waiters to find creative ways to ensure either that the customer chooses a single waiter as his assigned server, or about finding ways to convince the customer to drink on a tab. Waiting at the club is also about finding creative ways to convince other waiters that there is a legitimate claim of possession over a given customer. Short of staying at the customer's table as much as possible, this involves leaving assorted items on the table.

Beto, for example, uses different variations of this behaviour. They include asking permission to leave empty bottles at his table, as well as asking him to look after a bucket of unopened bottles in ice. In the first case, most waiters and customers will simply avoid a table with a large number of empty bottles because of the work it involved in cleaning it. In the second case, waiters generally avoid closed bottles left on tables because there is a general implication that someone is looking after it. Thirdly, waiters will sometimes leave

used tabs in the napkin holders, deceitfully indicating that the customer sitting at that table is drinking on a tab, even if he is not.

There is another example<sup>41</sup> which offers a more detailed illustration of how waters make customer territorial behaviour their own. Dated June 4, the incident involved a regular customer, a *padrino* who Gustavo habitually claimed as his own. He would do this by walking up to him as soon as he walked into the bar and turning to the other waiters to gesture with an open palm, as would be use to ask someone to stop. On this occasion, though, because Gustavo was not in the line-up and I was the next waiter in turn, I proceeded to show him to a table instead of hailing Gustavo or asking the customer to wait. I proceeded to place a new set of napkins, limes in a cup, and salt shakers on the table and served the first round of drinks. Shortly after this, Gustavo noticed and immediately approached the customer. Seeing that the table had already been served, Gustavo repeated the strategy used by Beto previously: he proceeded to present the customer with an additional table service, effectively filling the table with two cups of limes, two napkin holders and two saltshakers. More importantly, as it can be seen in the fieldnotes, Gustavo greeted the customer by shaking his hand as well as by embracing him and patting him on the back three times. He would also place his open palm on the customer's back on every occasion he stopped to talk to him as he returned to the line-up after serving an order to another customer.

In response, I tried to return to the customer's table. In a direct reference to their behaviour, my approach was to refill the napkin holder with napkins. However, after placing the napkins on the table, it was obvious that the other waiter would not relinquish. Rather

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<sup>41</sup> Week 8, June 4: 133-138

than a decision being made by a customer in favour of one or the other waiter, the matter of waiter competition was resolved by financial capacity. Seeing that a subordinate waiter was willing to continue a claim for the same customer, it was common practice for the more successful and experienced waiter to simply settle the dispute by opening a tab and financing the customer's drinks with his own money<sup>42</sup>.

## SUMMARY

In Chapter Three, I argued that waiters are key figures of club social control. The discussion presented in that chapter shows how *Marbella's* waiters are complex figures who occupy a central role in club relations. They appear as both intermediaries whose work involves negotiating with dancers in favour of their customers, and middlemen who resell the drinks they purchase at a lower price from the bar. They are simultaneously enforcers of the tipping norm and of bar etiquette, as well as customer-contact employees who work for tips and who are subject to the direct supervision and penalties of their customers. This is the case because waiters depend completely on customers' tips, and their work is subject to the scrutiny of those same customers. Waiters are the employees responsible for mediating their customers' experience of club services, for setting the terms by which customers access alcohol and sexual service, and for defining their rate of spending.

In other words, the picture of the lap dancing club waiter that begins to emerge is that of a figure of control. Waiters are in control of the club's services and of dancer sexuality. In customer-waiter conversations, which were directly accessible to me because of my role

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<sup>42</sup> When this happens the waiter that has been displaced has no other option but to either accept the loss or to confront his co-worker.

as a waiter at the club, customers share their fantasies, in which waiters appear as the sexual partners of the dancers who the customers fantasize about, with first-hand knowledge about the dancers' sexual performance and willingness to perform sexual favours, and as gatekeepers of dancer sexuality who can control dancer sexuality on command. Waiters are figures of social control, as they are given the power to allow or deny access to dancers, and they set the terms for the customers' access to the club.

One of the important findings obtained through the analysis of empirical vignettes in this chapter pertains to the way customers use their bodies to demarcate their territory, how they convey symbolic value to objects in order to use them for the same purpose, and how they expect waiters to police these territorial boundaries. These are the behaviours that waiters appropriate for themselves and then re-deploy to show their customers that they are willing to protect their territory and personal possessions. I also showed that a key driver in this process is waiter-on-waiter competition, providing empirical evidence to demonstrate this claim.

Waiters are the figures who enforce their customers' territorial claims and who ensure that the club's spatial organization follows the same rules from day to day. Waiters are guardians of the club's internal territorial divisions. Because of waiter-on-waiter competition, and the conditions of scarcity in which they work, *Marbella's* waiters are often faced with the need of defending the tables they have been assigned from the encroachment of their co-workers. In the context of these rivalries, waiters use the behaviours they observe from their customers, who use their body or other objects to define the limits of their territory, to present similar displays to their customers. It is through these displays that they can communicate their understanding of the customers' territorial boundaries and their willingness to enforce those limits.

## CHAPTER 5

### WORKPLACE THIEVERY, OBSERVATIONAL LEARNING, AND DIFFERENTIAL ASSOCIATION

In the course of this thesis I have sought to locate the Mexican lap dancing club waiter at the centre of the club's social world. Waiters are key figures responsible for mediating between their customers and the dancers, enforcing the club's spatial organization, establishing the way their customers occupy the space, and are also one of the most visible and mobile employees at the club. Their place is at the door as much as between the tables. They are hosts, eager and ready to greet any arriving customer as soon as he enters the club for the first time. They are also like sentinels. In a club where the doorman's place is only at the door and where there are no other security personnel, waiters are key figures in maintaining club social control. Much like doormen or club security guards, responsible for keeping track of their customers' belongings and drinks, protecting them from other customers who may want to take advantage of a free drink.

I have also argued that the waiters' place in the club is intimately tied to the tipping norm. As I have shown, at *Marbella's*, the tipping norm is what keeps waiters and customers in check, what regulates the waiters' work, and what keeps the club working. Through the tipping system, management ensures that service delivery is supervised by the customer. Waiters are kept working because tips are the main source of income for waiters.

In synthesis, waiters are figures of social control. They are the figures responsible for enforcing customer conformity with the tipping norm and, at the same time, they are the

employees responsible for enforcing their customers, territorial boundaries, playing a role that is reminiscent of the territorial disputes that have become one of the trademarks of the Mexican drug war. But this is not the full story. There is also another aspect to their role at the club which places them, paradoxically, on the opposite side of social control.

Conceptually, these ideas used to bring light to the behaviours and practices discussed up to this point have not had a coherent theoretical origin. Instead, because the direction of the discussion has been defined empirically and inductively, by the data itself, I have brought ideas into the analysis as they have become necessary. In this way, I have made use of concepts such as citationality and indexicality to discuss the use of language and gestures to encourage norm compliance. These concepts were taken from debates on gender (Butler 1990; 2011; 2015; Kulick 2003; Brickell 2005; Salih 2002) and semiotics (Nakassis 2012; 2013), and were redeployed in this thesis to make sense of the processes of imitation that were observed during my ten weeks of employment at *Marbella's*. A similar idea was then applied to the notion of territoriality, which was taken from debates on cultural geography (Ley and Cybriwsky 1974; Holloway and Hubbard 2000; Tyner 2011; 2012), which was linked to the symbolic use of the body and other objects through the debates on the concept of manspreading (Jane 2017; Ringrose and Lawrence 2018), and then brought into the description of the behaviours at *Marbella's* by suggesting that it is also subject to citation.

The problem with this eclectic approach, driven mainly by the conceptual needs dictated by the data, is that it does not address any of the specific debates in the literature. Additionally, this approach leaves issues unresolved. While the evidence seems to suggest that waiters learn the strategies employed from other waiters, as much as they do by imitating their customers' behaviours, I have not addressed this question. In light of this, this chapter seeks to resolve this issue, while at the same time bringing the ideas presented throughout

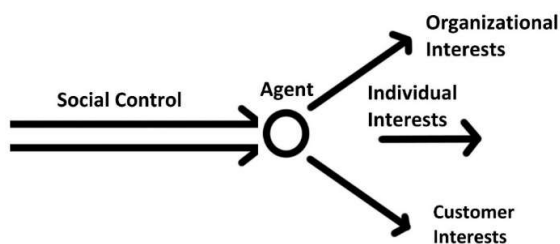
the discussion into a coherent whole. In order to accomplish this, I have decided to look more closely at one of the behaviours which raises questions about the way waiters have been portrayed up to this point. The idea here is to challenge the idea that waiters are norm enforcers by looking at the issue of workplace deviance, while at the same time introducing the problem of knowledge transfer and subcultural dynamics. In turn, this discussion will then lead me to address the question of theoretical eclecticism by demanding a clear theoretical approach to explain the relationship between workplace deviance, knowledge transfer, and imitation.

The point of departure is the idea that *Marbella's* waiters, like other service industry employees (Sallaz 2002), are also rule breakers. As the ethnographic evidence collected at the club shows, *Marbella's* waiters often find themselves in violation of the tipping norm. This is the case because they often break customer trust by taking their customers' money. This is conceptually problematic. If tipping is one of the key organizational devices that drives club operation and both customers and waiters share the responsibility of enforcing the tipping norm, and waiters depend on the tipping norm as their main source of income, why do they violate the tipping norm? How does the tipping system allow for moments of non-conformity or deviance from waiters and what role does this practice have in relation to the tipping norm?

### **WAITER AGENCY AND THE EXERCISE OF SOCIAL CONTROL**

The question of workplace norm violation has been one of the topics of discussion that has attracted attention in the recent literature on the sociology of service work (Rosenthal 2004; Litzky *et al.*, 2006; Eddleston, *et al.*, 2002; Sallaz 2002; Rusche and Brewster 2009). An author that has addressed this problem is Rosenthal (2004), who argues that waiters' have

an ambiguous relationship with club norms. Given that the nature of customer-service involves different degrees of continuous and personal contact between both employees and customers, as well as between managers and employees, their willingness to enforce key club norms is not fixed, but can move in either direction. This is precisely the argument presented by Rosenthal (2004: 609). According to her, front-line workers experience control and choice as a function of the involvement of managers in employee supervision. In businesses where employees are supervised through bureaucratic means, such as through the organizational hierarchy or through technological means, such as through video-surveillance (Rosenthal 2004: 609), employee' loyalties are different from businesses where supervision is outsourced to customers through the tipping norm. Where employee supervision is left exclusively to the customer, and where the employee receives the majority of their income from the customer, there is a greater likelihood of a bond of loyalty in the relationship between customer and employee (Sallaz 2002; Rusche and Brewster 2009). It is in situations like these where unique opportunities for the expression of a form of workplace agency develops. It is also in situations like these where employees have been found to be willing to break organizational norms to favour their customers in order to improve their own financial standing.



**Figure 11** An instance of agency through social control. Self-elaboration with information from Rosenthal (2004).



According to Litzky *et al.*, (2006), employee deviance can be defined as a type of workplace behaviour which infringes norms and ‘may ultimately threaten the well-being of the organization, its employees, or both’ (Litzky *et al.*, 2006: 92). From their point of view, such behaviour is bolstered by the tipping system, which ‘increases the employees’ identification with customers’ (Litzky, *et al.*, 2006: 94). In Figure 11, I summarize Rosenthal's (2004) understanding of the relationship between social control and workplace agency. On the right-hand side of the diagram, I have chosen to represent the two alternative orientations possible for customer-contact employees’ interests with two arrows. The top, ascending, arrow represents the organization’s interests while the bottom, downward arrow represents the customers’ interests. The logic here is that the customer-contact employee’s interests varied according to the intensity of the interactions workers have with either of these parties. As Rosenthal (2004: 611) explains, the relationship between employee agency and social control is not one-dimensional. On the one hand, employees are subject to varying degrees of supervision which can limit the time they spend with a customer, the type of care they devote to their customer, and even the type of emotions they can express to a customer. On the other hand, because certain forms of social control prioritize employee supervision through the development of more intense and intimate relationships between customers and employees, employees are able to gain a more personal understanding of a customers’ needs and may develop forms of loyalty which may contravene their employers’ interests.

To further emphasize the argument made by Rosenthal's (2004), I want to consider two empirical studies that can further clarify this perspective. The first of these is Eddleston, *et al.*, (2002: 85), a study where the authors report having found that the factors that place waiters and waitresses at risk of being required by their customers ‘through commissions, tips, or other means’ to ‘bend the rules’ (Eddleston, *et al.*, 2002: 86) are the expectation that

they be able to adapt to the unique requirements of each dining party, while simultaneously maintaining ‘efficient and consistent high-quality service’. According to Eddleston, *et al.*, (2002: 86), in the restaurant and food service industry, customer-contact workers are continuously confronted with the need to choose between their split loyalties. They can either align with the interests of management or pledge loyalty to the interests of the customer. They can also opt to fully reject either of these alternatives and embrace instead their own best interest.

In businesses where employee supervision is left exclusively to the customer, this is particularly problematic because the frequency with which customer-waiter interactions take place, and the personal nature of these interactions, encourages the development of relationships of mutual benefit between customer and employee (Eddleston, *et al.*, 2002: 88). Expressions of this in the restaurant industry include, for example, the practice of giving away free drinks by bartenders “either to regular customers or to compensate customers for poor service” (Eddleston, *et al.*, 2002: 89) or pouring free liquor to customers in order to assess their willingness to in return, and socializing their findings upon discovering their lack of intentions to reciprocate (Eddleston, *et al.*, 2002: 90). In a similar fashion, Litzky *et al.*, (2006: 94) argue that there is a relationship between workplace deviance and the tipping system because the tipping system fosters a close relationship with the customer, which is subject to supervision from within, acts such as giving preferential service to certain customers or the distribution of drinks and food free of charge, become possible as long as the two parties involved are personally benefited (Litzky, *et al.*, 2006: 94).

While these examples provide an illustration of how the employee’s self-defined interests can align with the interests of the customers, giving way to the possibility of norm infractions or rule breaking, they occur in the context of the strategies used to encourage

customer tipping. In this last section of the thesis, I use Rosenthal's (2004) look into the theory of differential association – reinforcement to address the issue of the waiters' relationship to workplace deviance at *Marbella's*.

### **A HANDS-ON TRAINING SYSTEM**

This section seeks to make sense of the existence of deviant practices among *Marbella's* waiters, particularly in relation to the handling of alcohol and money and takes place at the customer's table, despite their role in club norm enforcement. In this section I will describe the existence of this practice in context. To simplify the discussion, I centre my attention on the behaviours pertaining to the handling of alcohol in the club. Specifically, I am interested in drawing attention to the practice of stealing drinks away from their customers with the purpose of reselling them, but I also include examples detailing the practice of stealing other items of customer property. The discussion includes data obtained through conversations with other waiters, where they expressed their opinion on the practice, their understanding of the practice in the context of lap dancing clubs, and descriptions on how waiters share their strategies with each other. In the first part of the discussion, I look at conversations about stealing, both in relation to the way they talk about others' involvement in stealing and in terms of how they describe their own role in the practice.

The first example I want to consider took place on week two, specifically on April 22nd. This interaction took place during the 30-minute lunch break window, right after everyone had finished changing into their work clothes but before the lights had been turned off. Given that I was looking for potential future respondents, and that I wanted to make as many acquaintances as possible, I asked Gustavo (who was sitting alone) if I could sit next

to him while he finished eating. I wanted to build rapport and this was an exceptional opportunity to strike a one-on-one conversation.

To open the conversation, I asked him how things had been the previous night. He said he was not doing as well as his friends, who worked in a nearby club. Things were better for them. There were more customers there, and the waiters supplemented their income by stealing and, our conversation soon drifted towards the topic. We had to look for other options, he said, otherwise, no money would be made. To make his point, he used a story about himself working in a different bar. It was a story meant to illustrate that when customers are intoxicated, they become easier targets. The main themes were timing, learning how to decide whether or not to act, and knowing how to wait for the right moment in order to set up the circumstances in a way that minimized the possibility of an unwanted response from the customer. He said that on one occasion, he made a customer undress completely. He laughed and said that the customer had gone to the extreme of hiding his cash inside his shoes<sup>43</sup>. Apparently, he knew this was a problem.

At this point in the conversation, I thought that he may have sensed a little incredulity on my part because I asked repeatedly: “¿A sí?”—Really? It was my intention to keep him talking and it worked. His reaction was to offer another example to drive home the idea that thievery was pervasive in the business. According to him, his friends would often ask him how much he was making and would then tell him to quit his job and work with them instead. This was not because they were better paid or because customers were better tippers, but because their customers carried expensive mobiles which they could then sell for around \$500 pesos a piece. The only downside, he said, “Es que la mitad del bar son zetas y la otra

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<sup>43</sup> Week 2, April 22: 115

son golfos. ¡Está bien caliente el pedo!”—is that the bar is half one cartel (zetas) and the other half another cartel (golfos)<sup>44</sup>. Shit’s too hot to handle!

From the way Gustavo speaks about stealing, it is possible to make some inferences about the relationship this type of behaviour holds in relation to the waiters’ occupational role. Looking simply at the way Gustavo depicts thievery, it is clear that to him this skill is necessary to make money while working the tables in a lap dancing club. According to him, thievery is part of the job. For the waiter, knowing how to work involves knowledge of timing, of being able to identify the appropriate time to steal, as much or even more than it involves other skills. The waiter of the sort that works in lap dancing clubs knows how to identify the circumstances where the risk of being caught is minimal.

At the same time, from his attitude and the way he treats the conversation, it appears as though he is sharing trade secrets with me. The conversation takes place in my second week on the job. I have only recently joined the workplace, and he is taking the role of a teacher or adviser on how to earn more money. He talks about stealing in the context of a lesson about how to wait tables. He explains that it is important to know when the customer has become intoxicated. The key, he says, is about knowing how to get away with it. Given that I have not yet witnessed any of these activities, this conversation serves to draw my attention in the direction of the practice.

