

# **Erotic Service / Erotic Dance Establishments: Two Types of Marginalized Labour**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report reflects the findings of a qualitative research project which examined the in-call sex trade work in Montreal and Toronto from the perspective of marginal labour. This approach immediately positions the study outside of questions of deviance and morality and instead draws attention to the ways laws and regulatory practices are mediated by, and interface with, stigma, labour process, and labour structure to condition the experience of labour. Data from an earlier qualitative research study of exotic dancers was drawn upon in order to highlight the diversity of marginal labour and to position the in-call sex trade industry within broader labour market conditions.

## Literature Review

The question of female prostitution has been the subject of criminological inquiry since the emergence of the social sciences in the late 19th century when the “father of criminology” Cesare Lombroso defined prostitution as the quintessential women’s crime. From Lombroso’s day to the late 1960s, when the sociology of deviance engaged in the qualitative study of interaction, positivist explanations which sought to explain women’s engagement in the trade, dominated the debate. In the 1970s within a broader rethinking of gender and patriarchy by radical feminists, prostitution became the symbol of the social, sexual and economic domination of women by men. Within this framework, prostitutes emerged as victims. In the late 1970s, and particularly throughout the 1980s, a new and important voice emerged when sex trade workers organized into advocacy and support networks. Firmly rejecting the victim status bestowed on them by some feminist reformers they defined prostitution as work. This approach espoused by workers has in turn been taken up, albeit in a fairly limited way, by feminists who conceptualize participation in the sex trade (and skin trade) as women’s work.

## Methodology

The research, a collaborative effort of Stella (a Montreal-based sex trade worker advocacy organization) and two University of Ottawa professors, was guided by feminist principles and the commitment to centring the voices and understanding of experience. The findings are based on a series of fourteen in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted with women employed as in-call sex trade workers in Montreal (8) and Toronto (6); interviews with sex trade worker advocates from Stella (2) and Maggies in Toronto (1). The comparison to exotic dancers was based on fifteen semi-structured in-depth interviews with Ontario-based exotic dancers.

## Research Findings

The research found that women's entry into the sex trade was largely financially motivated. However, the decision to work in this sector of the trades (as opposed to out-call or exotic dance) was influenced by other considerations including personal suitability, labour practices, work environment, anonymity and safety concerns. Similarly, in addition to the economic benefit, a number of the interviewees identified other positive characteristics of the job including flexibility, autonomy, interaction with clients, collegial work environment and a relaxed work pace. These positive aspects notwithstanding, respondents also noted a number of undesirable elements of the labour. These included the potential exposure to sexually transmitted infections (STIs), dealing with rude and/or manipulative clients, vulnerability to criminalization, potential for violence and the need to negotiate stigma and identity and cope with the lack of empathy of (even sympathetic) outsiders.

The illegality of the trade emerged as a particularly definitive characteristic with wide-ranging consequences. On the one hand, it increases stress as workers endeavour to minimize the risks - a practice that was undermined by many respondents' partial or false knowledge of the laws. On the other hand, it also conditions the labour relations and denies workers potential resources in negotiations with clients and employers. Among other things the fear of denunciation by disgruntled customers complicates workers' maintenance of personal boundaries. Women are hesitant to turn to

the police for protection or to report violent clients and their ability to negotiate labour conditions through, for example, unionization is undermined by the illegal nature of aspects of the work they perform.

### Comparison to Exotic Dancers

When we consider the organization of the labour of in-call sex trade workers to that of exotic dancers we can appreciate that both sets of workers are own-account workers operating within a fee-for-service structure without benefit of a guaranteed income but nonetheless reliant on their employers. Put another way, they are part of the growing non-standard labour sector and, like other similarly-positioned marginal workers, are in a contradictory space: they are managed like employees and subjected to labour site expectations (including providing free labour) but denied the wages, stability and protection generally associated with employment. Moreover, while women working in both trades are vulnerable to criminalization and sometimes administrative regulation, they are, by virtue of the organization of the labour (own-account) and the illegality of their labour site (bawdy house), denied the protection afforded by provincial labour law.

When the labour practices of exotic dancers and in-call sex trade workers are compared, it is evident that both sets of workers employ a range of competencies including interpersonal, technical, and performance skills. When we attend to the particulars of the two jobs however, it is evident that these are very different labour processes. These findings - the need for skills on the one hand and the diversity of the sex trades on the other - challenge the focus on deviance rather than work process in much of the literature on the trades. They also highlight the importance of attending to specificity and acknowledging that the 'sex trade' encompasses a heterogeneous range of labour practices.

### Conclusion/Recommendations

This research confirms the usefulness of the concept of marginal labour for analysing the sex trades. It allows us to appreciate points of juncture with other consumer service sector employment

without obscuring the uniqueness of working in illegal and stigmatized sectors of the labour market. Within this framework decriminalization emerges not as a solution but as an important precondition to empowering workers so that they can more effectively resist some of the oppressive aspects of the labour.

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# I. Introduction

In spite of being commonly referred to as the world's oldest profession, 'prostitution' is not recognized as a profession like any other. On the contrary, within traditional criminology, it has, (erroneously) become the symbol of female criminality (Parent, 1994: 393). For most contemporary feminists, it represents the ultimate symbol of women's oppression. Not until the end of the 1970s and throughout the 1980s did sex workers' organizations and some feminists begin to articulate a discourse that affirmed sex work as labour and as a choice. Initially, however, the discourse dealt mainly with the sex trade in general, and attempted, through theoretical reflection and practical engagement, to legitimize this approach.

At the present time, empirical research on 'prostitution' as labour chosen by adult citizens is still relatively scarce. It is also evident that the diversity of sex work continues to be poorly recognized and explored. Accordingly it is important to use theoretical insights from the sociology of labour to conduct research and to explore the structures and processes of work within the sex industry. It seems equally crucial that each of the various forms of labour within the sex industry be targeted, one by one, and common points and characteristics identified.

This was our motivation in replying to the Law Commission's call for submissions on marginalized labour. We saw an opportunity to conduct research into the sex work of adult women in massage parlours and brothels, and to compare this form of sex work with that of erotic dancers, whose work was recently researched by a member of our group (Bruckert, 2000). We sought the cooperation of Stella, a Montréal organization run by and for sex workers, and they agreed to assist with the project. We were therefore able to contact and interview 14 sex workers and four sex worker representatives in Greater Montréal and Toronto. These interviews form the new empirical basis for our study, which was enriched by the data and analysis available to us on erotic dancers.

In the following report, we first present a review of the theoretical literature on "prostitution," studies on sex work in massage parlours and brothels, and on erotic dancers. We then briefly outline the theoretical framework and methodological approach we have chosen. Third, in order to identify the legal parameters that contribute to the marginalization of workers in these two forms of sex work, we present the principal federal and provincial laws and municipal regulations that affect their work. Next we outline the results of our research on sex work in massage parlours and brothels; address work in exotic dance bars and identify the factors for comparison between the two types of labour. We conclude with recommendations in terms of policy and future research.

## II. Literature Review

Sex work in massage parlours, brothels and nude dance bars has not been the subject of much social science research, but general theories of 'prostitution' allow us to understand the perspectives from which these forms of sex work have been, and are currently, analyzed. In the following section we briefly outline the theories that have contributed to the definition of the field as a whole before turning to the work specific to our research subject.

### A. Theories of 'prostitution'

#### 1. Criminology

Traditional analyses<sup>1</sup> of 'prostitution' are based on the assumption that the exchange of sexual services for financial remuneration constitutes deviant behaviour, and therefore seek to find causes within the "prostitutes." These authors examined biological, psychological, and/or sociological factors as keys to explaining this problem. From this perspective, 'prostitution' is not considered a profession

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<sup>1</sup> See Parent (1994) and Parent and Coderre (2000).

and laws are assumed to be designed simply as a response to the problem. Moreover, neither social relations between men and women nor traditional notions of sexuality are examined.

At the end of the 60s and during the 70s, researchers abandoned the search for causes and directed their analysis toward labour processes within the sex industry. Accordingly, research was undertaken on the process of entering the sex industry (Bryan, 1965; Velarde, 1975), on the development of deviant identities within the profession (Davis, 1971); and on the labour context and interactions between the various social actors (Prus and Vassilakopoulos, 1979). At the same time, traditional analytical assumptions still inspired and underlay this research: the authors' approaches were for the most part contained within the social parameters of deviance rather than in the sociology of labour.

In 1999, Stéphanie Pryn used symbolic interactionism to study street 'prostitution' as a stigmatized occupation. She examined the activities of the workers based on the meanings constructed by the social actors themselves. She used the sociology of occupation, not to escape the issues that cause 'prostitution' to swing between denial and recognition, but to integrate into the analysis the tensions between stigma and profession (Pryn, 1999: 30). In this way her work is markedly distinguished from previous studies.

## 2. Feminist analyses

Feminists in the 1960s<sup>2</sup>, and radical feminists in particular, conceptualize 'prostitution' not as a crime, but rather as the ultimate symbol of women's oppression within patriarchal societies. Kate

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<sup>2</sup> Feminists in the West have been interested in this issue since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. For a review of feminist thinking and initiatives in this period, see Dubois and Gordon (1983), Parent (1994), Rosen (1982), Walkowitz (1980).

Millet (1972), for example, sees 'prostitution' as a "paradigm... the very heart of women's social condition" (1972: 62). The 'prostitute' therefore becomes the ultimate victim. These feminists take issue with male privilege which allows men, as a gender, to oppress women and hold clients, pimps, and the police accountable. They condemn the laws and demand the decriminalization of 'prostitution' and seek the cooperation of sex trade workers in the struggle. However, most feminists do not consider 'prostitution' a profession; they see it as a textbook case of men appropriating women's sexuality. Nor is the meanings of sexuality challenged; it is simply defined as a dimension of life that women are attempting to reclaim for themselves.