Now, consider this conversation with the incident that took place three weeks later, an exchange I had with Gustavo during week five. In this interaction, the question of stealing

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<sup>44</sup> Reference to the different drug trafficking organizations competing for the territory during that stage of the Drug War during 2015 in Monterrey, Mexico.

was raised in the context of a customer I had been working with, so an additional layer of complexity was involved. This was the first instance in which Gustavo showed a deliberate and direct attempt to execute the schemes and strategies that had been at the centre of the stories he had been sharing with me from the moment I began working at *Marbella's*. It all began when Gustavo decided that he would serve a customer arbitrarily, instead of waiting to be assigned to a customer by the queue, and move me out of the way in the process. In this case, he chose a customer who had already been in the club but had walked out of the bar earlier that day because he had run out of cash. After returning to the club, this customer had simply made his way to his old table and taken a seat, so he had been ignored by the passing waiters who were working their assigned tables.

Because I had been serving this customer from the moment he set foot in the club up to the point he walked out of the club in search of a cash machine, I assumed that upon his return, I had the right to claim him as my customer. However, given that I had been distracted by another table, I did not realize he had returned until it was too late. By then, Gustavo was already at his side taking the order. At that point, it was obvious to me that this had not been a coincidence.

To any unsuspecting bystander watching this part of the interaction from a distance, this would likely have appeared as an aggressive move. After all, Gustavo had been watching the customer, who had been tipping generously and had been smiling and joking with me throughout his visit, and had simply stepped over me to claim the customer for himself. It was obvious that he was aware of this customer and that he had been pacing around the customer's table waiting for the right time to act. But this was not entirely the case.

Even though Gustavo did not ask me directly, he had been talking to me during the entire interaction. He had been watching how I talked to the customer, what the customer had been drinking, and how he had carelessly chosen to leave two untouched and recently opened beer bottles on the table. Gustavo knew I was guarding the bottles, and that they were not unattended. So, before beginning to act, he approached me to tell me his plan. In my eyes, it was as if he were making me step aside to salvage a missed opportunity. I was not doing what I should have been doing and he was not going to let the opportunity pass.

When the customer left, Gustavo and I were standing right behind him, so Gustavo had seen when the customer turned to me and asked me to watch his drinks for him until his return. Seeing that the customer was taking long, and that the drinks were practically untouched, Gustavo approached me and asked me if the customer had left for good. From the fieldnotes:

[*Gustavo*] kept asking me: “do you think he’s gonna come back?” “Where did he go? Did he tell you where he was going?”

[...] I told him, “no”, that he had said that he was gonna come back, but he didn’t say when. And [*Gustavo*] was just [so] eager, [that] he finally asked me: “do you have two bottle caps?”

I gave him two bottle caps and he said, “okay, I’m gonna cap them and I’m gonna hide them”. He put them in a bucket of ice— underneath his chair and he left them there for a while.

But he was watching and pacing around and pacing around. And then he finally took the bucket of beer and put it somewhere else, and then he [finally] cleaned up the spot [*where the customer was sitting*].

When the guy came back, the first person he spoke to was me. He asked me, “hey do you have the beers that I told you?” And I said, “I’m sorry man! The guy that does the clean-up took them. You took so long. I didn’t know if you were coming back or not” He said, “yes, I went far— to Leones.”

And I told him, “well, wait”. And then, whenever [...] [*Gustavo*] came [back] around [*to this side of the bar*], he just immediately went and sold him the same beers.

So, he sold him the beers twice. And then [the customer left again, only this time for a] private dance. He took like 30 minutes [to come back].

When [*the customer*] came back down, [Gustavo] sold him those same beers again — because he had done the same exact thing: he put them in a bucket of [ice, hid them] and then served them to him again. (Week 5, May 13: 187-199)

As the passage shows, this incident is more complex than the conversation which took place weeks earlier. In this case there is also a conversational element, but there is also a first-person demonstration of the practice, and my own participation in a scheme. To fully make sense of this incident I want to separate the interaction into two stages. In the first part, there is a moment of preparation, which involves talking about stealing; in the second part, there is the execution of the plan. The second stage begins the moment Gustavo's plan is brought into action as he finally decides to ask me for the bottlecaps. It is at that precise moment when he springs into action and finally takes the beer bottles and proceeds to hide them. The execution ends the moment the customer leaves for the night, after Gustavo has pulled the same trick three times.

When these two elements are considered separately, the similarities between this and the interaction that took place three weeks earlier are brought to the fore. In both instances, the conversational element involves a detailed description of the practice. In both cases, the key characters in the story are the waiter and customer. In both instances, one of the key elements of the story is finding the right moment to execute the strategy.

Because of these similarities, there is direct link that binds these two events into a single process. Talking about stealing entails the transfer of knowledge, becoming involved in the practice of sealing affirms this knowledge through direct, on-the-job practice. This is the reason why it is important to note Gustavo's approach is not abrupt. Instead of asking me directly for assistance, he chooses to gradually make me his collaborator. He begins by



revealing his intentions. Since I choose to avoid expressing any type of disapproval, he then proceeds to ask me to provide the implements necessary to carry out his plan. He tells me how he is going to do it. He describes each step, points to the area of the club where each action is carried out, and then asks me if I have any bottle caps. This is important because he could have sourced the bottlecaps himself with ease, since they are abundant throughout the club, but chooses instead to make me an accomplice by asking me to provide them.

The complicity builds successively with each instance of interaction. I am already part of the scheme before I even realize it. Prior to the interaction itself, there were many instances where we had spoken about similar situations and strategies. It was then that our partnership began to develop. It was through those conversations that he set the stage for this interaction. Then, there is the interaction itself, which could not be possible without there being a prior relationship of trust between us. I am more than the only other person that knows about his plan; I am the waiter that gives legitimacy to his actions. The customer assumes that I have guarded his drinks, so as Gustavo carries out the plan, the customer turns to me to confirm that nothing bad is happening. Without having any prior intention to deceive the customer, I am forced to corroborate Gustavo's story. He does not have to ask me to do anything or demand confidentiality. All he has to do is reveal his plan to me.

In this way, stealing is more than a topic of conversation used to build a waiter's reputation. Together with the tipping norm, talking about stealing is a means of shaping their relationships with each other and with their customers. Among waiters, it is through these conversations that waiters reveal their intentions. For Gustavo and I, it is through our prior conversations that it became clear to me that acting on my own self-interest would be detrimental to his opinion of me.

The terms in which the situation unfolds leaves me in a vulnerable position. By having participated in the conversations about stealing without voicing any concern, I have implicitly conveyed my approval. It is this approval which then leads him to assume that I am willing to help him. Even though this is a question that was never raised in our conversations, I feel indebted to me for having shared this information in confidence. Now, as he gives me a live, play-by-play narration of what he is doing, I find I am his accomplice without agreeing to do be a part of his scheme. The situation is such that if I were to reveal what is happening to the customer, I will have to share the responsibility and be accountable. By allowing Gustavo to take the first bottles, and lying for him, I have broken the customer's implicit expectation to guard his territory. This is what makes me share the responsibility. Once that happened, I became an accomplice. But even that was not a single event. It began the moment I had to surrender the bottle caps, watch him carry out the theft, hide the bottles, and then deceive the customer. As the interaction unfolds, there is no need for any instructions to be given and I had no need to ask any questions to what I had to do.

The waiter himself gives me a live, play-by-play, description of everything the waiter is about to do. Because of this, I have insider's knowledge of what is about to happen as the interaction unfolds. In turn, this gives me the unique opportunity to contribute to the scheme at key moments. This is a dynamic that has two broad consequences. It ensures complicity and it serves as a means of knowledge transfer. It is a mechanism that gives newer waiters an opportunity to learn the strategies used by more experienced waiters.

In synthesis, this interaction constitutes a type of practical, hands-on lesson on stealing. It is a lesson in which Gustavo is simultaneously a teacher and the example. Immediately before carrying out his plan, he walks over to me to ask me for the bottlecaps. Before he begins the execution of the scheme, he describes each of the components of the

choreography. He shows me how he is going to place the bottle caps onto the bottles by gesturing with his hands. He smacks a closed fist, which mimics the way he would position his hand if he were holding a bottle by the neck, and then he smacks it with the right hand. He makes sure to point with his index finger to show me where, when he carries out his actions right in front of me, I know where to look. Once he deceives the customer for the first time, he returns to tell me how much he made from the transaction. As he adds another layer of deceit, selling the same containers over and over again, he reports back to me with his earnings.

On the one hand, this example shows how, in the blink of an eye, Gustavo forces me to become an accomplice to his scheme. Much like the individual who begins a deviant career by incurring in a deviant act without even being aware of the changes that are happening around them, and in part motivated by the desire to belong to the group (Becker 1963: 30), I tell the customer that someone else has taken his drinks away because they had been left alone for too long. Without the need for any warning, I was well aware that the customer would have blamed me if I revealed what had happened. As his assigned waiter, I had been trusted with his drinks and allowing someone else to take them was a betrayal of this trust. Saying that Gustavo had taken them would have also affected my workplace relationships.

At the same time, the example also shows how conversations about stealing are more than moments of socialization. In talking about thievery among themselves, waiters create spaces of opportunity where it becomes possible to find new potential accomplices, where they can determine whether or not anyone noticed their actions, and where they can assess how others react to each other's deviant acts. and teach each other successful strategies. Much like the conversations on waiting in general, these conversations are lessons, part of

an informal training system, that prepares waiters for stealing successfully. These lessons include either references to the way someone approaches the task at hand, a reference to how they perform the task themselves, or a hands-on run through the activity in question. There are theoretical lessons, where the strategies are described verbally, and practical lessons, where the strategies are demonstrated. In the first type, waiters employ discursive means to talk about what stealing entails, discussing the outcomes of each action in detail. These more theoretical exchanges are then reinforced socially, as they share with each other the experiences learned in the course of their daily routine. From there, these behaviours are then transferred to their interactions with their customers and their outcomes are then brought into perspective and reflected upon with other waiters.

Because of the size of the club, a lesson in stealing is always as close as the nearest table, all the new recruit has to do is pay attention and watch. For example, in the example discussed above, for me to know what was happening, all that was necessary was a question: “Do you think he is coming back?” After that, he practically walks me through each stage of the strategy step by step. It is as if I were watching a live training video on how to steal. First, he takes the bottle caps and closes the bottles. Then, he hides the bottles in a corner, away from the customer’s seat. After that, he asks for a bucket of crushed ice, and places the bottles in it. Finally, when it is time to serve them, he uses his hand and the bottle opener to cover the used bottle caps. Before serving, he gestures as if he were opening the bottles right in front of the customer –he does this especially because he knows that the noise will not let the customer know whether or not the bottle fizzes the moment it is opened.

## AN EMPIRICALLY-DRIVEN CRITIQUE OF THE DIFFERENTIAL

### ASSOCIATION - REINFORCEMENT THEORY

At this point, it should be more than clear that at *Marbella's* there is an informal on-the-job training system through which less experienced waiters learn and practice the strategies they use to encourage customer's tipping, compete with other waiters, and generally present themselves as the customers' allies and associates. This is precisely what is happening each time Gustavo talks about stealing, drawing my attention directly to his actions, the victim's possible responses and providing alternative courses of action. Each time he demonstrates his examples in practice, he makes sure to first give me notice of his intentions. It is this gesture that allows me to focus on his actions, making it easier for me to understand and follow each one of his strategies.

This is also the hands-on, on-the-job training system can be seen operating in the background of the discussion on the use of the word *padrino* of Chapter Two, where more experienced waiters pointed to, and described the appropriate behaviour that should be had when interacting with an arriving customer. This same system can be seen at work each time waiters talk about waiter-on-waiter competition and draw each other's attention to the use of objects to establish claim over certain customers. This is also the system that underlies the conversations where a customer's specific preferences and desires are discussed and analysed.

However, while this on-the-job training system was given expression, and it was seen operating in the background throughout previous chapters, its presence was never explicitly acknowledged. Instead, the focus throughout the thesis has centred on demonstrating that the practices in question are, in fact, present among customers and waiters. The approach

has been to demonstrate that these practices either arise among customers, and then adopted and redeployed by waiters, or among more experienced waiters and then are employed and redeployed by newer waiters. In other words, the attention has been directed at identifying the uses given to the strategies, as well as looking at the relationship between the behaviours displayed by the waiters and their expression among customers, leaving aside the question of how these behaviours are transferred between individuals.

The problem with this is not only that the concepts used up to this point have nothing to say about the question of knowledge transfer and behavioural change, as the evidence collected at *Marbella's* seems to suggest. It is also that the discussions presented throughout this thesis are driven by similar concepts that are not necessarily theoretically compatible. A case in point is the concept of mimicry or mimesis (van Baaren *et al.* 2003; Kühn *et al.* 2010), used here to highlight the relationship between gestures and norm enforcement in the context of the tipping relationship, which refers to imitation and similarities between gestures and is conceptually different from the idea encompassed by the concept of citationality (Nakassis 2012; Nakassis 2013), which focuses on the semiotic relationship that links two different instances of use, highlighting the differences that set them apart and drawing attention to the creative effects that results from linking two different instances together.

As a result, in order to make sense of this issue, and to provide a more coherent conceptual framework to bring the disperse behaviours discussed in previous chapters together, it is necessary to look beyond the notions of citationality and indexicality (Kulick 2003; Nakassis 2012), performativity (Butler 1990; Butler 2015), and mimesis (van Baaren *et al.* 2003), and to think about the way these ideas can be reconciled with a theory of

knowledge transfer. That is, it becomes necessary to bring a theoretical tradition that addresses the issues raised up to now into the discussion.

The conceptual framework used for this purpose is the theory of differential association - reinforcement, as it has been reformulated by Ronald Akers (Akers and Jennings 2016; Akers 2017). However, before making use of a theoretical framework to guide the discussion on the system of knowledge transfer, or on-the-job training observed at *Marbella's*, choosing it based on its capacity to make sense of the relationship between subcultural dynamics, behavioural change, norm conformity and deviance, and knowledge transfer, it is necessary to discuss the origins and ideas of the theory.

According to Matsueda (1988: 280), Akers' (2017) work reconciles the ideas around subcultural theory and differential association with the social learning literature from social psychology. Receiving the name of differential association – reinforcement theory, Akers' work uses Edwin Sutherland's theory on differential association as its foundation (Matsueda 1988; Akers and Jennings 2016; Akers 2017). In this way, differential association – reinforcement theory addresses the key issues raised throughout this thesis: both the mechanisms of social interaction and subcultural dynamics, deviance, as well as the more psychological processes associated with knowledge transfer and the relationship between mechanisms of reinforcement and behavioural change.

Developed in the late 1930's (Matsueda 1988; Akers and Jennings 2016; Akers 2017), Sutherland's theory had the explicit goal of redressing the prevalent conceptual eclecticism that prevailed in criminological studies (Akers 2017: 22). It combined the tenets of behavioural change through systems of rewards developed by social psychologists with the principles of anomie produced by culture conflict posited by the several authors from the

Chicago School, drawing particularly but not exclusively from the work by Lewis Wirth (Wirth 1931), Edwin Sutherland's "processual theory of how individuals come to commit crimes" (Akers 2017: 22) has a structural, an interactional, and a psychological component. In its oldest and most basic formulation, it is built on three propositions (Akers 2017: 21): the first one states that all people are capable of learning behaviours; the second states that the failure to conform to behavioural conventions is the expression of a conflict in social influences in favour and against conformity; and finally that crime results from cultural conflict.

According to Akers' (2017: 23) account of the process that gave rise to this theoretical tradition, Sutherland's theory experienced important changes as it developed. For instance, as its propositions became more specific, defining the types of ideas and behaviours that were subject to being socially transmitted, Sutherland dropped the reference to macro cultural conflict (Akers 2017: 22). In its final version, Sutherland had developed a micro-level theory of criminal behaviour which explained individual criminal acts as a result of the interplay between the immediate social context and the "inclinations" of the individual (Akers 2017: 23). Published in 1947, the theory consisted of nine statements, the first three of which referred to the learning of behaviour, in interaction, with intimate personal groups (Akers 2017: 23). In this version, there were also two principles describing what is learned, such as techniques, "motives, drives, rationalizations, and attitudes" (Akers 2017: 24) and whether these elements were favourable or contrary to conformity with norms and laws. Additionally, there were four other principles. One of them specified that an individual behaves in either way as a result of the general balance of favourable to unfavourable influences accumulated through a person's life, explained that there are influences which may be deviant but not criminal. Two more established that the relative importance of these



influences in an individual's life depended on factors such as frequency of contact with a certain intimate social relationships, the intensity and duration of these relationships, and their priority (Akers 2017: 24). This principle gave more weight to prolonged, personal and direct contact, opening the way for Akers (2017) later emphasis on the importance of reinforcement through direct rewards. Finally, the last two principles referred to the need to clarify that this system of social learning for criminal behaviour was no different from the processes that lead to learning any other type of behaviour, and the idea that for certain behaviours to be adopted there also has to be a complementary need for the rewards that certain behaviours entail.

For Akers (2017: 34), one of the areas where the theory of differential association has received attention is in relation to the issue of definitions favourable or contrary to deviance, as this relates to the rationalizations used to counteract the influence of law abiding definitions. In this way, two important moments in the development of differential association theory are Donald Cressey's work on embezzlement and Sykes and Matza's work on techniques of neutralization because both of them are extensions to the theory focusing specifically on the issue of definitions. Cressey's contribution to the debate on the importance of definitions was the idea that the definitions favourable to crime were necessary before a criminal activity was undertaken (Akers 2017: 34). That is, the definitions favourable to committing embezzlement were the necessary condition, even if there was a structure of opportunity and motivations in place.

In contrast, Sykes and Matza's (1957) contribution to this issue was to clarify that the adoption of definitions favourable to crime did not have to imply a rejection of an entire value system favourable to norm conformity, nor did it involve a decision between dual principles, between clearly conforming or clearly deviant definitions. In arguing that most

of the attention given to the theory of differential association to that point had been directed at the mechanisms of learning and not at the content of what is learned (Sykes and Matza 1957: 664), they challenged the idea of a subcultural set of values favourable to delinquency, as had been previously argued by Cohen, suggesting instead that individuals learn and teach each other that certain forms of behaviour are tolerated under certain conditions (Akers 2017: 35).