### 3. Sex workers, feminist activists, and "sex radicals"

At the end of the 1970s, sex workers in many countries such as Canada (CORP), the United States (COYOTE), England (PROS) and the Netherlands (The Rode Draad) started to organize, discuss their work and defend their interests<sup>3</sup>. These groups assert that sex work is neither a vice nor a symbol of women's social and economic inferiority. They define themselves not as victims but as workers, and argue that 'prostitution' is a profession that is, for the most part, voluntarily chosen by women. They see neither clients nor pimps as the fundamental problem but the actions of the criminal justice system that penalizes them and makes their profession difficult and dangerous. They are therefore petitioning for the decriminalization of prostitution-related activities.

At the same time, some sex workers are defining themselves as "sex radicals" and challenging traditional social constructs of sexuality (Aline, 1987; CORP, 1987; Chapkis, 2000)<sup>4</sup>. They argue that they are genuinely liberated women in that they refuse male control of their sexuality through marriage and the family, and instead choose to offer sexual services as a business transaction. They maintain

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<sup>3</sup> For an overview of the stance of sex workers' associations, see, among others, Delacoste and Alexander (1987), Jaget (1980), Pheterson (1989).

<sup>4</sup> Some writing (McClintok, 1993; Califia, 1994) seeks to go beyond liberal and libertarian feminist parameters of sexuality, based on individual interviews and analyzes.

the right to control their own bodies, to define their sexuality outside traditional moral discourse and feminist discourses that connect women's sexuality to love and affection.

Some feminists have also begun to present research on sex work as a profession (Parent, 1994, 2001; Chapkis, 1997; Brock, 1998; Brewis and Listead, 2000; Lever and Dolick, 2000, Coderre and Parent, 2001), further legitimizing the approach of sex worker organizations. Other authors associate sex work with subversive practices and join with sex workers in challenging dominant values and customs (Williams, 1993, Bell, 1995).

## B. Massage parlours/brothels

### 1. Criminology until the 1980s

During the 1970s, massage parlours entered the universe of sexual services available in North America. Brothels again emerged as a subject of public debate and criminological interest, and several researchers undertook investigations specifically on this arena. Although some of them dwelt on developing a classification of massage parlours (Valde and Warlick, 1973; Bryant and Palmer, 1975), most of the studies focussed on questions of workers and their clients.

In the case of the former, authors highlighted diverse aspects of the profession: training and acquisition of skills, including sexual techniques, client management, solicitation and interpersonal relationships (Heyl, 1977, 1979); self identity and mechanisms for neutralizing social stigma (Velarde, 1975); initiation into the occupation, reasons for the choice and the negotiation of identity (Bryant and Palmer, 1975); subjective understanding of the profession (Rasmussen and Kuhn, 1976); and personal and social implications of labour location (Farley and Davis, 1978). Although these studies distanced themselves from research on causes, and based their analysis on surveys, questionnaires and interviews with workers, the authors did not question the deviant designation imposed on the

activities. Furthermore, some of them adopted a condescending tone, thereby reproducing traditional judgments about sex work.

During the same period, one also finds research on clients. Initially, these authors presented a traditional analysis of clients either they labelled patrons as suffering from sexual fixation and/or delayed sexual development (Valde and Warlick, 1973), or they adopted a functionalist explanation that sexual services allow men to meet their sexual needs outside of prevailing social rules (Simpson and Schill, 1977). Later studies however suggested that clients, mainly white men from the middle or lower middle classes, are not sexual perverts but 'normal' individuals (Bryant and Palmer, 1975; Simpson and Schill, 1977; Armstrong, 1978). A normalization that is notably absent in most research and theories on sex workers.

## 2. Feminists and the regulation of sex work

Although feminists have not focussed their attention on sex work in massage parlours and brothels, they have taken a position with respect to policies regarding criminalization of sex work and, for the most part, favour deregulation.

The majority of feminists, especially radical feminists, believe that 'prostitution' should be eliminated, and thus disagree with these practices being controlled by the state. Such control would position the state as pimp and undermine women's pursuit of equality. Moreover, according to Barry (1979), accepting brothels would have the effect of hiding "the moral double standard, which encourages and protects prostitution, sexual violence and sexual slavery. Women could be used, abused and forgotten" (1979:133). These feminists favour decriminalization in order to counter the victimization of "prostitutes".

In addition, feminists examine the abusive practices against workers in brothels in several countries, and specifically in Nevada, U.S. (Barry, 1979; CCCSF, 1984). They speak out against the

working conditions to which these sex workers are subjected: in Nevada, for example, women are required to work 14-hour shifts, six days per week; they are not permitted to refuse clients; they are required to undergo medical examinations; they are required to share half their income with the "house". These feminists also highlight that these workers do not enjoy the same civil rights as other citizens; they are, among other things, prohibited from going to restaurants.

In short, for the majority of feminists, regulation does not represent a solution, and for radical feminists, it *cannot be* one.

### 3. Sex workers, their feminist allies and the regulation of sex work

Sex workers' organizations also decry working conditions in brothels such as those in Nevada. However, they are not fighting for the decriminalization and eventual abolition of "prostitution," but for its decriminalization and the implementation of laws to protect the rights of sex workers (Osborne, 1987). They argue that, until their profession is considered socially legitimate, they cannot be considered on par with other workers in the labour market. Until that time, the laws and regulations in place will continue to tend toward the protection of the client and the community, and not the workers (Chapkis, 1997: 164).

Moreover, sex workers' organizations do not unequivocally endorse the regulation of sex work, regardless of the social context, as *the* ideal solution. In their campaign for the decriminalization of prostitution-related activities, they support the withdrawal of criminal laws against brothels (Boutellier, 1991). Ultimately, the issue for them is not about ensuring that women can work in one location or another, but that they are able to work safely, free from harassment and as full citizens (Tong, 1984: 57).

### 4. Major themes in the literature on brothels since the 1980s

The issue of regulation has continued to interest researchers in recent decades (Brents and Hausbeck, 2000; Outshoorn, 2001). Notable is Outshoorn's (2001) recent publication which address the legalization of brothels and the recognition of 'prostitution' as labour in the Netherlands. There is also some research that highlights the dynamics of brothel life and the impact of public and media discussions about the workers' identity and business success (Albert, 2001; Skibrwei, 2001). Another study showed considerable disagreement among sex workers as to the desirability of working in brothels: more than half of the sample reject this option (Sharpe, 1998).

In Canada, the Fraser Commission, which was charged with the task of inquiring into pornography and 'prostitution' in this country, funded six projects on 'prostitution', but only Crook (1984) placed any emphasis on brothels<sup>5</sup>. She concluded that protective measures are in place for potentially violent clients (bouncers and walkie-talkies), however, in this profession which is controlled by men (pimps, brothels owners, etc.) the labour is very demanding and the women are exploited.

A database search, specifically of *Women's Resources International*, revealed that during the 1980s and 1990s, the main research themes catalogued with respect to brothels were related to the historical context and to sexually transmitted diseases. Historical research covers diverse time periods and geographic locations. There are, for example, studies on brothels in medieval Europe (Karras, 1999), in Shanghai in the 19th and 20th centuries (Henriot, 1999), and in the United States during the 19th century (Best, 1998). In Quebec, the issue of brothels has been the subject of a number of historical studies (Lévesque, 1987, 1989, 1995; Lacasse, 1994; Proulx, 1997). We note, in particular, Lévesque's contribution on Montréal bordellos in the 19th century, *Le bordel milieu de travail contrôlé* [Brothels: controlled labour environments] (Lévesque, 1987, 1995). She demonstrates how sex work is controlled by outside agents for the purpose of either making money or protecting society from the moral corruption associated with 'prostitution' activities (Lévesque, 1995: 124). As part of this

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<sup>5</sup> Gemme *et al.* (1984) and Fleischman (1984) also briefly address brothels/massage parlours.

organization, "prostitutes" are located at the bottom of the scale and are subject to control by brothel operators, police, doctors and social reformers (Lévesque, 1995: 125).

During the 1980s and 90s however the predominant theme was the subject of sexually transmitted diseases. In the wake of the AIDS epidemic, the finger was quickly pointed at sex workers, the traditional scapegoats for sexually transmitted epidemics and infections. Brothels, therefore, became the subject of investigation the world over (Albert *et al.*, 1998; Hanenberg and Rojanapithayakorn, 1998; Prybylski and Alto, 1999, Sedyaningsih-Mamahit, 1999), although regions where the infection was particularly prevalent were more often targeted for research<sup>6</sup>.

### C. Erotic dancing

Strip bars where clients can consume alcohol and watch nude dancers are a relatively recent phenomenon in North America. Bars that offer these services opened their doors in the 1960s and were very quickly designated as a social problem. As with 'prostitution' and "prostitutes," strip bars and strippers themselves were targets of moral condemnation and subject to a number of laws and regulations.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> For an overview of the many publications on this theme, search the *Women's Resources International* database using the keyword *brothels*. Our search results provided 280 entries.

<sup>7</sup> For an analysis of this issue, see Bruckert and Dufresne (2002).