From these foundations, Akers and Burgess set out to address the lack of clarity in regard to the mechanisms by which knowledge transfer takes place, an issue that had already been characterized as one of the “major shortcomings” of the theory (Akers 2017: 42). This effort, which took place in the late 1960s, sought to formulate “testable statements” on the mechanisms of learning behind the theory of differential association (Akers 2017: 43). Their approach was to propose that, rather than simple imitation, these mechanisms involved the processes of behavioural reinforcement through rewards as suggested by psychological behaviourism, particularly operant conditioning (Akers 2017: 43).

Placing the principle of cognitive reinforcement at the centre of their critique, Akers and Burgess reformulated the statements that gave rise to the differential association theory (Akers 2017: 45). This resulted in generalized statements that highlighted the effect of acts of positive or negative reinforcement in the learning of behaviours through social interactions. As such, the learning of behaviours is the result of a positive balance of reinforcers in favour of those behaviours opposing said behaviours (Akers 2017: 45). In other words, the approach here was to operationalize the process by which an individual learns definitions favourable or contrary to a norm through the action of reinforcers which are brought into operation through interaction.

In a section dedicated specifically to revise and reformulate the social learning – reinforcement theory, (Akers 2017: 50) offers a restatement of the theory that incorporates the spirit of the changes made to the propositions to incorporate the notions of reinforcement and imitation, but that drops the statement approach used in earlier versions. Here, the author explains that the basic tenet of the theory remains the same: that deviant and conforming behaviour is socially learned through situated interactions (Akers 2017: 50). The author also states that these definitions are not absolute, pointing exclusively in either direction according to the situation, time, and other contextual factors (Akers 2017: 50). Additionally, these learning processes (cognitive conditioning and imitation) also produce behaviours which are themselves cues for the definitions they express (Akers 2017: 50). In this way, according to Akers (2017: 50) deviant behaviour is more likely when: a) there is differential association with social contexts favourable of, involved in, or who represent such behaviour; b) the system of reinforcement favours deviance over the alternative; and c) the situated definitions that result from this learning process favour deviance. Finally, it is important to note that the reformulation of the theory places emphasis on both personal and symbolic exposure to a system of rewards (Akers 2017: 50), unlike Sutherland’s approach which emphasized intimate associations over other types of interactions.

As it should be clear at this point, this theoretical framework addresses many of the issues raised throughout then analysis presented in this thesis. However, one of the questions that is not developed, is the precise role of the model, and the mechanisms by which imitation comes about. This is important because this has been one of the consistent themes throughout the analysis of the data collected at *Marbella’s*. Given this conceptual shortcoming and the need to conceptualize this process dictated by the empirical observations obtained during fieldwork, in the following paragraphs, I discuss the key tenets proposed by Bandura (1971),

their application in criminology, and their applicability to the behaviours observed. Specifically, I focus on the relationship between observation and cognition, and the place given in the theory to the issues of verbal descriptions of behaviours and their resemblance to the stories produced by *Marbella's* waiters as they talk about stealing.

### **BANDURA'S SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY AND AKER'S DIFFERENTIAL ASSOCIATION – REINFORCEMENT THEORY**

One of the key features of the theoretical expansion proposed by (Akers 2017) is the emphasis on reinforcement as described by operant conditioning, which is consistent with Sutherland's emphasis on intimate interactions. While this approach is later reformulated to include observational learning, this idea continues to be defined in terms of imitation without further theorization (Akers 2017: 50). As the evidence obtained at *Marbella's* shows, this is one of the strongest components of the system of on-the-job training that exists at the club. As a result, in order to introduce conceptual clarity to this analysis, in this section I consider an alternative view of social learning originating in social psychology.

The cognitive, interactional and social-behavioural theory proposed by Bandura (1971) develops as a response to the two prominent theoretical frameworks in psychology. It is distinct from psychoanalytical approaches which attempted to explain human behaviour by focusing exclusively on internal drives in that it prioritizes the role of the social context in shaping an individual's behavioural habits. It is also different from behavioural theories that explained human learning processes based on the relationship between environmental rewards and selection of behaviours through a process of trial and error that is at the core of operant conditioning (Fryling, Johnston and Hayes 2011: 191), given that it established a clear relationship between observation and learning, separating this process from the need

of immediate rewards. Instead of focusing on subconscious drives internal to the individual, or on the effects of immediate rewards on behavioural change, Bandura's Social learning theory posits that observation is a central aspect of learning (Fryling, Johnston and Hayes 2011: 192).

In this way, the key difference between Bandura's (1971) variant of social learning theory and the reward system conceptualised by operant conditioning is the concept of vicarious reinforcement, which expands the relationship between positive and negative rewards and behaviour beyond the face-to-face interaction in intimate groups. Unlike operant conditioning which emphasizes the effects of direct rewards, vicarious reinforcement associates behavioural change with the possibility that an individual observes, from a third-person point of view, a model sanction someone else's behaviour with rewards or penalties. This approach also separates the function of knowledge acquisition from motor repetition of the behaviour (Bandura 1971: 8; Bandura 2008: 1; Fryling, Johnston and Hayes 2011: 194).

Briefly, the theory is grounded on experimental findings and on children and adults and emphasizes observation and the role of modeling in this process of learning, understood as 'observation and demonstration' (Fryling, Johnston and Hayes 2011: 192). The approach taken in these experiments was to control for the presence of a model which displayed a novel and complex behavioural pattern and the presence or absence of immediate reinforcement through a system that rewarded either the model, the subject in question, or neither. Among the findings, the authors reported that behavioural change occurred more frequently when a model was present, and when the behaviour in question was coded verbally through spoken descriptions of the observed behaviour (Fryling, Johnston and Hayes 2011: 192).

Social learning theory considers four mechanisms for the acquisition of behaviour: ‘differential association, definitions, differential reinforcement and imitation’ (Wortley *et al.* 2008: 100), but fails to theorize the role of differential association as developed by Bandura (1971). In Aker’s approach, the emphasis is placed on exposure to behavioural models takes place in the context of behavioural interaction with other individuals, which can be as part of primary, such as family or friends, or secondary groups, such as neighbours or teachers (Wortley *et al.* 2008: 101). The types of reinforcement occur both through the association with peers, family and other institutions, and can be immediate and anticipated, positive or negative (Wortley *et al.* 2008: 102).

Akers (2017: xvi) has mentioned that the tenets of the differential association-reinforcement theory are compatible with, psychological social learning theories, such as the framework developed by Bandura (1971). However, the problem and the reason why I have chosen to use Bandura's (1971) approach and not the criminological variant is that even after undergoing revisions, this approach tends to place the emphasis elsewhere, giving less attention to the mechanisms of observational learning compared to the alternative approach proposed by Bandura (1971; 2008). Instead of looking at the mechanisms of observational learning themselves, the emphasis is on factors such the relative influence of certain ideas, beliefs, and norms that may favour deviant behaviour in relation to other ideas, beliefs, and norms that favour norm conformity (Akers and Jennings 2016: 231) and on the intensity and frequency of associations and the frequency and availability of reinforcement (Akers and Jennings 2016: 231).

In contrast, the model developed by Bandura (1971) goes beyond the element of reinforcement. It continues to place emphasis on the process by which behaviour is acquired, but it also theorizes the mechanisms of observational learning in more depth. It describes the

process by which individuals' attention is directed towards complex behavioural patterns, the way individuals represent these behaviours both symbolically and visually to facilitate understanding, how people use these symbolic codes and patterns to articulate their future behaviour, and the way these behaviours are then reproduced and reinforced. Instead of presenting an image of the learning process shaped by trial and error, this model introduces the possibility of foresight in the sense that the individual can perform a symbolic evaluation of the outcomes of a learned behaviour. In other words, it theorizes the interactional dynamics that take place between waiters when they share information about stealing with each other observed at *Marbella's*.

This approach to observational learning and behavioural change gives continuity to a discussion presented in earlier chapters of this thesis that drew attention to the social transference of behaviours, but said little about how these behaviours are appropriated. It adds an additional layer of complexity to continue developing the discussion where the concept of citationality and indexicality stopped. When considered in light of Bandura's (1971) Social learning theory, citationality and indexicality reveal themselves as only the final stage in the process; they are the mechanisms by which the observed behaviour is reproduced once the subjects attention has been directed towards the behaviour in question, and learning has been made possible by coding the behaviour symbolically. Citationality and indexicality become a property of the relationship established once the subject has observed others being rewarded or punished and the behaviour has been reinforced. Where citationality and indexicality point to a relationship of similarity, tracing a line from the original to the copy, Social learning theory looks at the cognitive dimension of the process that makes citationality possible.

Bandura's (1971) central concern pertains to the question of how behavioural change comes about without the need to preestablish whether the behaviour being acquired is deviant or not. The theory does not concern itself with the question of whether or not the behaviour violates a rule or a norm, but instead seeks to address the means by which this behaviour is transferred, considering an interplay of both cognitive and interactional mechanisms. This is the reason why it establishes a distinction between cognition or learning, which can be through observation of others, and the social reinforcement of behaviour through repetition and rewards or punishments. In Table 13 above, I have summarized the central features of the framework developed by Bandura (1971). According to Bandura (1971; 2008), one of the key elements of this Social learning theory pertains to the distinction between the learning or cognitive dimension, which consists of the attentional and retention aspects.

<b>Learning (Describing behaviour)</b>	<b>Attentional</b>	'Recognize essential features of the model's behaviour' (Bandura 1971: 6)	Associates – selective observation
	<b>Retention</b>	'Long term retention of activities' (Bandura 1971: 7)	Live – physical demonstration  Verbal - sequence of verbal representations  Symbolic - pictorial demonstration
<b>Performance of behaviour</b>	<b>Motoric</b>	'Symbolic representations' converted into 'overt actions' (Bandura 1971: 8)	Reproduction of modeled patterns – practicing
	<b>Reinforcement</b>	'Self-corrective adjustments on the basis of performative feedback from performance' (Bandura 1971: 8)	Relying on onlookers' negative or positive sanctions of the outcomes of learning  Direct reward on performance



			Vicarious – see and hear rewards being given to others
			Self-reinforcement

**Table 6** Functions of modeling (Bandura 1971). Self-elaboration

As shown in Table Six, the key elements of the model include four mechanisms. The first two, attentional and retention, constitute the first, cognitive or learning stage of the process. The second pair, motoric and reinforcement, are part of the stage in which the behaviour is repeated as modelled on the symbolic codes employed in the retention mechanism. One of the key ideas in this framework is the notion of modeling, which involves representing the behaviours of interest visually, through imagery and verbally. That is, instead of directly performing the behaviours and experiencing the rewards or punishments, the subject can acquire the behaviours in question by observing a model perform the behaviour in question, and receive reward or punishment, by seeing an image or video of the behaviour, or by listening to a verbal description of the behaviour which can then be represented in the form of a mental image. In this way, the model describes the individual that performs the behaviour, the symbolic coding of that behaviour, and the image of the behaviour.

### **A SOCIAL LEARNING APPROACH TO MARBELLA’S ON-THE-JOB TRAINING SYSTEM**

When the evidence collected at Marbella’s is taken into consideration, it is not difficult to see Gustavo’s role as a model. In the interaction that took place during week two, when he describes the way his friends work in the other club, and then extrapolates this same behaviour to himself, providing details about how he forced an intoxicated customer to undress, he fulfils the role of the model. According to Bandura (1971: 8):

A model who repeatedly demonstrates desired responses, instructs others to reproduce them, physically prompts the behaviour when it fails to occur, and then administers powerful rewards will eventually elicit matching responses in most people (Bandura 1971: 8)

In the earlier example<sup>45</sup>, Gustavo's insists on returning to this topic of conversation. His stories are full of detail, providing a clear illustration of the individual components of the behaviour he is interested in demonstrating. In the first conversation, the story is brought to the fore in the context of an exchange on the poor income received during the previous shift. In this way, stealing comes across as an alternative, as the option through which the waiters financial standing can be improved. If the waiter can perform the scheme without being held accountable by the customer nor the club, he receives a financial reward. Similarly, in the story about his friends, he sets the symbolic reward: a \$500 peso cell phone.

Gustavo's stories are verbal descriptions of scenarios in which certain behaviours are possible. They include descriptions of the customer's state, the spaces available in the club, the way to approach the customer, and the potential rewards. Because they are organized in a coherent chronological narrative, in the form of an epic story or an adventure in which the details of each component behaviour are clearly visible and they follow each other in a logical fashion, they can serve as patterns on which future behaviour can be modelled. At the same time, they are also attentional mechanisms. They include specific information on where to look for the customer's money, and what kind of possessions are valuable. It is through these stories that the waiter draws attention to the behaviour of interest, adding an

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<sup>45</sup> See page 222

element of dramatic flair to the passages where the risk is greater or where greater care needs to be deposited.

In this way, Gustavo's role is complex. He is simultaneously a live model and the facilitator of an image of the behaviour which is coded verbally and delivered through live narration. In the example that took place during week five, we can see how Gustavo fulfils an additional role, both as a live model and as a reinforcer of the behaviour he is trying to transmit. In this incident, instead of the more theoretical conversations about stealing, we have a more practical approach to training based on watching each other and then providing feedback on how each waiter performs with a particular customer. He provides reinforcement by expressing his approval and validation: "ya sabes trabajar", now you know how to work, he says.

This approach can also be seen in the following example, which took place during my first week at *Marbella's*. It consists of an earlier on-the-job training session with Gustavo that involved a group of customers. Again, like in the previous examples, the interaction was also connected to a conversation I had with Gustavo on the previous day. Then, he had insisted that I needed to change my approach if I wanted to increase my income. This training session had spilled over into the following day, as Gustavo continued sharing information about the customers I was being assigned to:

They were called *padrinos*, I guess because they pay a lot, or they give tips. But the guy [...] wasn't giving [*me any*] tips.

At the beginning I was getting two pesos out of him —extra pesos— by not giving him the correct change. He never said anything, so I just kept them. But then at the end he was very, very, very careful with his money. It seems to me that once they start getting drunk, they'll start to be more careful with the money.

Because, that's the other thing. The waiters have strategies [they use] to get the customers confused with the change.

They'll take the change and go around —this was explained to me by [Gustavo the night before]. He was the one that was explaining [this to me] last: That you can take the money and put it in your pocket and then ask them, "what was the bill that you gave me?" Or take the money and [walk] around and never come back with the correct change. And it's doable. In my case, I didn't do any of that, but this guy was very pushy...[he wanted me to do it]. (Week 1, April 15: 117-124).

In this example, aside from providing a verbal model of how stealing works at *Marbella's*, Gustavo is the onlooker that critiques my work and gives feedback on my performance. He watches as I work with a customer, providing encouragement to try to deceive the customer with the change. I try it once, and he provides the verbal reward to reinforce the behaviour. Partly to avoid taking the customer's money again, and partly because it is true, I tell him that the customer seems to become more suspicious about the change as he gets more intoxicated.

Aside from using himself as the model, he also uses other waiters. For example, on many occasions, he tells me to watch how Beto works. As he points in his direction, he laughs and celebrates Beto's skill. He underscores how Beto is able to skilfully hide all of his actions from nearly everyone in the busy club. After several similar conversations, I recognize the steps automatically. Each time I watch a waiter pick up the bottle caps, I know what is happening. I have seen the bucket of ice hiding in a corner before, I recognize the habit of placing the used bottle caps in their pockets. This practice of taking beer bottles from the customers can be seen in the following brief exchange I had with Beto, also during my first week at work.

At the end of the day, I actually told [Beto] that I had found three beers sitting on a table. And he said, "Well take it! Put it under the table. Sometimes they're so drunk they don't even realize it and its extra money".

I didn't take [the bucket] but then, I saw [Beto] take it. He actually took it and hid it! I saw him! (Week 1, April 16: 165-167)

Each time they offer half of the profits if I sell a beer they suspiciously have in their hands, I know what happened. I know that, if I wanted to, I could try it myself and would probably succeed. After ten weeks, I am also able to verbally code the behaviours I have learned. From the fieldnotes:

[T]he most basic [*level*] is [...] messing with change. You can fool the customer while giving change. [This means that] you give less change than what you need. Uh... That's at the lower scale. If you... uh... they teach you that. [...] That's the second part. Learning how to fool your customer with giving change, with keeping bills, giving the wrong amounts, maybe stealing a beer or two [...] (Week 10, June 15\_2 : 195-196).

At *Marbella's*, waiters are routinely involved in two forms of stealing. The first type includes the practices that involve the handling of cash. This is possible because all of *Marbella's* cash transactions take place either at the customers' table or at the till, and customers never approach the till, this means that the waiters mishandling of cash takes place at the customer's table. These strategies depend on two environmental factors, which include dim lighting and dampness in the environment, as well as one contextual factor: the customer's intoxication. One of them, for example, relies on the customers' inability to count his change and intoxication is important. In this way the waiters simply return an incorrect amount and hope that the customer will not notice.

Another example is an approach that depends on waiters capitalizing on environmental factors such as humidity, sweat and the habit of keeping bills in billfolds. In Monterrey there are basically two seasons: summer and spring. As a result, most of the year the temperature is above 30 degrees. People sweat profusely and their money, especially bills kept in wallets are often stuck together because of the sweat. At *Marbella's*, both waiters and customers are well aware of this fact. Customers will use the friction of their fingertips to double-check if they are unknowingly handing over two bills instead of one.

Waiters, on the other hand, will rely on the darkness. After receiving a bill they will quickly check the denomination visually and then quickly hide their hand in their apron, where they will then use their fingertips to rub on one of the corners of the bill. If there are two or more bills stuck together, this friction will separate them. If there is only one bill, the waiter knows that the customer paid the tab.

The other strategy involves taking the customer's beer. This can be either from a bucket, a customer's unattended table or from the bartender. In this approach, the waiter relies on the prevailing darkness, the bartender's distraction and, occasionally, on the customer's intoxication. As with the bills, the approach here involves speed and skill in the ability to hide the bottle in an apron pocket, under an arm or in between other bottles being carried away to the back of the club. This is usually done by picking up several empty bottles and concealing the unopened container among them, by taking an unopened glass bottle from a bucket and then hiding it in an apron pocket, or by approaching the bartender and asking for a drink without having visited the till. To sell these beers, waiters can either offer the bottles to another waiter for a lower price, or place them among their customers when the beer in question is of the most popular and commonly sold name brand.