## 1. Criminology

At the end of the 1960s and during the 1970s, a number of researchers employed the sociological symbolic interactionist approach to frame ethnographic research on crime as labour. Several researchers examined women who worked as strippers. Early studies focussed on erotic dancers as lesbians (McCaghy and Skipper, 1964), issues of self-definition (Boles and Garbin, 1974), deviant lifestyles (Salutin, 1971) and on unforeseen career circumstances (Skipper and McCaghy, 1970). At the end of the 1980s, a new flurry of research appeared using this perspective and exploring the management of deviant identities (Thomson and Harred, 1992), emotional stability (Peretti and O'Connor, 1989), deviant culture/sub-culture (Forsyth and Deshotels, 1997, 1998), "false intimacy" (Enck and Preston, 1988; Sijuwade, 1996), the socialization process (Lewis, 1998) and the risk of contracting AIDS (Lewis and Maticka-Tyndale, 1998).

Unfortunately, although this literature embraces the language of work, the analysis nonetheless continues to rely on assumptions of deviance. For example, the perspective of workers are invalidated when their explanations are defined simply as rationalizations (Thompson and Harred, 1992; Lewis, 1998). The researchers also employ linguistic codes that are 'othering' referring for example to sub-cultures rather than to work cultures (Forsyth and Deshotels, 1996, 1997; Lewis, 1998). In practice, the boundary between legitimate and illegitimate workers is not eliminated. Thus, we find analyses of careers in deviance rather than in deviant careers.

## 2. Radical feminists

Feminists, for the most part, have undertaken limited analysis specifically of stripping. Instead this form of work has been integrated into more global discussions on 'prostitution'<sup>8</sup> or pornography. In the case of the former this conflation of the occupations does not allow for a consideration of strippers'

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<sup>8</sup> We note that some of these discussions adopt a critical position with respect to moralizing analyses of sex work and pornography (Bell, 1987; Delacoste and Alexander, 1987; Silver, 1993).

points of view or of the fact that they distinguish themselves from sex workers (Cario, 1968; Cooke, 1987; McDonald *et al*, 2000). It also obscures the need to explore the labour processes associated with each category of sex work.

Alternately, anti-pornography feminists specifically identify stripping as the "soft end" of pornography (Klein, 1982). This perspective emerged within the women's liberation movement of the 70s, which emphasized women's oppression, the appropriation of their sexuality by men, and the violence exercised against women. This approach relies on a universal female understanding and anecdotal material to argue that pornography reflects violence, causes violence, and finally is violence against women (Dworkin, 1979; Lederer, 1980; MacKinnon, 1987; Cole, 1989). This perspective negates the subjectivity for sex workers (Lacombe, 1994 : 62); they cannot develop their own discourse about the conditions of their lives, nor can they be recognized as being able to make appropriate choices for themselves. Worse still, women who claim to choose sex work are dismissed as agents of patriarchy. In summary, the understanding of workers themselves is ignored, or, worse, appropriated and used as proof of their subjugation and lack of political consciousness (Cole, 1989; Price, 1989).

### 3. Erotic dancers

In the late 1980s and during the 1990s, several autobiographies or semi-autobiographical narratives of former dancers were published in Canada and the United States. In these publications, some workers criticize the radical feminist discourse, taking particular issue with their silencing. "you're not giving legitimacy to our story...you sit on your little pedestal...you don't like my definition of who's doing it, so you don't want to hear my story" (Bell, 1987: 138). They reject any responsibility for oppressing women: "women in the sex industry are not responsible for the oppression of women, nor are they accomplices to it" (Sundahl, 1987: 176). Others present narratives that challenge the assumptions of deviance and immorality that are the hallmarks of media, social and political discourse on sex workers (Snowden, 1994; Atkinson, 1995; Tracey, 1997). Some of the workers define

themselves as sex radicals and glorify the emancipatory nature of the sex industry (Sundhal, 1987; Dragu and Harrison, 1988). Others emphasize the exceptional nature of their story (Ample, 1988; Mattson, 1995). These narratives are important in that they allow the reader to enter the world of the sex industry and shed valuable light on the life experiences of erotic dancers. Moreover while not analytic they do provide an important point of entry into developing new ways of understanding the industry.

Fortunately, toward the end of the last decade, some feminist research began to address these limitations. Ross (2000) presents a history of the regulation of stripping; Wood (2000) and Bruckert (2002) suggest a consideration of emotional work and power relations; Romai and Cross (1998) analyze the discourses of resistance and Lewis (2000), Bruckert and Dufresne (2002) examine the implication of regulation on this sector of the sex industry. Although very diverse, this literature shares a commitment to emphasizing that strippers are social actors, is attentive to what they say, suspends moral judgement and applies feminist and sociological tools to make sense of the marginal space and experiences of erotic dancers.

In conclusion, we would like to direct the reader's attention to an unavoidable observation: research that considers sex work within the theoretical framework of the sociology of labour, and that gives voice to the workers involved, is scarce and that there is a clear need to develop knowledge based on this framework.

### III. Theoretical Framework

Consistent with some of the papers we reviewed in the previous section, we will examine the sex industry and erotic dancing as forms of marginalized labour. Using the conceptual framework of the sociology of labour informed by feminist analysis not only immediately positions our discussion outside of questions of deviance but opens up a series of fruitful avenues of inquiry and positions us to explore commonality without obscuring specificity.

At the level of the economy this theoretical approach draws our attention to the implications of economic decline and the recognition that, although marginal, the strip and sex trades nonetheless operate in relation to broader market processes and practices including the restructuring of the labor market, the steady expansion of non-standard labor practices and the exponential growth of the consumer service sector (Phillips, 1997; Luxton and Corman, 2001). Appreciating that the skin and sex trades are largely *women's work* highlights the need to situate the labor within the broader context of *women's eroding economic position*, continued ghettoization in sales, service and clerical occupations (Statistics Canada, 2000), increased domestic responsibilities (exacerbated by the dismantling of the social welfare net) (Maroney and Luxton, 1997). When we shift from labor structure to labor process specificity emerges and we can begin to consider the nature and organization of the labor and labor site and the characteristics specific to each labor site. We are also able to identify skills and competencies, examine social and work relations, and reflect on how workers experience the physical, emotional and sexual dimensions of the labor.

This theoretical lens also facilitates an analysis that acknowledges the unique configuration of challenges, problems and difficulties confronted by women working in stigmatized and/or illegal sectors of the labor market. In particular by attending to the ways social and legal discourses and practices impact on the organization of the labor and labor process, increase the danger and stress negotiated

by workers, and shape the relations of workers to their social and personal worlds we begin to see the complex interplay between labor, subjectivity and law.

## IV. Methodological Approach

Our approach falls within the (diverse) framework of feminist research: from the outset, we recognize the significance of social gender relations in all areas of life, including the production of knowledge. We also believe it is important to give voice to sex workers, allowing them to occupy a place in the discursive space. It seems equally necessary to prevent the research from having negative effects on the participants. We therefore adopted a research approach based on empathy with our respondents. This approach is no less scientific, since it recognizes the position of the researchers on the one hand, and on the other hand, is based on the maintenance of a critical and dialectic distance between the researchers and the women participating in the research. In addition, we endeavour to produce knowledge that can be useful to sex workers and that can open the way for social change (Harding, 1987, 1991; Barnsley and Ellis, 1992; Parent, 1998). Central to our approach was collaboration with workers at all stages of the research process: not only initially, in establishing the partnership with Stella (the Montréal organization by and for sex workers), but also through sustained exchange with the organization during data collection and analysis. The three of us who conducted the research and signed the report participated jointly in the horizontal and vertical analysis of the interviews. We challenged each other's readings and interpretations, taking care to reproduce the women's voices as faithfully as possible.

Our objective was to interview 14 sex workers in erotic establishments or massage parlours, the first half in the Greater Montréal area and the second half in Greater Toronto. We did not wish to compare situations in these two regions but to ensure a sufficiently large sample to permit qualitative analysis of our material. In addition we endeavoured to supplement this data with interviews with four representatives from sex workers' advocacy organizations: two representatives from Stella in Montréal

and two representatives from Maggie's in Toronto. We therefore developed two interview protocols and two consent forms, which ensured, among other things, participant anonymity. These documents can be found in Appendices I and II of this report.

Since access to this field is difficult and resistance is often encountered from workers who want to protect their anonymity in order to avoid problems with the police or their employer, we used the "snowball" sampling method (Pires, 1997). We first established contact with sex workers' service organizations: Stella (Montréal), Projet Vénus (Laval) and Maggie's (Toronto). We posted a recruitment letter (Appendix III) at Montréal community organizations such as *Stella*, *Passage*, *l'Anonyme*, *Cactus*, *La cohorte des jeunes*. We posted this same recruitment letter on Web sites (The Big Doggie-Montréal (TBD), The Red Zone, Demimonde). We also visited various massage parlours and distributed the recruitment letter.

The recruitment letter (Appendix III) posted in massage parlours, community organizations and on the Web did not provide any results. A sex worker who worked in one of these massage parlours and who was referred to us later by another informant advised us that she did not receive the letter. It is likely that the information did not get past the reception desk. In short, the only recruitment method that bore fruit was referrals from the sex workers' organizations: Stella (Montréal), Maggie's (Toronto) and Project Vénus (Laval). We therefore recruited by word of mouth, asking each person interviewed to refer us to other workers and in this way we built a "snowball" sample. But given these difficulties, our data collection took several months and we experienced significant delays in meeting our deadlines. Our experience suggests that erotic establishments are very closed environments; even sex workers' organizations have difficulty gaining access to them.

We were finally able to complete 14 interviews with sex workers, eight in the Greater Montréal Area and six in the Greater Toronto Area. We also conducted four interviews with representatives of sex worker organizations. Regrettably the cassette for one of the interviews proved to be completely

inaudible. We therefore were able to analyze three of these interviews, which were in effect used to complete information drawn from the other interviews. The sex workers we interviewed generally had more than one year of experience in the field. One worker was however in her first month of work and this factor was taken into account during analysis. The others had between four months' and eight years' experience.