### ***MESERO DE VERDAD***

At *Marbella's*, when the topic being spoken about was table service, the right way of doing things was embodied in the figure of one waiter or another. In the previous section, I described how waiters often speak about 'the right way of doing things' in their everyday conversations, using other waiters as examples. I showed how these conversations are actually mechanisms by which complex behaviours are transferred from more experienced

to novice waiters. Specifically, I argued that they are mechanisms of observational learning known as models.

The importance of modeling at *Marbella's* can be further demonstrated if we look at an idea that is often used in waiter conversations. This idea receives the name of *mesero de verdad*, which translates to 'the real waiter' or 'the true waiter'. To see what this idea describes, it is important to clarify that, contrary to what it may appear, this is not a model that verbally encodes the appropriate way of being a waiter. It is also not the negative or wrong way of approaching waiting, but an alternative, more emboldened approach which uses stealing as a way of affirming the waiters' power over their customers. The *mesero de verdad* can be seen as a sort of extreme case. It is a term that describes a certain way of doing things, which is directly associated to a particular person. It represents a different, more carefree way of being a waiter. This distinction is important because this difference can be lost in translation: the *mesero de verdad* is not an abstract concept, but rather is a label applied to specific waiters when attention is being drawn to a certain attitude or approach to waiting. The idea here is that the *mesero de verdad* is an outlier. It is a figure that possesses traits that violate the fundamental nature of the waiters' position: their dependence on customer tips as their main source of income.

Let me explain. Unlike everyone else, the *mesero de verdad* has nothing to lose. This is not a waiter that depends on customers conforming to the *padrino* ideal, but a waiter that is beyond the tipping norm: a waiter that is beyond ambiguity and that can completely fulfil his deviant role. The *mesero de verdad* represents an approach which is incompatible with the tipping system that exists at *Marbella's*. Where the club's waiters have developed strategies to maintain a positive reputation in the eyes of their customers because they depend fundamentally on the income they receive from tips; the *mesero de verdad* is a waiter

who can antagonize the customer feely because he is not subject to the type of control afforded by a dependence on tipping income. And yet, despite this important difference, the figure of the *mesero de verdad* is spoken about with a great amount of detail, both in terms of how their attitude and in terms of how they do their job.

If we return to the concept of modeling proposed by (Bandura 1971) as part of his theory on observational learning and behavioural change, we can see that the *mesero de verdad* operates in the fashion of a model. This is not a model in the conventional sense of the word, a point of reference that is to be imitated, but a mechanism of knowledge transmission that codifies certain forms of behaviour through citationality. That is, this is not a model in the sense of a sequence of verbal representations that codify a behaviour in question in such a way that it can be imitated literally. It is a model in the sense of a mental, symbolic, device that allows waiters to think about the negative outcomes of stealing by referring to a mythical figure that encodes the limits of the waiters' behaviour.

Like the *padrino*, the *mesero de verdad* has an attentional function because it draws attention to the importance of maintaining a positive relationship with the customer with the goal of not jeopardizing their tipping intentions. It is a symbolic resource that draws attention to adverse outcomes that may result from failing to conceal their actions. It encodes a social norm at the very same time it draws attention to certain targets and sequences of behaviours and gestures. It is a device that synthesizes complex behaviours and lays them out chronologically, allowing for retention and motor reproduction in a new context.

To illustrate this idea, it is useful to return to the fieldnotes. There are several passages taken from the fieldnotes, where the idea of the *mesero de verdad* was discussed, which can be used to show that a key trait that characterizes this ideal type is its brazenness



or willingness to take behaviour that to others appears as audacious or outrageous. Unlike the people who speak of the *mesero de verdad*, the true waiter can get away with taunting the customer because he is not worried about the possibility of getting caught. The *mesero de verdad* is beyond the ambiguity that characterizes their responses, he becomes obvious, but only to the extent that like them, he can avoid the consequences because he does not abide by the tipping norm.

To give an empirical example of what waiters describe when they speak of the *mesero de verdad*, it is useful to look at the exchange dated May 12. On this day, I had chosen to join Pepe, while he smoked a cigarette before the beginning of the shift. As we stood under the marquee, away from the street and leaving enough space on the sidewalk for people to stroll by, the DJ emerged from the front door and decided to join us. I had just initiated a conversation by asking him about Monday. As we shared reports—I summarized the highlights for Tuesday in return—with each other, the DJ remarked that things were not going to improve. As I finished giving my opinion about the reasons for the low customer turnout, there was a brief silence, which was then interrupted by another man who approached us. He seemed cheerful, energetic and jumpy. He immediately revived the conversation and I noted that his gait, build and posture resembled that of another waiter at the club: Beto. To me, they were identical.

This passer-by did not stay long. He exchanged a few jokes and they laughed together. I smiled and looked away, knowing little about the subject of their conversation. After he left, Pepe said: “ese es un *mesero de verdad*”<sup>46</sup>. In support of this idea, he produced

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<sup>46</sup> Week 5, May 12: 148

a story about this waiter, set in some distant past when both this waiter and Pepe worked together at some other bar.

The story began with a couple walking into the bar. The waiters of the club, who were loitering around the main entrance to the bar in a way that reminded me of *Marbella's*, immediately noticed that the couple had money. According to Pepe, it all began the moment they noticed their mobile, which they wore right on their hip. It was bright red, large and it attracted attention. Immediately, the waiter reacted by walking up to them and greeting them with an embrace, taking the man's mobile in the process—the customer had what Pepe called a 'Ferrari' mobile clipped onto his belt. Before they even entered the bar, they had already been robbed of their phone. They did not discover the theft until they were inside the bar, so they ended up spending most of the night looking for it. They never saw it coming. At this point both the DJ and Pepe laughed. Adding insult to injury, concluded Pepe, the waiter took the phone to work the next day, showing it to everybody, bragging about it.

There is another, a completely unrelated incident that can also be employed to illustrate the situated meaning associated with the *mesero de verdad*. On May 28, while we sat a few tables away from each other—each one folding the stack of paper towels in half which we used as part of the table service, Beto decided to ask Gustavo about his weekend. Unlike the other stories about thievery, this particular story is important because the brazenness is evident in the actions of the waiter in question. The waiters in Gustavo's story do not work for tips but extort their customers. Because they take their money by force, they can operate out in the open, revealing their intentions and their methods to the customer.

This story was about a lap dancing club he had visited on the weekend. As he entered the club and proceeded to take a seat, he noticed that the waiters were simply ignoring him.

When they did finally come to his table, he asked about the beers they served. He noted that during the entire interaction, the waiter never told him the price and they did not write anything down. This, he said, made him think that they were not actually keeping track of what they were serving. They offered a bucket of ten bottles. He wanted to drink his beers one by one, but they refused: only buckets. He ordered, they served the drinks and left. He described how he had watched two other customers order only two beers, but they simply ignored them. Then the waiter said: bucket or nothing! Gustavo laughed as he described them, punctuating each deed with more laughter. “¡Vergüeros!”—shameless, he called them. Judging by their reactions, what seemed most amusing of all, however, was the part about him leaving. Laughing, he said they did not even leave a little piece of paper in the napkin holder or anything, so whenever it was time to go, and he asked for the bill, they simply came up with a number and said: it’s this much. He did not know where the number came from nor how they had kept track of the amount. To him it seemed as if they had decided the total bill on a whim. He said he felt they had definitely overcharged him, and they all laughed upon hearing about this.

Together, these examples show that for *Marbella’s* waiters, the *mesero de verdad* represents that which they are not. For them, stealing is to be kept hidden until the right time but the *mesero de verdad* is the opposite of this: it embodies the possibility of being able to carry out their thievery in the open, outside the limits of the tipping norm. For the true waiter, stealing is beyond any accountability. The true waiter operates with the confidence that his income will not be affected.

In this way, the *mesero de verdad* is an empirical expression of Bandura’s (1971) approach to social learning. In the particular case of the figure of the *mesero de verdad* used by waiters to refer to the special type of waiter that is outside of the limits of the tipping

norm, it is possible to see how modeling works at *Marbella's*. This idea has an attentional, a retention, and a motoric function, serving as the means through which less experienced waiters are taught to recognize their customer's possible responses. At the same time, when waiters speak of the *mesero de verdad*, they draw their listeners' attention to certain types of behaviour, outlining the gestures and strategies used by waiters in other clubs. The *mesero de verdad* also serves a retention function, verbally coding the sequence of actions involved in taking a customer's money. It describes both the methods and items of interest, such as overcharging and the profitability of taking a customer's phone.

This is not all. Aside from being a model that codes certain types of behaviour into language in the form of epic adventures experienced by the waiter narrating the story, the figure of the *mesero de verdad* also operates as a means of communicating definitions about a situation. Consistent with Akers' (2017: 34) theory of differential association – reinforcement, of the *mesero de verdad* contains the rationalizations used by waiters to justify their actions in a way that does not violate the limits of the tipping norm. As stated by Sykes and Matza's (1957) of the definitions favourable to deviance used by the waiters are not a rejection of the value system established by the norm they are responsible for enforcing, and which is their main source of income. Rather than a decision between dual principles, between clearly conforming or clearly deviant definitions, the *mesero de verdad* shows how norm violation and norm conformity can coexist and be transferred in the same instance of communication.

Each time *Marbella's* waiters laugh at the idea of stealing brazenly from their customers, they do so not because they celebrate it, but because this way of operating would imply a violation of the tipping norm. Brazen stealing is comical because it is outrageous. This is why Gustavo teaches the idea that a smart waiter should always have an excuse or a

way out in case he gets caught. He tells me: it is better to be known as the dumb-one, the one unable to do basic math, than to be held accountable for short-changing a customer. *Marbella's* waiters take an approach to stealing which is clearly different from, and could not be characterized by, the term *mesero de verdad*. Stealing is possible only if it takes place in the space between the customer's trust and their fear of the club and the club's employees. *Marbella's* waiters build for themselves and occupy an ambiguous role, they are both knowledgeable figures that operate as the customer's gate keepers and naïve employees who fumble with money, making intentional miscalculations in their favour. At the same time, they present themselves as incapable. As long as thievery remains undiscovered, there is always the possibility that the customer-waiter relationship will remain intact

In summary, at *Marbella's*, waiters' relationship with stealing is markedly ambiguous. On the one hand, waiters celebrate the brazenness of the *mesero de verdad*, laughing together each time they share stories depicting the boldness that is possible when a waiter does not depend on customer tips for the main source of their income. On the other hand, when they show each other how to take money or beer away from their customers, they always emphasize caution and having an escape route. Unlike the *mesero de verdad*, who is free from the restrictions placed on their actions by the tipping norm, *Marbella's* waiters are completely dependent on their customers' tips, they take every precaution possible before attempting anything. In Gustavo's stories, we hear the same lesson being repeated time and again: the key to knowing how to work consists in finding the right moment to take their customer's money while always keeping an escape route in sight while, in contrast, the *mesero de verdad* needs no such thing. In the hands of the *mesero de verdad*, the customer is powerless.

## DEFINITIONS FAVOURABLE TO DEVIANCE: STEALING AS A FORM OF PUNISHMENT

As the discussion on the *mesero de verdad* shows, *Marbella's* waiters' relationship with stealing is mediated by the tipping norm. At the same time, waiters are also involved in stealing, a practice that violates the norms of reciprocity and trust defined by the tipping norms. Nonetheless, despite this apparent contradiction, stealing and the tipping norm are not necessarily incompatible. In fact, if we look closely at the context, we see a paradox: for the club's waiters, stealing is actually rationalized as a tool used to enforce the tipping norm. In a way that can be adequately described as an expression of Rosenthal's (2004) thesis that instances of social control can become employee resources by producing spaces of worker agency, *Marbella's* waiters have found a way of integrating thievery into their occupational practice.

Waiters are able to reconcile their deviance with their role in club social control in part because they keep this practice a secret. This means that contrary to what their habit of talking about the topic freely during the time they spend at the queue socializing or before the start of the shift may suggest, waiters are cautious about revealing their intentions to their customers. As a result, they avoid talking about stealing as they are doing it, or in the proximity of customers. When they do talk about this topic in the shift, they take advantage of the loud music and avoid being overheard by making sure they speak closer to the other person's ear. Waiters devote effort into concealing their movements. To the untrained eye, their actions simply blend in into the background of their routine. Sometimes, the only way to know about an incident is to hear it from a third party who was told about it in confidence. In other words, while this is not conclusive evidence that they are fully aware that stealing from their customers constitutes a violation of the tipping norm, the secrecy with which they

handle their activities shows that they are aware of the implications for their income if they were to be discovered.

Secondly, waiters reconcile this contradiction by appealing to a greater sense of purpose. It is a way of changing the meaning of their actions that is consistent with their role as norm enforcers. Because waiters are the figures responsible for ensuring customer conformity with the tipping norm, but lack any mechanism to punish non-compliant customers and customers are allowed to stay in the club even if they decide they do not want to consume or purchase any drinks, waiters have managed to develop a unique way of justifying their actions. For them, stealing is both a way of supplementing their income and a means of punishing the non-compliant customer. By stealing from the customer who refuses to tip, or by deeming a customer's tips insufficient, they are able to recast their actions in a way that does not break the bond of loyalty they have created with every other customer from the moment their customers walk in into the club. Because punishing a non-compliant customer necessarily involves the risk of losing their income from the victim, as well as from any other customer that may be a witness to their actions, waiters have to consider the potential of any negative effects on their income before taking any action that may antagonize their customers in the interest of the club.

This is where stealing comes in. Unlike any of the other strategies used by waiters to encourage tipping behaviour that rely on subtle forms of suggestion such as touching and conversation, stealing lets them take things directly into their own hands. By stealing from their customers waiters can directly restore the financial imbalance left by the deviant customer who either refuses to tip or tips inadequately. Its use fulfils a deficit in a place like *Marbella's* where there is no formal mechanism for penalizing a non-compliant customer. This is why waiters rationalize the use of thievery as a form of punishment, but only as long

as it remains concealed from the customer. Stealing is only acceptable as long as it remains undiscovered. This is also the reason why waiters have devised a system of meaning that justifies and regulates the use of this practice. In their eyes, stealing is justified as long as it is a means of punishment through which they retaliate against non-conforming customers.

These approaches to rationalizing their actions can be seen, for example, in the way waiters speak about their co-workers when they are successful in stealing from their customers without being discovered. It is also present in their sense of common purpose and identity that develops from having shared skills. Like the deviant groups described by Becker (1963: 38), it is through these conversations about thievery that waiters develop a sense of membership and ‘a sense of common fate, of being on the same boat’. These conversations are also a way of sharing ideas, a mechanism of on-the-job teaching and learning from each other. Through the process of hearing others talk and being talked to about stealing, the new waiter learns the key principles: when to do, the reasons why it is done, and how to do it (Becker 1963: 39). It is a system that functions through citationality, by which new waiters are not only told but shown how things are done and asked to repeat what they observed.

This does not mean that every time a waiter takes a customer’s money, he is motivated by his desire to punish a customer’s refusal to tip or failure to tip appropriately. This discussion is not about the nature of the waiters’ intentions or their true motives behind their actions, but about the way they portray and justify their actions to each other when they talk about stealing among themselves. Like the discussion on the use of *padrino* behaviour to encourage tipping, my interest lies on the waiters’ observable behaviour and not on their conscious or unconscious motivations. This is precisely the nature of the observations collected during the time I spent working at *Marbella’s*, where I had the opportunity to see



other waiters in action, as well as to cooperate with them as they stole money and drink from their customers and had first-hand access to hear how waiters rationalize their actions.

From these interactions, there is little room for misinterpretation: for *Marbella's* waiters, stealing is a way to punish non-compliant customers. To provide some examples of this unequivocal association between stealing and norm enforcement, I need to return to the empirical data. One incident that provides valuable information for this discussion took place on May 7 in Week Four. It involves a conversation that took place between Gustavo and I while we stood at the queue waiting for our next customer. Previous to this, I had been serving a customer and I had noticed that Gustavo was looking at me. As we both looked in the customer's general direction, Gustavo began to list the man's consumption habits, one by one. He knew and remembered even small details. He told me the customer would usually only drink five beers—he told me the brand—and then he would go to the private areas for half an hour, would have a private service and then he would leave. He said that the customer would habitually leave only a \$20 peso tip (a bit less than £0.80). He confessed that this made him angry. “He makes you get him so many drinks and doesn't give you anything”, he said. From the fieldnotes:

[Gustavo] told me that [the customer] drinks 5 beers and then goes up for half an hour to get a private dance and then leaves. [He said the customer] usually leaves you [*the waiter*] only [a] 20 pesos tip. [He also said] that what he usually does is [...] write down an extra beer on his tab [while he is upstairs]. (Week4, May 7: 10-12)

Despite being brief, this example brings together several issues mentioned in this discussion. One of the most noticeable elements in this vignette is that it captures Gustavo's emotional state. The problem is that the payment is not equivalent to the waiters' efforts. It is this what makes him feel angry. For Gustavo, a tip of \$20 pesos (£0.80) is not enough to

pay for five trips to the till and the bar area to fulfil each order as well as for using \$120 pesos of the waiters' own funds to save him the effort of paying for each drink individually.

For Gustavo, the solution is to overcharge the customer's account. This involves adding the price of another drink to the customer's tab. In order to be able to do this successfully, Gustavo has learned the customer's habits. He knows the number of drinks the customer habitually orders, he knows the amount of time the customer spends upstairs, and he knows that, having finished his fifth drink, the customer will only pay his final tab once he finishes his time in the private area. Even though the customer leaves his tab unattended during 30 minutes, enough time for him to write down an extra drink without being noticed, Gustavo knows that he cannot use this time to write down the extra drink because the customer checks the tab before he leaves his table.

In order to give the reader a precise sense of what needs to happen in order for the waiter to be able to add another drink to the tab, I will provide a few additional details about the tab itself. At *Marbella's*, the tab is known as *la cuenta*. *La cuenta* is a Spanish word that is used to refer both to an account and to a long white rectangular piece of paperboard that has the club's letterhead printed on the top in black ink and is always left at the customers' table so that the customer can keep track of the charges. Aside from the letterhead, which has the name of the club, there is a long line in black ink that divides the majority of the front face of the paperboard rectangle into two equal parts. Each one of these two sides of the black line are used as columns on which waiters can write the cost of each drink following an order of top to bottom and left to right in such a way that each of the five drinks would be written in a single column. Every time a customer finishes their drinks and before he is able to pay, the waiter will count the number of drinks, multiply or add, draw a horizontal line at the bottom of the last drink, and write a total in large print.