The respondents were between 21 and 40 years of age; most were in their twenties. Their educational background varied from secondary school to university. All had varied experience in the labour market. Before choosing the sex industry, they held different jobs: restaurant server, sales person, business manager, public service employee, masseuse, landscaper. Half of them had work experience in other sex work, mainly as escorts or erotic dancers.

The research information (recruitment letter and consent form) for the sex workers, as well as for the workers at the service organizations, was available in both French and English. The interviews were conducted in the interviewee's language, and to protect respondent anonymity, we present their statements using pseudonyms.

## V. Laws and Regulations

In this section relevant federal, provincial and municipal statutes are examined to provide and overview of the regulatory context of women working as either exotic dancers in bars or as in-call sex trade workers in erotic establishments in the Greater Montreal and Toronto areas.

### A. Erotic dancers

Since the 1950s when burlesque came to Canada, dancers have sporadically been charged with appearing in an Immoral theater performance@contrary to section 167 of the *Canadian Criminal*

*Code* (hereinafter *code*), *indecent acts* (code 173) and with public nudity *without lawful excuse* (code 174).

The emergence of ten-dollar private *champagne* (or VIP) rooms in the early 1990s engendered considerable public outcry. It also rendered dancers vulnerable to charges under the bawdy house provisions of the *Criminal Code* (code 210). In March 1997, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in *R. v. Mara* that lap-dancing represented the undue exploitation of sex, and relegated it to the ranks of illegal behavior.<sup>9</sup> In December 1999 the Supreme Court added further complexity to the issue when it upheld a Quebec Court of Appeal ruling in *R. v. Pelletier* that touching between patrons and dancers in private cubicles does not contravene community standards of tolerance (*R. v. Pelletier*, SCC, 1999).

In the 1980s, going beyond the controls exercised under the *Criminal Code*, some municipalities in Ontario and Quebec applied city planning principles to enact zoning restrictions. For example many communities have banned clubs from residential areas, restrict clubs to commercial (and sometimes industrial) zones, sometimes stipulate no strip-club parameters around churches and schools as well as carefully dictating the nature and extent of outside signs. In addition, since 1990, Ontario communities are authorized under section 151.1 (a) of the *Ontario Municipal Act* to limit (but not ban) the number of strip clubs, Toronto has limited the number of adult entertainment parlors to 63 (34-574-200.33). Toronto limited the number of adult entertainment clubs within its borders to 63 (By-law 34-574-200, Section 33).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> In *R. v. Mara*, Chief Justice Sopinka citing the 1992 ruling in *R. v. Butler* that behavior that degrades or objectifies women is socially harmful and, therefore, beyond community standards of tolerance.

<sup>10</sup> Ironically, these zoning regulations, the primary goal of which is to control the industry, also very often serve the interests of the establishments, to the detriment of the dancers. In addition to limiting competition, these regulations can decrease dancers' job opportunities. The subsequent lack of work thus means dancers have to compete within a buyers' market and deal with all the disadvantages inherent in this reality.

However, only Ontario cities are actively involved in the regulation of this industry's practices (Bruckert and Dufresne, 2002). In 1995, Toronto exercised its jurisdiction over workplace health and safety (*Ontario Municipal Act*, 150.2.1). In order to circumvent federal jurisdiction over morality and revise its adult entertainment by-law (32-574-2000) the city relied on the possibility that lap dancing could expose workers to fatal illness<sup>11</sup>. Under the by-law dancers are not allowed, in the course of providing services, to touch, or have physical contact with any other person in any manner (32-574-2000.34). Moreover, the privacy of champagne rooms have (in principle) been eliminated through the stipulation that attendants can provide or perform services only within the plain and unobstructed view of the main stage (32-574-2000.36.1). Other aspects of the law speak to moral condemnation - unlike other entertainers dancers in Toronto are required to purchase licenses at an initial fee of \$186.00 and annual renewal fee of \$85.00. Moreover, not only are dancers' licenses more expensive but, unlike applicants for other comparable licenses (i.e. hairdressers), they are required to furnish health and police reports for their application to be considered (32-574-2000.8).

It would appear that, while dancers in either province are regulated through the federal criminal code, Toronto dancers are subject to an additional form of control. The extent to which these regulations operate in the interests of Toronto workers is unclear. On the one hand it neutralizes judicial intervention for permit holders who comply with the conditions. Some have even affirmed that issuing permits in some way legitimizes the industry (Cooke, 1987). But on the other hand, the parameters associated with obtaining a permit create a number of problems, above and beyond monetary considerations: increased control, marginalization with potentially long-lasting stigmatizing effects, and the prevention of some women (those with criminal records) from joining the profession. Furthermore, while in principle these municipal by-laws give dancers tools with which to challenge a requirement to lap-dance, it seems that few of them have sufficient power to use them. In practice, this creates a protective legal space that is too precarious and too limited to respond effectively to the characteristics, needs and demands of this profession.