For Gustavo to be able to include an extra drink to the customer's tab, he has to find the appropriate moment. But this is not all. At *Marbella's*, overcharging the customer's tab is about complicating that which is straightforward and making invisible that which is obvious. The problem for Gustavo is that the club has two systems of ensuring that its customers pay the correct price: posted pricing and paper tab to keep control of the charges to his account. In order to be able to successfully overcharge a customer, Gustavo has to make sure the customer does not see the wall where the club has posted the price per drink. Instead of doing what I did, which was to write down an amount on the tab and leave it within an arm's reach and facing the customer, Gustavo makes sure the numbers do not show. In order to make sure the customer's attention is not drawn to the change, Gustavo has to return bills in smaller denominations, which make it difficult for the customer to count in the dark.

This approach is also consistent with the interaction that took place on May 20. On this occasion, Beto had been serving a group of customers for the greater part of the shift. However, nearing the end of the shift, before leaving, one of them had yelled 'thieves!' repeatedly as he was carried out by his companions. Shortly before any of this happened, I had had a chance encounter with the same customer in one of my trips to the bathroom. While we were there, his behaviour had struck me as odd. The details of this part of the interaction are not necessary to provide context, so I will focus basically on what he said to me. First of all, I thought it was odd that he would—despite me not being his waiter—begin a conversation in, of all places, the bathroom. He told me the neighbourhood he was from, that he had gone there and back to the city centre because he and his companions were looking to have sex. He said they had been drinking and gave me a measure in number of bottles to support his claim. I tried to be friendly, but personally felt intimidated. It was clear

that he had had too much to drink. He was not able to walk out of the bathroom without bumping into the wall. In the end, as he was being led (dragged would be a better word) out of the bar, while screaming “¡pinches ratas!”—fucking rats! I knew who to look for: as I walked out of the washroom, I tried to find where the customer was sitting and had seen that Beto was the waiter serving them. Having found him, I watched trying to see what Beto’s response would be. Beto’s reaction was to turn away and not look towards the screaming customer. I found this odd because nearly everybody around us was looking in the opposite direction, trying to see who was screaming. But Beto stood his ground, looking towards the wall.

Even though this may not be Beto’s most successful moment, since he was discovered and a scandal ensued, this incident is valuable because it provides a clear demonstration of the relationship between an over demanding customer and stealing. Through the brief exchange I had with the customer, I was able to ascertain that he wanted personalized entertainment and validation. He was looking for conversation in a way that was interfering with my work. I did not want to be rude nor did I want to antagonize the customer, so I could not cut the conversation short even though at that point I was not interested in what he had to say. In the short time we spent talking in the bathroom, the customer boasted about the number of drinks, about the number of companions, and also about their purpose for the outing.

Most importantly, the example shows how, despite being directly identified by the customer, Beto did not face any consequences for his actions. No one questioned what had happened and no one spoke about the incident again. Even though the bar was near closing, and the customer’s voice was heard loud and clear all the way to the back of the club where I was standing, “fucking thieves!”, the general reaction was to continue working. Beto’s

reaction was a bit more extreme. Instead of looking in the customer's direction, his response was to ignore the customer and to pretend as if nothing was happening. It was as if he was not able to hear the screaming man.

Like this one, there is another incident that took place nearing the end of my employment at *Marbella's* (Week 8, June 1: 172-176). This exchange involved a group of customers, a dancer, and me. To provide some background to the incident, I should note that from the moment they placed their first order I had been annoyed by this particular group of customers. It all began the moment they walked into the club. My first impressions were shaped in part by the fact that the waiter that was ahead of me in the queue had decided to pass them on to me, instead of taking them himself. Previous experience told me that whenever this happened, the customer in question would either be a low tipper or uncooperative in some way. I knew this interaction had the potential of becoming a problem, so I was tense.

The first confirmation to my suspicion came soon after they placed their first order. Because I was already tense to begin with, I thought that the best path of action was to make things easier for myself and keep as much distance as possible from them. The best option I could think of was to offer something that would reduce the number of trips I had to make to their table. Given that there were three customers at the table, I thought it would be practical to serve a bucket of ten beers instead of serving individual drinks every fifteen minutes.

The moment I finished taking the bottle caps off each of the glass bottles, I expected one of them to pick up the full tab or for them to take turns paying, like most customers have the habit of doing. Although this is less frequent, sometimes customers take turns as an

alternative to the practice of pooling funds, which was not only rare, but was also impractical. When they did choose to do this, it was difficult to watch them struggle trying to count their money in the dark. To my astonishment, one brought out only a single bill. Judging by the colour of the banknote, I knew this was only enough to pay half of the tab. Immediately after bringing his wallet out, this customer turned to the others and waited. In response, his companions began to look around in confusion. In their faces, I could see an expression of surprise, as if they were not expecting to pay for anything. Finally, after what to me seemed like an eternity, one of them produced a handful of coins, and started to count them as slow as possible, moving them one by one from one hand to the other, I felt relieved the moment I realized that he had just enough.

The second confirmation to my suspicion came the moment their attention shifted towards a dancer. As I counted the money, Mayra approached and sat on someone's lap. Immediately, he pointed to the man sitting in the middle and dismissed her by saying that he did not have any money. She simply stood up, sat on the other customer's lap, pulled her shirt down to her belly, and placed her bare chest near his face. Without saying a word, he wrapped both arms around her waist and proceeded to bite and lick her breasts and neck. In my opinion, he was being rough. Not knowing what to do, I looked at her for a gesture, but she remained unfazed. In fact, she seemed to encourage his behaviour by pulling him towards her with the hand that she had placed on the back of his head. He finally stopped the moment she pulled his head in the direction of her lips. By that point, I had nearly finished counting the money. Soon, they both emerged from their kiss, smiling. Because of my eagerness to step away, I felt annoyed seeing that my plan had failed, and I had spent with these customers more time than necessary. Before I could finally step away, she called out to me: "¡Pelón!"—Baldy! She screamed. I could see her begging him to buy her a drink. He

finally agreed and then asked me to bring it to her by holding one index finger up and enunciating the words “una nomás”—only one. From the fieldnotes:

So, I brought the beer and the guy in the blue shirt paid for it. [...] I think they were making him pay because [Mayra] was sitting on his lap, but all of the other guys were also touching and [caressing] her [body]. [...]

When I gave the change [back] to the guy, I guess [Mayra] noticed that he didn't give me any tips and I just walked away.

The next time they ordered [drinks] for the 3 of them—or 2, I don't remember. It was [a regular one] and [a] small one—for the dancer. I brought the beers and I [waited] for the payment: “80 pesos”—I said. And the guy gave me [a] 100-peso bill.

[I handed him the change] and [Mayra] took it away from him, gave me the bill [back] and said: “That's enough! Go!”.

[The customer] didn't say anything. [...] I hesitated a little bit, but since he didn't say anything, I just took the money and left. Next time [they] ordered something, again she asked me to give her the money [instead of handing it to him]. I gave her the money, and she tipped me [again] with a 20-peso bill.

It wasn't much money; it was just small tips, but she tipped me with that. And the next time—that happened like 3 times—she also gave me a 20-peso bill as a tip. So basically, I got like 60 pesos [£2.<sup>40</sup>] in tips that she was giving me, and the guys never [complained or] mentioned anything [about it]. So, at the end of the shift [...] I tried to give her half of the money, and she refused. She said that she had already taken some money from them. She basically took only 20 pesos [from me]. (Week 8, June 1: 172-176)

When thinking about the implications of this example, it should not be overlooked that this is not precisely a case that highlights the actions of a waiter. Instead, it is Mayra who takes centre stage in this exchange. However, this does not mean that the incident has little to say about the question about the role of stealing at the club. On the contrary, because it involves a dancer and not a waiter, this example actually speaks to the prevalence of the idea that at *Marbella's*, stealing is tolerated as long as it is used to deal with a non-complying customer.

When speaking about stealing to their co-workers, they frame their actions as a way of redressing the financial imbalance that results from an uncooperative customer and, in doing

so, *Marbella's* waiters are also able to minimize their sense of responsibility (Sykes and Matza 1957: 667-669). This can be clearly seen if we return to Gustavo's account of how to deal with the customer (May 7, Week 4) discussed earlier in this section. If we recall this exchange, it involves a customer who has the same routine. The exchange takes place as Gustavo and I stand at the queue, and he continues with the on-the-job training that he began during my first week at *Marbella's*. As he talks, I realize that he has memorized the number of drinks this customer takes each time he visits the club, the brand, the dancer, and the amount of time he spends with the dancer and away from his table and the tab. As we speak, he reveals that he is angry at the customer because he does not tip. In other words, it is not his own ambition, his financial situation or the opportunity, but the customer's own refusal to tip that triggers his response. It is this ulterior motive that serves as the rationale for his actions; it is the customer and not him who has the ultimate responsibility. Sykes and Matza (1957: 667-669) speak of this in terms of minimizing injury or harm of the deviant act:

In some cases, a nonconforming act may appear necessary or expedient to a person otherwise law-abiding. Undertaken in pursuit of legitimate interests, the deviant act becomes, if not quite proper, at least not quite improper. (Becker 1963: 29).

In this sense, it should finally be said that waiters are able to reconcile their role as norm enforcers with their with their deviant actions precisely because of the way the club reacts to the practice. Becker (1963: 11) argues that the deviant act depends on how people react to it. Deviancy is not so much about the person who violates the rule, but about how the rule is applied. This is exactly the point I want to make. What takes place at *Marbella's* is that stealing is tolerated when it is rationalized by summoning the tipping norm and when it is done with discretion.

This also means that waiters have devised a system of internal oversight, through which they ensure that they adjust their behaviour in order to reconcile their actions with



their role as norm enforcers. This is why sloppiness, or behaviours that are easily identifiable, are not tolerated, particularly when there is a risk that the waiter antagonizes the customers. As the example that took place on week six (May 21: 418-419) demonstrates, it is in situations like these when other waiters' step in. This interaction takes place at the queue, where Gustavo, Rodolfo, and I happen to be the only ones standing in line. As we stood there, the captain spoke to me, but I knew the words were not meant for me, but for Gustavo who was there, in front of him. He spoke without looking at him directly. Originally, I did not hear what he said. From the fieldnotes:

I had to make him repeat it— but [Rodolfo] said that [Gustavo] had been stealing beer, [and he told me] to be careful. [According to him, Gustavo] was stealing beer from the buckets. He said, 'be careful with your customers and, if you see him doing it, tell me. Report him!'.

[...] Later on [Gustavo], out of nowhere, just came up to me and said: 'I don't know why he's acting like that. I've seen him. He's even worse. I don't know what the problem is. (Week 6, May 21: 418-419).

As this example shows, Rodolfo's actions show that knowing about his behaviour is not enough to confront Gustavo. In his decision to warn me to be careful with my customers, there is more than the desire to protect my customers. The captain's words are not really directed at me, but at Gustavo. It is an indirect way of establishing limits to his behaviour. First, there is an omission. In warning me to watch my customers he omits to mention Gustavo's own customers. In other words, it is my customers that are off-limits, but not his own. Secondly, because of the way the warning is structured, it is clear that the problem is not the act of stealing but being seen. It is not a straight order to stop, but a warning: do not let me catch you doing it.

## **SUMMARY**

In this chapter I have argued that thievery is an important part of the waiters' job.

Waiters talk about this topic, teach each other how to approach it, and teach each other how to rationalize their actions. However, because of their place at the club, these rationalizations are plagued by a fundamental contradiction: for waiters, tipping is both a system of rewards and the system through which their customers evaluate their service. On the one hand, they depend on and work towards gaining their customers' trust. On the other, because the emphasis on service delivery makes waiters completely dependent on customers' tips, any action that waiters can make to punish non-tippers is limited by its possible effects on their own financial interest. This is the reason why every time a waiter takes a customer's money, he also runs the risk of foreclosing any opportunity of obtaining a tip.

At *Marbella's*, waiters have solved this contradiction by justifying theft as a means of reclaiming unpaid tips. It is also important to note that these rationalizations, are not developed individually by each waiter in isolation, but are constructed and passed down to less experienced waiters through an informal on-the-job training system. Using Akers' (2017) theory of differential association – reinforcement in conjunction with the ideas on social learning developed by Bandura (1971), I showed how waiters use their group, on-the-job interactions to draw attention to these practices. It through their conversations and storytelling sessions, often told in first-person and using an epic narrative style, these stories outline the items of value they take from their customers, places where money is hidden, customers' potential reactions, and possible courses of action that need to be taken to avoid being held accountable. Waiters also serve as models, serving a reinforcing function by providing feedback on performance and a motoric function, showing how these strategies are set in motion.

Additionally, waiters also make use of other linguistic resources to verbally codify their customers' potential responses, as well as the terms of their rationalizations. In

particular, I discussed the figure of the *mesero de verdad*, an almost mythical waiter that is not subject to customer supervision through the tipping system. The *mesero de verdad* is a model, which reinforces notions about acceptable and profitable targets and draws attention to the customers' point of view. More importantly, it is a device used to remind waiters of their vulnerable position, accountable as they are to the tipping norm. It serves as a vehicle through which definitions in favour of thievery are coded and communicated surreptitiously. The lesson is transferred negatively: if a waiter does not depend on tipping as their main source of income, they are allowed to take their customers money without being held accountable; because Marbella's waiters depend on tips, they are accountable to their customers.

The rationale is simple: when customers do not tip, waiters can resort to stealing from their customers as long as they do so without being discovered. Stealing is allowed, but only within certain limits. Waiters speak openly about stealing, presenting it as a means of restoring an imbalanced relationship with their patrons. This does not mean that they, in fact, limit the amount to the equivalent to what they feel they are owed in tips. It only means that they have devised a system that helps them come to terms with the contradictions involved in their occupation. Secondly, in order to protect their main source of income, waiters have devised a system of self-oversight through which they keep their own behaviour in line. Mainly, this involves keeping their activities from being noticed by their customers or, if this is not possible, it involves finding strategies to avoid being held accountable for their actions.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSION**

In this the course of this thesis, I have developed an empirically grounded study of club interactions in order to determine the organizational implications that the availability of prostitution entails for lap dancing club employees. In the process of presenting and analysing my fieldwork experience, I have made contributions to Gender Studies, Organizational Studies and the Sociology of Deviance/Cultural Criminology. In this final chapter of the thesis, I want to discuss these contributions in detail in that order.

At the beginning of the monograph I stated that my goal in this study was to determine the way male employees in a lap dancing club sell prostitution services, and the effect this activity has on the club organization and the waiters place in the club. This was asserted in the form of four research questions that inquired about the way prostitution is articulated at the club, the waiters' role in this exchange and the customer-dancer interaction, as well as in relation to their role linked to club social control.

In the first half of the thesis, I presented sufficient empirical data, in the form of multiple ethnographic descriptions, to demonstrate how the club's social organization is articulated through the tipping system. I began with an analysis of club vocabulary, particularly the word *padrino*, showing that its usage corresponds to a unique, club-specific, adaptation of a word used widely outside of the club. At *Marbella's*, this word is a verbal practice, that much like other non-verbal practices used, summons a set of principles that regulate club behaviour. Other strategies include the use of gestures such as touching, gestures expressing protection, as well as the discursive construction of narratives that allow waiters to alter club dynamics.

More importantly, because their job involves shuttling back and forth between waiters and dancers to facilitate the commercial exchange of money for sex, they have information on customers and dancers that either of these parties do not possess. As a result, they can use their position as middlemen to improve their own position, to present themselves as something they are not. Much like lap dancers have been known to do, the waiters working at *Marbella's* deceive their customers, intentionally making them think that they are bound by loyalty and friendship. These narratives include the use of stories to present themselves as capable of ensuring dancer compliance, as well as having unlimited access to sex.

The behavioural displays used by waiters have two effects. On the one hand, through the combination of these social practices, including the use of the vocabulary of sexual prowess and the strategic use of gestures, waiters are able to reconfigure their role in their club. They use the discourse of sex and camaraderie to reposition themselves in relation to their customers. On the other hand, through the use of the word *padrino*, they link club behaviour to the rules of a commonly known, and widely accepted relationship of reciprocity. By invoking this norm, and the norms of gender, which specify which topics constitute appropriate subjects of conversation among men, they become agents of social control, both in terms of gender and club behaviour.

In other words, because the tipping system, they are driven to create strategies to induce tipping behaviours. To do so, they employ practices that invoke norms of reciprocity and norms of gendered behaviour. This, in turn, allows them to reconfigure their place in the club and navigate around material disadvantages.

As it is to be expected, these findings contribute to the discussion on hegemony and practices outlined in Chapter Two. Especially, relative to the discussion on hegemony or legitimacy through consent, the findings presented here speak to the importance of the analysis of these processes in the micro-interactional sphere. As described, the evidence shows that, at the micro-interactional level, consent is associated to the process of teaching-learning of work related tasks. The legitimacy of social norms comes from the relationship of trust that develops between the older and more experienced and the novice employee. In this sense, as described in Chapter Five, modelling is key.

What the evidence collected here demonstrates, and this constitutes my contribution to Gender Studies, is that the question of legitimacy and consent can be addressed by looking

at the social-learning processes that can be found in the workplace. *At Marbella's*, this process involves the overlap of two spheres, gender and social control. The practices employed can be thought about as common sense solutions to everyday problems, affirmed and reproduced through modelling and embodied practice.

Regarding the relationship between prostitution and the waiters' role in the club, and the contribution to the literature on Organizational Studies, the evidence shows that to their customers, waiters present themselves as gatekeepers. They are their customers' point of access to the world of sexual favours and arousal. This is the case because the tipping system places the responsibility of waiter supervision mainly on the shoulders of their customers (Whyte 1963; Sallaz 2002; Rosenthal 2004; Brewster and Wills 2013), and because their customers' expectations define service obligations that go far beyond serving alcoholic drinks to their customers, waiters develop intimate relationships with their customers. As a result of these two circumstances, waiters have access to their customers fantasies and sexual desires, and receive rewards when they make these fantasies and sexual desires become a reality. In this way, it is the tipping norm which also places the waiter as a mediator between customers and dancers, both forcing them to negotiate with the dancer to secure sexual favours for their customers, and making them the subject of their customers' sexual fantasies.

*Marbella's* waiters also occupy a central role in club social control. They hold the responsibility of ensuring that their customers pay their tab and consume gendered services. Since waiters depend on their customers for the core of their income, waiters are personally invested in ensuring that their customers comply with the most fundamental of club norms. Waiters are the employees responsible for keeping their customers focused on the club's goods and services. They keep the alcohol flowing, customers consuming, and dancers busy. In this way, waiters are figures responsible for introducing and socializing their customers

to the club's social norms (Azar 2011). Drawing from the literature on tipping and the restaurant and the service industry (Azar 2004; 2005; 2007; 2009; 2011) I mentioned how previous research has shown that customer tipping practices are associated with the positive feelings individuals experience when they conform to a social norm. In this way, through the use of cues, both linguistic and gestures, they guide their customers' behaviours in the club.

Through the interplay of space, tipping behaviours, negotiations on intimate interactions, and on-the-job competition, waiters and customers develop a common understanding of the club's internal territorial divisions. Waiters learn from their customers the importance of keeping other customers and waiters away from the items arranged on their assigned tables, they learn and employ the use of objects to assert these territorial claims, and redeploy these practices in the context of waiter-on-waiter competition. In this way, waiters become the guardians of their customers' territories. This is an issue that links back to the relationship between territory and identity (Ley and Cybriwsky 1974; Holloway and Hubbard 2000; Tyner 2011; Tyner 2012), two elements which are inherently associated with the drug war in Mexico. In the course of this discussion, I argued that the underlying mechanism that makes this possible can be understood through the concept of citationality (Hollywood 2002; Nakassis 2012). Through this concept, it is possible to see how waiters appropriate and re-deploy their customers' behaviours to performatively (Brickell 2005; Butler 2015) re-construct themselves as *padrinos*.

In this way, one of the core findings of this thesis is that waiters are the key employees responsible for enforcing and breaking club norms through mechanisms that highlight the importance of learning processes, social groups, structures of opportunity, and need underscored by the theory of differential association (Akers 2017). As the evidence collected



shows, for the people working the tables at *Marbella's*, the conditions of their employment make it impossible to depend on a single source of income. Even though they receive a small portion of commission on sales, these funds are insufficient to cover their basic expenses. Additional to this, the lack of windows, the consumption of alcohol, and the club's reliance on the use of cash money constitute factors that waiters use as part of their strategies to enforce the tipping norm.

In relation to Cultural Criminology and Deviance Studies, the evidence collected at *Marbella's* highlights the way the club's employees and patrons interact with the physical environment, how their behaviour is constructed through the physical features of the club, and how they pass on these behavioural practices among each other: social learning processes develop through interaction between individuals in space. This is an issue that is clearly evident in the way I was taught to live and contribute to shape the club's environment together with the club's other employees and customers. The data analysed. In this way, this study makes an empirical contribution to the discussions on the importance of space in criminological research (Hayward 2012). The findings documented by this study provide evidence of the multiple and simultaneous uses given to the club by the people who frequent these spaces, each of which holds its unique rules and norms. In this way, the highlights the usefulness of phenomenological inquiry in criminological research, particularly as a means of unravelling the way space contributes to the spatial dynamics involved in deviance.

However, this study also makes an equally important contribution to criminological debates by drawing attention to the importance of modeling in social learning processes. This was an issue that was brought to the fore in the last chapter of this thesis, where I spoke about modeling in relation to the concepts of citationality. Whereas the approach to differential association and learning theory proposed by authors such as Akers (2017) relies

on an understanding that suggests that behaviours are learned through mimesis and reinforcement, here I suggested that one of the aspects to modeling is citationality and that this mechanism works together with other cues to summon and enforce norms. Additionally, I argued that these functions work together with symbolic encoding, attention, motor repetition, and reinforcement, suggesting that they can be organized into a coherent whole through the theory of social learning and differential association. It was in Chapter Six where the mechanisms by which waiters appropriate and redeploy language and behaviours, discussed earlier in terms of their function, were finally presented in terms of how they are transmitted within the waiter subculture that exists at *Marbella's*.

Following an empirically inductive approach of increasing complexity, the concepts used in earlier chapters were finally assembled into a logical whole by drawing from Akers (2017) work on differential association and social learning. As it was stated in Chapter Five, this theory addresses the issue of knowledge transfer in intimate groups and also highlights the mechanisms of knowledge acquisition themselves and not the role of group memberships. The approach taken here, however, was slightly different from the way these ideas have been used in criminology. Within criminological theory, the version of social learning theory that is generally employed was developed in conjunction with the ideas around differential association and highlights the role of mimesis and contact with the intimate social group as key aspects of the theory (Akers and Jennings 2016; Akers 2017). While it is true that this approach to social learning developed by Akers (2017) has been tested in many empirical studies and is one of the most widely accepted criminological theories (Akers 2017: xxi), given that this study adopted an inductive, grounded approach where the use of theory did not predate the analysis, but was only brought into the discussion once certain patterns and behavioural trends emerged from the data as factors that required

further explanation, the adoption of social learning concepts was not dictated by the need to test the theory. Instead, the use of the theory was dictated by the analytical questions raised by the data. In this way, rather than adopt the concepts used by (Akers 2017) which emphasise mimesis and knowledge transfer through intimate social group, my approach was to shift the focus to modeling (Bandura 1971; Bandura 2008) and its relation to the language deployed strategically at the club. In this way, words such as *padrino* and *mesero de verdad* were finally revealed as models that code specific behaviours through language, making the transfer of strategies and norms possible.

At the same time, this thesis also makes an important contribution to the literature on lap dancing clubs. In the opening paragraphs to this thesis I showed that some of the attacks against Mexican lap dancing clubs that the presence of these employees had not been noted in previous studies on lap dancing clubs. As the evidence collected at *Marbella's* shows, waiters have a central role in the club as norm enforcers and main agents of customer contact. This is in part what defines the waiters' place in the construction of these symbolic messages of violence is defined by their role in social control. This finding was the result of an analysis that involved a review of the key debates in the literature on tipping behaviours, where considerable effort has been dedicated to show that tipping has a normative dimension and that the role of the server involves enforcing this norm through the use of strategies to encourage tipping behaviours. As the key figures responsible for keeping customer behaviours under control, and also because of their central place in the social relationships that exist at the club, waiters can be seen as the individuals responsible for guarding the people, behaviours, and activities that take place inside the club. It is this role that makes them a key component of the narco-message.

One of the most important findings identified in this thesis pertains to the relationship

waiters have to the tipping norm, and the significance this has for their behaviour. As I have argued, to date analysis of the creation of norms has focused on dancers, who were thought to hold a monopoly over customer interactions. However, here I have shown how, without tipping, waiters would not have any incentive to perform their work and customers would not have access to information about club services. The on-stage show would be out of sight since they would not have access to adequate seating arrangements. Without the existence of tipping, customers would not be able to obtain sexual services, since the likelihood of being rejected by a dancer would be greater. If the tipping system were not in place, the club would operate differently: patrons would not spend most of their time drinking but would be able to roam throughout the club in search of dancers.

At the club, tipping is ever present. For the customer, from the moment they walk into the club, to the moment they leave, the norm dictates that they should keep tipping continuously. Like the waiters employed in the restaurant industry, waiters at *Marbella's* employ non-verbal gestures appropriated from tipping customers, as well as verbal strategies also adapted from the behavioural displays used by their customers, to induce compliance to the norm. Through the tipping norm, customers are given instructions on what to do, how to behave, and who to interact with. Through the assumption that the information they are being told is true, customers are instructed to choose certain services over others, choose certain dancers over others, and to keep drinking and drink at a faster pace.

For the waiter, the tipping norm calls for speed, accuracy, but more importantly, for friendliness and personalized attention. It entails strategic thinking as much as it demands attention to detail and the use of friendly gestures. Waiters anticipate their customers' behaviours, using language and employing the gestures they know have resulted in tips in the past. Because they are constantly worried about income, they are continuously looking

to perform any duties established by their customers with the goal of receiving a tip in return. These activities include engaging the customer in conversation by learning and using the topics preferred by other customers, using conversational strategies to circumvent dancers' unwillingness to work with specific customers or disinterest in drinking alcohol with a customer, and showing their customers that they are willing to protect their possessions in the club.

It also means that, because the club outsources their employee supervision to their customers, the customer has complete control of the waiter's income. This means that the waiter's work is supervised from within the customer-waiter interaction. For the participants in the interaction, this means that they are, simultaneously, judge and jury of each other. Their performance is evaluated through the tipping norm, either in terms of how much they tip or in terms of how much tip they deserve.

This is a situation that has particular importance for the waiter's loyalties. From the point of view of club managers, this means that there is a dual chain of command. Because at *Marbella's* waiters receive instructions from both their customers and their superiors, but their main source of income comes directly from their customers, waiters frequently prioritize their customers' interests over club rules. This is, for example, what happens when the directive to instruct customers to put out their cigarettes is ignored to avoid antagonizing a customer. From the perspective of the waiters, this is a system of supervision that multiplies the number of supervisors by a factor that is directly proportional to their workload. Since each customer is a supervisor, the more customers a waiter serves, the more supervisors he has. This means that, as the workload increases, the tolerance for mistakes decreases.

As it may be clear by now, this is an imperfect system that places particular strain on

the waiters each time they are faced with policing a customer's behaviour. Every time a customer chooses to deviate from the tipping norm, waiters are faced with a grim reality: they are the one and only authority responsible for enforcing the tipping norm in the case of non-compliance. At the same time, every time there is an increased risk of mistakes, for example on peak hours, waiters also have to increase their flexibility towards their customers, to compensate for any errors made. Moreover, since *Marbella's* lacks any type of formal mechanism for ensuring customer satisfaction other than the waiters; there is no one else to complain and no one else to seek for assistance and all disputes have to be resolved on the spot.

### **AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

This undertaking involved breaking new ground, both in terms of my own cultural sensitivities in relation to working in a sexual entertainment venue, as well as in relation to the methodological choices that had to be made based on approaches taken to the issue in completely different cultural contexts. This scarcity shaped every single element of study design, from the choice of method to the area of interest and the theoretical traditions employed in the analysis. From the early first stages of the project, it was clear that there was a lack of previous ethnographic studies on the subject of Mexican sexual entertainment venues and that, in the limited available literature on lap dancing, there was no reference to the figure of the lap dancing club waiter. As a result, issues such as entry into the setting and approaching respondents were resolved by using studies performed in a completely different cultural context as guidelines. This is why nothing was done to prepare for the physical strain of working in an industry with no hygiene or labour regulations, nothing was done to prepare for the emotional strain that resulted from having to deal with aggressive customers in an organizational context that lacked any other form of security personnel. I simply was not

aware of the waiters' role in a Mexican lap dancing club, and without any culturally-informed point of reference, the main concern was always to decide for the option that minimized risks. This is why it remains to be seen if the results are a function of the method and the positionality of the researcher.

Despite these shortcomings, this study produced findings which raise new questions and open new lines of research. For instance, one of the themes discussed in this thesis pertained to the waiters' use of interactional strategies to encourage their customers' tipping behaviour. As it was discussed, this is accomplished through the use of subtle gestures and linguistic cues to summon the tipping norm, as well as with the development of strategies to punish non-compliant customers. In the literature on lap dancing, one of the lines of work has been to centre the inquiry on the emotional cost of this type of labour (Barton 2007). While the presence of this type of strain has been implied, and there is an indication that waiters are able to manage this strain through their involvement in workplace deviance (Brewster and Wills 2013; Rosenthal 2004; Sallaz 2002), this was not investigated directly. Similarly, it is also not known whether workplace deviance is part of the dancers' work, and what relationship this holds to the debates on power (Whitehead and Kurz 2009).

In relation to the issues raised regarding the value and use of Bandura's (1971) conceptual framework on modeling as an extension to Aker's (2017) theory on differential association – reinforcement, more empirical research would be needed. In particular, this is true for one of the findings obtained from the analysis of the data collected at *Marbella's*. First of all, it is important to note that the concept of the model was applied both to the role played by waiters such as Gustavo, to the stories told in the club, and to a verbal resource which symbolically codes certain forms of behaviour. Secondly, it is also important to mention that this same characterization applies to the term *padrino*, discussed earlier in the

thesis.

In this context, one of the arguments made in this discussion was that the *mesero de verdad* constitutes a model with both an attentional and a retention function. However, while this is true, it is also important to note that this model also served another function which is not conceptualized either in Bandura's (1971) nor Akers' (2017) work. This function refers to the model's capacity to codify both behaviour and the norm. Where Akers (2017), working from the differential association tradition, speaks about definitions in favour or against compliance being obtained through reinforcement from an intimate group, what we have here is the transmission of the definitions together with the norm itself. This idea follows on Rosenthal's (2004) work, which argues that instances of norm violation can result from the application of social control. In this way, even though it is not directly theorized, in the evidence collected at *Marbella's* there is a strong indication that models have two more functions. Aside from the attentional, symbolic, motoric, and reinforcement functions, they have a normative function, where by the limits of the norm are codified, where definitions in favour or against conformity are contained, and through which rationalizations are communicated.

While these results are positive and speak of the usefulness of combining the ideas on differential association with the more detailed discussions on social learning available in Bandura's (1971) social learning framework, further research is necessary. That is, this line of work would imply shifting the attention away from the debates on the definitions themselves, or the types, duration, and intensity of the associations, and in the direction of the models, particularly verbal models such as the *mesero de verdad* or the *padrino*. It remains to be seen if the functions described here can be identified in other scenarios and contexts.



## POLICY IMPLICATIONS

As far as the policy implications of this study are concerned, I want to use this opportunity to make one last consideration. Because of the way I have decided to append this final section at the end of the document, this is intended to be a sort of closing statement to the thesis, and perhaps, the one critical observation that brings this project to a close.

Like many of the sections included in this manuscript, this final section was not a part of the original monograph submitted for revision prior to the final examination. This was not the result of an omission but of a political position. Even though during the viva examination I offered an improvised response after being asked about the potential policy implications of the study, I have chosen not to repeat this mistake in the monograph.

Whereas in certain contexts it may be common practice to require students to reflect on the social implications of their work in terms of government action, this is not the only possibility. As a Latin American sociology student, it would be an act of dishonesty on my part to talk about the social implications of research in terms of government action, when there is no evidence that this link between research and policy actually exists in Mexico. Ethnocentrism takes unexpected forms, and in this case it is expressed in the belief that government action in Mexico is informed, in any way, by social research.

Instead, this monograph is written for progressive journalists. It is meant to shed

light on an industry that, has captured the popular imagination, but that is generally unknown as there is a lack of scientific evidence on what actually takes place in these businesses. It is written in the hope of informing future representations of the industry and to prevent the production of new sensationalistic portrayals of the clubs. As a result, rather than making policy recommendations, I want to use these final words to make an appeal to the reader to reflect on the evidence presented here before lending credibility to the stories being told about these clubs.

# APPENDIX



## Research Ethics Committee (REC) Application Form

Please complete this Ethics Application form in conjunction with your supervisor. The supervisor must email the completed copy of the Application form, Consent form, Information Sheet and Research Instrument to:

Research Instrument to:  
E.s.smith@kent.ac.uk

Name of Applicant: **Jorge Vladimir Castañeda Ochoa**

Name of your Degree: (e.g. BSc/UG degree title), PG, PhD, Doctorate in Cultural and Global Criminology

Campus: **Canterbury**

Name of Supervisor:  
**Dr. Marian Duggan (School of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research, University of Kent, Canterbury, UK),  
Prof. Phil Hubbard (School of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research, University of Kent, Canterbury, UK),  
Prof. Dina Siegel-Rozenblit (Willem Pompe Institute for Criminal Law and Criminology, Utrecht University, Utrecht, NL)**

Title of Project: **"In 'bad' company": A study of interactional patterns and masculine practices among male Mexican lap dancing club patrons"**

Please provide a brief jargon free background to the project in no more than 150 words:

This is a study on how lap dancing club customer's individual behavior compares to that which occurs in groups and how this plays a role in the practice of masculinities in Mexico. The focus is on how customer behaviour relates to in-house rules. Data collection consists of a three-month period (2 320 hours from April 6<sup>th</sup> to June 29<sup>th</sup> 2016) of observing and taking notes on the public interactions among groups of customers, by gaining entry into a lap dancing club as an employee [waiter]. Using theories on masculinities (Connell 1992, 1996, 2005a, 2005b; Coston and Kimmel 2012; Kimmel 1993; Kimmel and Trewer 2005; Messerschmidt 2008) as an initial approach, this project seeks to contribute to a body of literature on lap dancing that pervasively focuses on the women dancers (Lavin 2014; Bradley-Eigen and Ulmer 2009; Frank 2007). The central aim is to develop a classification of the different expressions of masculine behaviour.

Research Methods:

A) Selection & number of interviewees/participants:

The process of data collection consists of :

### Semi-covert research:

Previous scholarly work on lap dancing has demonstrated that it is a stigmatized activity (Bradley 2007; Thompson, Harred and Burks 2003; Malicha-Tyndale, Lewis and Clark 2008; Weseley 2003; Maxin and Grandy 2013). In line with this, authors such as Brewster (2003: 227) noted how covert techniques are "viable and necessary" in situations where participants "require autonomy and secrecy". Among scholars who have chosen to undergo their research openly (Bradley 2007; Brooks 2010; Montemurro, Bloom and Madell 2003; Montemurro 2001; Murphy 2003; Spivry 2005; Thompson, Harred and Burks 2003), there have been reports of difficulties with fieldwork such as having to remain unobtrusive (Montemurro, Bloom and Madell 2003), to refrain from interviewing customers (Murphy 2003), or have had their access restricted to certain areas (Thompson, Harred and Burks 2003). As a result, to avoid obstacles in the process of data collection, specifically because of the tendency by patrons to be distrustful to disclose their activities (Erickson and Tewksbury 2000), this research follows the precedent set by other empirical work (Frank 2005) and takes a semi-covert approach to fieldwork. This entails fully disclosing purposes of research to gatekeepers and obtaining informed consent from them, but of only informing other participants on a case-by-case basis. Information will be completely provided if approached directly, but will be offered according to the requirements of the data collection process. In this way, if it is necessary to ask a participant about their activities, the use for the information would be disclosed.

### Participant observation:

Following the methodological approach proposed by Erickson and Tewksbury (2000), in this project the researcher will be present in the setting to observe and take note of customer interactions and behaviors within the club while taking care to avoid those activities that entail full participation and membership in a setting. This methodology has been employed by other authors who have entered the field as customers, but have refrained from purchasing lap or couch dances, tipping, and purchasing alcoholic drinks for dancers (Montemurro 2001; Montemurro, Bloom and Madell 2003; Forsyth and Dethlefs 1997; Brewster 2003).

In the same manner as other authors who have used employment in a key role in the business as a means of access (DeMichele and Tewksbury 2004), the researcher has secured an opportunity to work as a waiter in a lap dancing club in Monterrey, Mexico (pop. 4 million 2010). Access to this locale is a function of convenience, knowledge of the culture and location (place of prior residence for the researcher), and the use of personal contacts. By using this job position, it is possible to observe the anonymous behavior of club customers covertly and have first hand access to the creation of meaning. This is consistent with previous research that has discussed the relevance of waiters in lap dancing businesses as active participants in the production of the environment and in the socialization of club norms and rules (Pasko 2002).

Because the data necessary to answer the research questions is limited to social interactions and public gendered practices among men, personal data or information on individuals has no relevance for the study. As a result, the researcher will ensure that all information documented, transcribed, or in any way registered, pertains to the interactional dynamics between men who patronize the locale of study. Special attention will be given to ensure all subjects observed are given a pseudonym in case they need to be registered individually in the field notes. This pseudonym will be taken from an internet list of the 100 most popular names in Mexico in 2014.

B) How will your project comply with the Data Protection Act? i.e. how much personal data do you plan to collect? How will you ensure that data is kept securely? Do you plan to destroy data after the project is completed?

<p>Using a job as an employee of a lap dancing club is the core procedure for data collection involved in this project. This will be accomplished by taking quick and brief field notes (one word notes on scrap pieces of paper to refresh memory on posterior transcription) as it would be impossible to do it otherwise. To ensure more elaborate note taking takes place as soon as possible, the researcher will use these keywords and expand on them on the trip to the place of residence by using voice recordings. All written notes will be discarded upon transcription, and all voice notes will be downloaded to a hard disk and encrypted using specialized software. A key area of concern is in communication with the supervisors. To avoid a breach of anonymity all references to individuals will be using pseudonyms or made in such a way that no individual identifiers are present. Access to any material that may indicate the identity of the club will be kept private from the supervisory team. Additionally, the researcher will be responsible for all transcription of notes.</p> <p>For security reasons, a host and a close friend will know the location of the club and the general of the project in order to agree on an emergency contingency plan in case the researcher does not meet a previously agreed schedule of travel from fieldwork to place of residence. Nonetheless, no information on the data collected will be shared with anybody prior to analysis and ensuring complete anonymity of the observed subjects.</p> <p>All data files will be appropriately labelled and identified and will be kept throughout the duration of the programme. Data will be stored according to the guidelines of The University of Kent. No physical records, such as photocopies, print outs, or notebooks will be retained and they will be discarded in a manner that ensures confidentiality. After completion of analysis, data may be disseminated having previously ensured complete anonymity and confidentiality of all subjects and the location of study, in scholarly journals, conferences, or the body of the dissertation. No images will be taken of the subjects or location in any form.</p>
<p><b>C) Anticipated start date &amp; duration of data collection:</b>  <b>Observational data will be collected from during the workdays comprised in the period from April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016 to June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016.</b></p>
<p><b>D) Details of payment, if any, to interviewees/participants?</b>          No payment will be made to participants.</p>
<p><b>E) Source of funding (if any):</b>          This research is funded through the Erasmus + (Erasmus Mundus Programme of the European Union).</p>
<p><b>F) List questionnaire and other techniques to be used: <i>N/A do not forget to attach these to your application</i></b>  <b>Participant observation:</b> The researcher taking the role of a full employee in the setting will accomplish observation of in situ interactions between customers, with special attention paid to comparing lone to group customer behaviour. Observation will be covert, a decision taken based on the challenges and limitations (U 2008) outlined by previous authors (Erickson and Tewksbury 2000).</p>
<p>The goals of participant observation can be summarized in the following way:</p>

<p><b>A. Establishing patterns of club patronage</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Type of customer: Is female lap dancing club patronage an activity done alone?</li> <li>Approximate ratio of lone customer to groups of customers per night</li> <li>Temporal patterns of club patronage (Weekdays vs. Weekends / Day vs. Night)</li> <li>Demographic profile of groups</li> <li>Response of business to group patronage (Are they given differential service according to spending capacity?)</li> </ul> <p>Type of behavior: associated to group patronage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Associated to physical distance between dancer-customer</li> <li>Associated to payment of services</li> <li>Associated to interaction among group members</li> <li>Associated to interaction with non-group members</li> </ul> <p><b>B. Locating key actors</b></p> <p>Type of actor: Group hierarchies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Patterns of interaction: dancers per customer</li> <li>Patterns of interaction: age differentials</li> <li>Patterns of interaction: sitting arrangement (towards stage – towards each other)</li> </ul> <p>Interaction with club personnel: Are negotiations done individually or one group member?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bouncer/security</li> <li>Other customers</li> <li>Dancers</li> <li>Waiters</li> </ul> <p><b>C. Determining limits to behavior</b></p> <p>Club normativity: What are the limits to customer behavior?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are there formal rules? (Posted or written rules of conduct)</li> <li>Are there informal or unwritten rules?</li> <li>Who enforces them?</li> <li>Who is responsible for socializing them?</li> </ul> <p>Performance of masculinity: How does group behavior compare to individual customers?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Objectification of dancers</li> <li>Risk taking</li> <li>Excessive consumption</li> <li>Aggressiveness</li> <li>Body language</li> <li>Norm/rule breaking</li> </ul> <p>Because the main concern consists in documenting personal and individual interactions, the researcher will take all necessary measures to register the collected data in such a way that it would</p>
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not be possible to identify the location of study. As the city where research will take place has a large population (over 4 million), ensuring anonymity relies on preserving the name of the location of study as sensitive data and maintaining it private. All documented information will be limited to public interactions. In case the dynamics of fieldwork require seeking in depth information with subjects in private settings (such as outside of club setting), it will only be used as contextual data and will not be documented directly. Audio recording will be limited to voice notes.

**Ethical Considerations:**  
A) **Indicate potential risks to participants (e.g. distress, embarrassment) and means adopted to safeguard against them:**

During the planning stage of this project, it was possible to identify two central areas of concern regarding ethics and safety. They are connected to the semi-legal character of the activities under study and the semi-covert character of research design. There are also issues with the risk involved for the researcher associated with the location (Mexico and the ongoing War against Organized Crime). These three themes have been discussed with the supervisory team and with other members of the SSPSSR. In particular, emphasis has been given to the security and safety of the researcher and an analysis has been implemented, which is thoroughly described here. While violence related to organized crime had been pervasive in the region where the study will take place, this has declined at the same time that there has been a southward shift to the Central and Pacific states (Heinle, Molzahn and Shirk 2015). Regardless of this, to aid in the mitigation of risks, the supervisory team has agreed to adhere to a plan of scheduled contacts which will ensure the researcher is accounted for at all times when entering the locale of study. This schedule is attached in **Appendix 1** at the end of this document. Additionally, a risk assessment form has been elaborated and designed to address and minimize risk. This is included as **Appendix 3**. In **Appendix 4** there is a detailed description of a plan of actions to take in case of specific scenarios, the people responsible, and the necessary and relevant contacts.

**Disclosure:**  
The core ethical issue inherent to the process of semi-covert data collection is disclosure of the aims and scope of the research to the participants. While the procedures of data collection included in this research design effectively deny the right of research subjects to deny participation in the study, as informed consent will not be possible or practical in all cases, all possible measures of ensuring anonymity and confidentiality will be taken (in all cases where the dissemination of the results of the study is under consideration, no reference will be made to the exact geographical location of the club nor to the individual characteristics of any people portrayed in the study transcripts). In no way will there be any room for deception in the case of the participants who are approached directly to provide information (informants) or the gatekeepers (people who can be used as contacts to gain entry or obtain more in depth information), as they will be supplied with an information sheet that explains the aims and scope of the research and the relevant contacts through which they can raise concerns or complaints on the ethics of the researcher.

Mexican cultural specificities will be employed to ensure confidentiality of the informants or gatekeepers who sign the informed consent form. According to Mexican traditional practice, all signatures are practically illegible. In some cases, some people may include a legible character or letter, but in general, it is not possible to identify the individual names and surnames of the person

signing. Therefore, to ensure anonymity, participants will be given the opportunity to sign without printing their name.

**Anonymity:**  
Participants keep related activities in secret because of the stigmatized nature of the sexual entertainment industry (Brewster 2003). Therefore, the highest power imbalance against participants will be a result of any type of public disclosure of their identities. The consequences of such disclosure could include the public shame that such activities may entail in a predominantly catholic country and/or family conflicts. As a result, a key concern in the research methodology is to ensure anonymity and protect their public image. To avoid breaching anonymity, only data useful to understand the meaning of public symbolic and material practices regarding gender identity in a sexual entertainment venue will be collected. Because this will be the criterion to filter out any data that is not directly related to this, the only information to be enquired about, registered, transcribed, and coded will be that which is connected to public gender practices. Therefore, while because of the characteristics of the sex industry it is possible that other types of activities may be taking place within the premises of the location of study, no attempt will be made to take note of them as they go beyond the scope of this research.

**Risk and safety for researcher:**

**The first factor that requires consideration when analysing the risks that may arise during the data collection process of this project is that the researcher is a Mexican national familiar with academic contacts in place who can help in risk reduction and assistance.** Nonetheless, it is also useful to foresee any other risk that may need further preparation. Because of the characteristics of the location where this study will take place (a gendered sexual entertainment business of the night-time economy), security and safety has been a central concern during the planning stage for the fieldwork. Discussions about the topic in the supervisory meetings have been frequent and attention has been given to ensure the appropriate provisions are taken. As a way to prepare for this, part of the tasks connected to assessing the risk for ethnographic fieldwork has been to review the travel advisory and warnings issued by the foreign services of government agencies distinct from the Mexican Government. In this review, aside from general guidelines on personal safety and care regarding personal possessions and awareness of the environment, a focal point was to determine if there was any information advising against traveling or working in the area of study.

**Risk**

The security situation regarding violence and crime in Mexico is not at the level it was before 2006 (Heinle, Molzahn and Shirk 2015), and travel advisories and warnings have been issued by foreign services (Global Affairs Canada 2016; Department of State 2016; Foreign & Commonwealth Office 2016). The violence is localized and regional in character (Heinle, Molzahn and Shirk 2015; Department of State 2016). In a process that began in 2012, there was a decline in homicide rates in the states situated along the US border and an increase in states such as Michoacan and Guerrero (Heinle, Molzahn and Shirk 2015). While the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (2016) still includes the state of Nuevo Leon among the regions under dispute between drug smuggling organizations, it also emphasizes it is localized into specific areas and some zones and tourists' areas are violence free. The advice given for travelers into one of the cities where violent was rampant a few years ago, after acknowledging an end to a ban issued on all but non-essential travel, is to "travel during daylight, inform relatives or friends of your travel plans and use reputable hotels only". In general, while the situation regarding crime in Mexico is described in the document as

risky, specially for foreigners, the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (2016) centres its safety advice on being alert, avoiding public lone or isolated roads, avoid using unlicensed taxis and being weary of theft. Most importantly, it highlights monitoring "local media and informant/trusted contacts" of travel arrangements.

On its website, the Department of State (2016) takes a similar approach and notes that, threats from organized criminal groups is localized. Because of this, it advises to determine the security and safety situation in the specific zones of interest where the traveller will be spending time. For the case of Nuevo Leon, the main concern is outside the city of Monterrey. The recommendations specific for this region include traveling outside the city only in daylight hours, and staying within the municipal boundaries of San Pedro Garza Garcia between 1300 and 5:00hrs. The general advice is to lower the profile, because of the risk of theft and kidnappings, and avoiding situations where the traveler may be isolated. In all, the document stresses special care, as the risk may be higher during the night, especially when traveling through secluded areas.

Likewise, Global Affairs Canada informs its nationals that there is "no nationwide advisory in effect for Mexico", although it maintains two regional advisories. The regions considered to have high levels of violence related to organized crime are the North and West of the territory. Among the states considered in the North is Nuevo Leon, although there is an explicit exclusion of the city of Monterrey. On the security measures, it advises to avoid road travel between cities in the northern states, mentioning that special targets are sport utility vehicles and full-sized pick up trucks. For Monterrey, there is an advisory when traveling within the city and to avoid venturing outside the municipality of San Pedro Garza Garcia after dark. With respect to crime in general, the recommendations are to carry identification at all times, while regarding organized crime, the advice is to not venture outside urban areas, to remain vigilant and to follow local media.

In synthesis, a piece of advice that had not been considered originally but emerged from this review was the necessity to establish local contacts that were aware of the extent and duration of the data collection activities required for the completion of this project. While a series of precautions had been planned to ensure accommodation was secured with a person of trust (a personal friend) who could mobilize a personal social network of friends and family to help in any adversity (by a plan to establish a daily schedule of work hours and phone contact and an agreement to follow up on any inconsistencies), additional measures were sought. Specifically, it was agreed –with the supervisors- to make contact with local established and experienced (in ethnography) academics and explain the generals of the project before traveling abroad and the beginning fieldwork. This activity was taken as intensive and time was allocated to identifying academics that could be interested in the topic, who had experience in ethnography, and who had the institutional credentials to offer advice and assist in case of an emergency.

During the initial contact, in which the central question was if they agreed to give general guidance on fieldwork in the specific cultural context of Monterrey, and to advice on whether there were any special risks that should be considered, none of the researchers raised issues. One of the main purposes of this initial contact through e-mail was to establish a formal relationship. Care was taken to write formal e-mails from the institutional e-mail account explaining the generals of the project and the specific dates for fieldwork. In total, three researchers replied and stated to be willing to offer advice and meet in person prior to the beginning of fieldwork. One of the researchers opened the possibility of formal institutional cooperation. It is this academic who has worked in studies on sexualized spaces and gender using qualitative research methods. In all, this is the groundwork to

formulate a contingency plan (Appendix 3 and Appendix 4) in which a daily e-mail is sent at scheduled intervals to the supervisory team, the local researchers, and a personal friend. By doing this, it is possible to mobilize assistance in case any emergent situation may arise.

#### Legal framework and responsibility

As a means for preparing for the fieldwork stage, the researcher undertook a close review of the laws that regulate lap dancing in the location of interest. There are three levels of regulations that constitute the legal framework in Mexico. As previous work on the subject in the country shows (López Villagrán 2012b; López Villagrán 2012a; Olvera Maldonado 2006), there may be an overlap with prostitution as the presence of exchange of money for sexual services cannot be disregarded. If in fact prostitution occurs in the setting under study, the code on *lenocinio* (procurring) in the Código Federal Penal (Federal Penal Code) is relevant. Additionally, the corresponding Código Penal del Estado de Nuevo Leon (Nuevo Leon Penal Code) also applies. In both cases, the researcher does not have any responsibility. According to these codes, it is a crime to exploit the body of a third person and obtain any gain from it, to induce or solicit a person to perform a sexual act in exchange for money or to make available the means to do so. Nonetheless, legal responsibility falls on the people who manage or sustain establishments where this may take place. These codes also typify that it is a crime to conceal, agree to, or allow a minor to commerce with their body. Yet for this same reason the club has to employ practices that ensure that minors are not to be allowed in the premises. Furthermore, an additional regulation that include references to lap dancing is the *Ley Estatal de Prevención y Combate al Abuso del Alcohol* (State Law to Fight and Prevent Alcohol Abuse) regulates the opening and closing hours of any establishment that commercializes alcohol for human consumption. The relevant local codes are the corresponding alcohol control regulation (*Reglamento que Regula las Actividades de los Establecimientos de Venta y/o Consumo de Bebidas Alcohólicas en el Municipio de Monterrey, Nuevo Leon*), the *Reglamento de Espectáculos Públicos para el Municipio de Monterrey, Nuevo Leon* (Code for Public Spectacles of the Municipality of Monterrey, Nuevo Leon), the *Reglamento de Policía y Buen Gobierno del Municipio de Monterrey* (Police and Government Code of the Municipality of Monterrey), and the *Reglamento para las Construcciones del Municipio de Monterrey, Nuevo Leon* (Building Code for the Municipality of Monterrey) and the *Reglamento de Zonificación y Uso de Suelo del Municipio de Monterrey, Nuevo Leon* (Zoning Code for the Municipality of Monterrey, Nuevo Leon) (Government of the Municipality of Monterrey 2015).

To sum up, in Mexico, regulation of such businesses is through licensing and inspection. According to the Zoning code, in its Article 18, the local authority prohibits land uses related to cabarets, restaurants/bars with pole dancing. Nonetheless, while this code prohibits licensing of new businesses –it also does the building code for issuing of licensing to new constructions, the codes on Policing and Public Spectacles prohibit only sexual intercourse in public or on-stage. This is also a prohibition present in the code on Alcohol consumption, which additionally indicates that semi or complete nudity in spectacles or exhibition of the body is only permitted through operation with a cabaret license. This code establishes that people under the age of 18 are not to be allowed into the premises, employed, or permitted to consume alcohol. In synthesis, while the penal law codifies procuring prostitution as a crime, a common theme in the three levels of laws are regulations in the presence of minors in businesses related to nudity.

The first concern is legal the responsibility that can be incurred by undertaking the research. It is important to mention that all legal responsibility for violations of local codes falls on the person that applied for the license to operate. In case of prostitution, the legal responsibility can also be

<p>attributed to the manager or administrator of the locale. Gaining entry is only possible by presenting an official identification card that certifies being over 18 years of age. It is not the responsibility of the waiter to establish whether or not a customer or another employee is a minor, the State Penal Code does mention that it is a crime to conceal, agree to, or allow the prostitution of a minor.</p>
<p><b>B) What confidentiality issues might arise during data collection, analysis, and dissemination of results? How do you plan to protect participants' anonymity?</b></p> <p>An issue of concern in ensuring that the appropriate measures are taken to ensure anonymity is the possibility of tracing names, nicknames or attributes of the venue to the actual subjects or the location of study. To prevent this, throughout the process of data collection and analysis measures will be taken to minimize the possibility of linking the activities to the subjects. The first and most important step to ensure this is in the early stage of transcription of notes and descriptions of the setting. To stop the likelihood of a person with knowledge of the location to be able to identify it, all names used in the process of note taking and transcription will be chosen at random. The name of the venue will not be recorded during data collection or at any other stage; instead a pseudonym will be used. Furthermore, no information will be recorded that could make this venue geographically identifiable.</p> <p>The researcher will ensure that all information collected is limited to personal and group interactions occurring within the areas of the business with public access and in view of customers. In the case, a situation arises that may imply harm (as a result of physical threat of violence, sexual harassment, or any other activity that may constitute injury) coming to the subjects of study, confidentiality may be breached to the extent that ethical and moral obligations that bind any person present in the setting will compel them to report the situation to the club authorities according to club rules and legal statutes.</p> <p><b>C) What difficulties might arise (e.g. regarding power and/or dependency imbalances between researcher and participants) and how do you safeguard against them?</b></p> <p>In general terms, it is perceived that the researcher holds a position of power and authority with respect to the research subjects. While this is true, and all precautions will be taken to ensure anonymity and confidentiality to address this power imbalance, it could also be that the scenario could be inverted. This project is based on two short 3-month trips for fieldwork. It is a time frame that reduces the possibilities for preparation. This entails going into the field cold, without much knowledge about the specifics of the setting. In contrast, it is the subjects, especially key informants, who hold in depth knowledge about the activities and interactional patterns under study. If they decide not to collaborate, it is in their power to impede data collection, particularly because of the time constraints in which this project will take place. Therefore, the greatest risk of power imbalances between researchers and participants pertains to the gatekeepers and informants. This may be a result of gender relations in the Mexican context, as it is possible to encounter hostilities. While Mexican masculinities are changing (Gutman 2007), there is a likelihood that the gender of the researcher may play a role in the attitude expressed from the informants encountered during fieldwork. While it is possible that some men would be willing to speak about their activities with another man, framing them as a variation of sexual conquests and a daring personality, it is equally possible to face negative reactions such as withholding of</p>

<p>Information by key informants.</p> <p>To avoid the risk that the data collection would be partial and controlled by any one figure, efforts will be made to observe and make contacts as a function of the requirements of data collection and not of the social network to which there is access. By making use of the researchers' knowledge of local cultural practices, it will be possible to display a neutral persona and make as many contacts as it is possible, not as they are made available by the gatekeepers. Additionally, a great effort has been made to make contact with local experienced ethnographers that have worked in the location where the study will take place. Meetings will be scheduled prior to the beginning of fieldwork, in order to obtain general advice on gaining cooperation.</p>
<p><b>D) How will the project take into consideration cultural diversity (e.g. through provision of interpreters where necessary)?</b></p> <p>As the researcher is fluent in the language and fully socialized into the culture, no translators will be used to interact with participants. All notes will be taken in English to avoid future issues with after-the-fact translations. The informed consent sheet will be translated into Spanish and will be submitted to the DCGC Urecht Programme Coordinator for approval, as he is fluent in Spanish.</p> <p><b>E) Why, if at all, are you paying participants? What is the potential impact on them of such financial inducement?</b></p> <p>No payments will be given to participants.</p> <p><b>F) What provision are you making for giving feedback to participants about your findings?</b></p> <p>Not applicable.</p> <p><b>G) What other ethics review procedures has this project already undergone (e.g. with funding bodies)?</b></p> <p>None</p>
<p><b>Consent:</b></p> <p><b>A) What procedures are you using to secure participants' informed consent (please append any forms etc. use for this)?</b></p> <p>An informed consent form will be provided for the gatekeepers approached to obtain access to the setting. Because of the peculiarities of participant observation (amount of people present in a setting, the anonymity of participants when interacting in collectivity/groups) informed consent will not be possible in every case. Nonetheless, when procuring information directly from participants, such as with informants or when further clarification is necessary for a particular interpretation for a situation or compartment, the researcher will be prepared to explain the motives behind his inquiry. As in Frank (2005), information on the research will be provided on a case-by-case basis and when approached directly by participants.</p> <p><b>B) What procedures will you use with participants unable to give their own informed consent?</b></p> <p>To ensure participant anonymity in this project, the researcher will employ a strategy analogous to that used when obtaining a video or photographic image of a public location. Accomplishing</p>

anonymity in photographic or video documents requires blurring out facial features of those individuals who have not explicitly agreed to participation. Because of the number of subjects being observed at any one time in the location chosen for this project, and that the data collected here will only be that in relation to interactions that take place in public situations, it is nearly impossible to obtain informed consent from all the people involved. Therefore, any recording of information that may connect the subjects' identities to their presence at the location will be strictly avoided. This extends to individual identifiers such as the particular combination of clothing items worn. All individuals who have not given informed consent will be documented in their public and anonymous behaviours and displays.

**C) Explain, where applicable, why the informed consent of the participants is not being sought?**

Obtaining signed consent implies requesting personal data and signatures. While this is feasible in a controlled setting, like during an interview, it is not during participant observation in locations where there is a continuous flux of people. The location where this study will take place is a lap dancing club, a bar where customers come in and out and their presence varies from day to day. This situation would create a condition where more time is spent obtaining consent and explaining the particulars of the project to people than in actually collecting data. It would also not allow for the normal operation of the club or for the realization of the activities that the researcher will be obliged to perform as an employee. The lap dancing club is also a location where groups of people aggregate. Group processes and dynamics are partially a function of the anonymous character acquired by the participants as a result of being in numbers. Attempting to collect personal information from the individuals present in compromises the decision to abstain from collecting any type of personal data. Lap dancing clubs are not discretely private locations. As private businesses open to the public, all audience members and staff can witness any person's behaviour.

**Security Sensitive Material**

Does your research involve access to or use of material covered by the Terrorism Act?

No

*(The Terrorism Act (2006) outlaws the dissemination of records, statements and other documents that can be interpreted as promoting and endorsing terrorist acts. By answering 'yes' you are registering your legitimate use of this material with the Research Ethics Advisory Group. In the event of a police investigation, this registration will help you to demonstrate that your use of this material is legitimate and lawful.)*

**Researcher, please sign, print name and date to testify the accuracy of this completed application:**

Sign: 

Print Name: Jorge Vladimir Castañeda Ochoa

Date: 7 March 7 2016

**Supervisor, please sign, print name a date to testify that you have seen and approve this Research Ethics Application:**

Sign: 

Print Name: Marian Duggan

Date: 4 March 2016

**Please submit your application including your questionnaire and consent form via email to:**

[G.E.Smith@kent.ac.uk](mailto:G.E.Smith@kent.ac.uk)  
Claire Smith  
SSPSSR Ethics Administrator  
Cornwallie East  
University of Kent  
Canterbury  
Kent  
CT12 7NF

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Appendix 1

Plan for contact with supervisors

				April			
Date	Mexico	Amsterdam	London	Type	Comments		
7th	10:00hrs	17:00hrs	16:00hrs	Email	Confirm arrival in Monterey		
11th	2:00hrs	9:00hrs	8:00hrs	E-Mail	General comments about entry into setting		
18th	2:00hrs	9:00hrs	8:00hrs	Skype	Issues/Institutional taking in setting		
25th	8:00hrs	15:00hrs	14:00hrs	Skype	Issues/institutional taking in setting		
<b>Notes:</b>							
An e-mail will be sent daily at 13:00hrs (Mex) / 20:00hrs (Amn) to confirm safety							
				May			
Date	Mexico	Amsterdam	London	Type	Comments		
2nd	2:00hrs	9:00hrs	8:00hrs	Skype	Note taking and Coding		
9th	2:00hrs	9:00hrs	8:00hrs	Email	Note taking and Coding		
16th	2:00hrs	9:00hrs	8:00hrs	Skype	Note taking and Coding		
23rd	2:00hrs	9:00hrs	8:00hrs	Skype	Note taking and Coding		
<b>Notes:</b>							
An e-mail will be sent daily at 13:00hrs (Mex) / 20:00hrs (Amn) to confirm safety							
				June			
Date	Mexico	Amsterdam	London	Type	Comments		
13th	8:00hrs	15:00hrs	14:00hrs	Email	General report and issues		
20th	8:00hrs	15:00hrs	14:00hrs	Email	General report and issues		
<b>Notes:</b>							
An e-mail will be sent daily at 13:00hrs (Mex) / 20:00hrs (Amn) to confirm safety							

**RESEARCH INFORMED CONSENT FORM**  
**Participant Observation**

<b>Title of Project:</b>	"In bar" company: A study of interactional patterns and masculine practices among male Mexican lap dancing club patrons".	<b>Ethics Approval Number:</b>	
<b>Investigator(s):</b>	Jorge Vladimir Castañeda Ochoa	<b>Researcher Email:</b>	joed@kent.ac.uk
<b>Supervisors:</b>	University of Kent (UK) and University of Utrecht (NL) Dr. Marian Buggen (Kent), Prof. Dr. Phil Hubbard (Kent), Prof. Dr. Dina Steger (Utrecht)	<b>Unwebsites:</b>	University of Kent, UK University of Utrecht, NL

**Research project**

The activities described in this document are part of the thesis dissertation project, which Jorge Vladimir Castañeda Ochoa is required to comply with in order to fulfill the Joint Doctorate in Cultural and Global Criminology. Funding for this research comes from the European Commission through the Erasmus Mundus/Erasmus+ programme. The main objectives of this research consist in investigating the homosocial bonding and masculinities of Mexican men in a gendered entertainment business (lap dancing club) in Monterrey, Mexico.

Please read the following statements and, if you agree, initial the corresponding box to confirm agreement:

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

Circle

I agree to the reference of my name in the researcher's publications/thesis dissertation.  (Yes/No)  (Yes/No)

I understand that in case I do not agree to the use of my name in published material my data will be treated confidentially and any publication resulting from this work (written work, conference presentations, journal articles) will report on my data that does not identify me. The researcher will not use any personal information during meetings or conversations and will not share sensitive information in any other way.  (Yes/No)

I understand that it will not be possible to obtain formal written consent from every person participating in the activities of the club. Nonetheless, the researcher is obliged to abide by the agreement of confidentiality and anonymity described above.  (Yes/No)

I confirm that I will receive no direct benefits and that there will be no monetary compensation.  (Yes/No)

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason. I have the right to refuse the use of any information that I may feel could breach anonymity and confidentiality. The researcher is obliged to comply and the information will not be disseminated.  (Yes/No)

**Signatures:**

<b>Name of participant (Optional)</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Signature</b>
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<b>Researcher (block capitals)</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Signature</b>
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If you would like a copy of this consent form to keep, please ask the researcher. If you have any complaints or concerns about this research, you can direct these, in writing, to the Student Research Ethics Committee (SREC) by email at [sarec@kent.ac.uk](mailto:sarec@kent.ac.uk). Alternatively, if you have further questions, please contact by post: Research Ethics Administrator SSPSR, Cornwallis East University of Kent, Canterbury Kent CT2 7NF.

**OVERSEAS TRAVEL RISK ASSESSMENT FORM**

(BASED ON HSE 'FIVE STEPS TO RISK ASSESSMENT')

Sheet No :.....

Department/Section ..... Work Area ..... Date of Assessment .....

Assessor ..... Signature ..... Date of Review .....

HAZARD (List)	PERSONS AT RISK AND HOW (Consider all persons, including those who may not be involved with the job)	EXISTING CONTROL MEASURES AND ADEQUACY (List the control measures appropriate to each hazard and consider the level of residual risk; is it high, medium or low?) If using a risk matrix then show risk factor (R) = (hazard x risk)	ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS (If the residual risk is high, you must take additional practicable measures to reduce it, or abort the proposed task)
1. Local environment/customs	Researcher	Risk level: Low  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moderate body language to prevent appearing as aggressive</li> <li>Use previous cultural knowledge of politeness and manners to minimize being confrontational</li> </ul>	
2. Law	Researcher and research subjects	Risk level: Medium  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adhere to job policies and refrain from activities such as alcohol/drug use</li> <li>In case of police raid, cooperate fully</li> <li>Assume a low degree of responsibility in the business to minimize contact with law enforcement</li> </ul>	

3. Crime	Researcher being in presence of criminal activities	Risk level: Medium  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Being Mexican and familiar with the local cultural practices, the researcher will take care to avoid risk</b></li> <li>Limit interaction to the aims and scope of the research</li> <li>Do not discuss the subjects personal matters or in any way attempt to enquire about their identity</li> <li>Adhere to the method of routine communication agreed with the supervisory team</li> <li>In case of an emergency, establish communication with local contacts/hosts <b>Appendix 4</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agree on a safety plan with local hosts that defines:                             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Means for them to inform family members of any emergency</li> <li>Means for them to establish contact with supervisory team</li> <li>A time frame upon which to ensure an emergency protocol will be undertaken if no contact is established by a certain time <b>Appendix 4</b></li> </ol> </li> <li>Establish contact with researchers from the local university to obtain information on safety procedures in local ethnographic fieldwork (Use contacts in School of Sociology and in School of Social Work)</li> </ul>
4. Violence	Researcher being in presence of violence among patrons	Risk level: Medium  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish rapport with security personnel to ensure knowledge of internal security measures</li> <li>Obtain information on possible threats from individuals</li> <li>Increase awareness of the setting and of possible hostilities</li> </ul> <p><b>Waiters are not responsible of ensuring security of dancers, nonetheless the researcher will report any incident to the appropriate personnel.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss all potential sources of hostilities with the supervisory team and assess the situation accordingly</li> </ul>

5. Violence	<b>Researcher being target of violence or aggression</b>	Because of the characteristics of the business (alcohol consumption and the likelihood of illegal drug use or intoxication), being the object of aggression from the customers may be a part of the everyday activities of the club employees. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Notify security personnel of any incident</li> <li>Notify co-workers of the situation</li> <li>Allow for security procedures to be implemented by in-house security personnel</li> </ul>	
6. Theft	<b>Researcher</b>	Risk level: Low <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use <b>personal knowledge of local practices and familiarity with the surroundings</b></li> <li>Carry phone numbers separate from mobile</li> <li>Do not use mobile in public spaces</li> <li>Dress inconspicuously</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have local police phone number to make report <b>Appendix 4</b></li> <li>Keep insurance information at hand</li> <li>Avoid using electronic equipment on public transport</li> </ul>
7. Transportation	<b>Researcher</b>	Risk level: Low <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To minimize risk of theft in public transportation, an effort should be made to use trains instead of buses, in order to take advantage of police presence at stations</li> <li>Use of taxicabs will be minimized as they have been object of polemics regarding their use in property crimes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A plan of communication with hosts will be establishing listing the hours at which the shift ends and the average hours of travel to place of residence <b>Appendix 4</b></li> </ul>

8. Drug/Alcohol use of subjects under study	<b>Research participants</b>	Risk level: High <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lap dancing clubs are places where drug/alcohol consumption is prevalent. To minimize risk of violence, knowledge of local cultures will be employed</li> <li>A strategy of returning home in the company of other co-workers will be preferred as a means to avoid confrontations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supervisory team will be informed at all times of any relevant issues so that decisions may be taken accordingly</li> </ul>
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**NOTE:** All assessors should read the Performance Standard for undertaking risk assessments and have been trained in risk assessment. On completion, appropriate employees should be briefed by the assessor who should ensure that they fully understand the risk assessment.

## Appendix 4

Emergency Communication Plan				
Contact Information	WHO (Person Responsible)	WHEN (Warning)	WHAT (Action)	WHY (Description)
David Licea +5218118160329	Jorge Castaneda  Local Address:  Calle Dr. Luciano #110 Colonia Los Olivos Escobedo, Nuevo Leon Mexico C.P. 66056	Being in the presence of violence against others (fighting)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Notify in-house security personnel (bouncers and doormen)</li> <li>If situation escalates, notify close friend of situation and prioritize personal security</li> </ul>	As waiters are not responsible for enforcing security within the premises, avoiding any unnecessary risks will require notifying the appropriate personnel.  Jorge Castaneda will notify Manager, bouncer, and security personnel of any violence and will notify by text message the generals of the situation to close friend.
David Licea +5218118160329	Jorge Castaneda	Being object of violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employ same actions as in situation above</li> <li>Take time off by having another waiter tend the table in conflict</li> </ul>	Avoid personal involvement in conflict situations.  Jorge Castaneda will notify Manager, bouncer, and security personnel of any violence and will notify by text message the generals of the situation to close friend.
Marian Duggan (supervisor) Mobile No. +44 7900 563918	Jorge Castaneda	If sending e-mail is not possible	Text confirming all is in order	Back up to daily follow-up e-mail confirmation of safety.  Jorge Castaneda will send text to Marian Duggan confirming safety.
Personal Friend (Accommodation) David Licea +5218118160329 davidlicea@hotmail.com	Supervisor	When communication has been lost for 72 consecutive hours	e-mail or text asking for knowledge of whereabouts	As there is an agreement to communicate on a daily basis to acknowledge safety and whereabouts, and the purpose of the trip is exclusively for fieldwork, missing two consecutive e-mails or texts without previous notice requires further action.  Supervisor will send e-mail to enquire about whereabouts of Jorge Castaneda.
Academic contact (Local University) dieguesreyes@hotmail.com jesusreyes@unam.mx	Supervisor	When communication has been lost for 96 consecutive hours	e-mail or text asking to report to local authorities through university channels	According to Mexican Law, a missing person can be reported after 72 hours. Only then can official channels for localization be

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