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<sup>11</sup> *Ontario Adult Entertainment Bar Association v. Toronto* [1995] O.J. No. 3219.

## B. Sex workers

Women working in the sex trades generally are vulnerable to charges of communicating for the purposes of prostitution (*code* 213), procuring/living off the avails of prostitution (*code* 212) or under the common bawdy house provisions (*code* 210). Women receiving in massage parlors, brothels or dungeons are most frequently criminalized under the latter offence which stipulates that being an inmate (a resident or regular occupant) of a common bawdy house as an offence punishable by summary conviction. The *Canadian Criminal Code* defines a common bawdy house as - Aa place that is a) kept or occupied or b) resorted to by one or more persons, for the purposes of prostitution or the practice of acts of indecency@ (*code* 197). Canadian jurisprudence specifies that the definition of 'prostitution' does not require actual sexual intercourse, nor need there be physical contact. The definition of prostitution merely requires proof that the woman offered her body for lewdness or for the purposes of the commission of an unlawful act in return for payment. The act of offering one's self as a participant in acts of indecency, for the sexual gratification, of the other is sufficient to find prostitution (*R. v. Tremblay* (1991), 68 C.C.C. (3d) 439; *Martin's Criminal Code*, commentary on section 197).

This very broad definition has led to recent convictions under section 210 of the *Criminal Code* of, strip clubs where dancers gyrated on the laps of fully clothed patrons (*R. v. Caringi*, O.J., 2002); massage parlors that offer full body massages (including manual masturbation) but no oral, vaginal or anal sexual intercourse (*R. v. Brandes*, O.J., 1997); and sado-masochism dungeons where neither intercourse nor masturbation was offered. In a finding supported by the Supreme Court of Canada when it dismissed the leave for appeal (*R. V. Bedford*, S.C.C., 2000), Justice Osborn of the Ontario Court of Appeal ruled that the phrase lewd is broad enough to encompass acts that do not include genital touching but are intended to be sexually stimulating@ (*R. v. Bedford*, OCA, 2000).

Workers in Toronto massage parlours are also subject to municipal control under by-law number 1-274-200, which regulates the services offered by body-rub parlours. This municipal by-law defines a body-rub as the “kneading, manipulating, rubbing, massaging, touching, or stimulating by any means, of a person's body or part thereof, but does not include medical or therapeutic treatment given by a person otherwise duly qualified, licensed or registered so to do under to the laws of the Province of Ontario”. Notably this by-law does not necessarily constitute a duplication of repression: or it may represent an alternative to the control of the *Criminal Code*.

According the by-law, those whose duty it is to carry out, give or solicit body contact in body-rub parlours must acquire a permit, at a cost of \$186 (in addition to annual renewal fees of \$85). Applicants are required to fulfill a series of conditions: they must provide a health certificate stating that they are not carriers of infectious disease (by-law 31-274-2000, section 7.1); agree to a more comprehensive medical examination if the authorities have reason to believe that the applicant may suffer from an illness, injury or any other physical or mental disability rendering them unfit to carry out the required duties (section 7.3); and they must also submit to a police check (section 8). The by-law is careful to detail all the required health measures (section 19) and prohibits the possession of illegal drugs (section 30). Although the by-law controls behaviour in body-rub parlours and prohibits all advertising other than a small sign on the door (sections 23.8-10), it does not explicitly refer to acts that may be sexually inappropriate, unlike some provisions of the provincial massage therapy act (*Massage Therapy Act*, S.O. 1991, C-27, Reg. 474/99).

The legal implications of the regulation of these establishments, which could well be defined as bawdy-houses under Canadian jurisprudence, are unclear. Although it is obvious that the by-law creates a certain safe and controlled space for the workers, several of its provisions are problematic. The health-control measures are very cumbersome, and the requirement to obtain a permit means that an administrative file must be opened and is likely to be ongoing. Moreover, a great many of the provisions may penalize the workers. One of them stipulates that the permit, which includes the birth

name and address of the permit holder, must be displayed in a clearly visible location in the body rub parlour (section 12). In addition, the managers/owners of these parlours must initially pay the city \$6,577.00 to obtain an operating permit and \$6,381.00 for renewal. These fees are substantially higher than those required to operate, for example a holistic health care centre, (\$143.00 to obtain a permit and \$45.00 to renew), and appear to be discriminatory.<sup>12</sup> Obviously, for many people and more particularly for marginalized women, these fees are prohibitive.<sup>13</sup> The fee schedule therefore means that most sex workers cannot be owners. Finally, as it is applied, this municipal by-law increases the sanctions that can have a direct effect on sex workers. In Toronto, when police lay charges under section 210 of the *Criminal Code* dealing with bawdy-houses, they are accompanied by municipal officers who, at the same time, lay charges under the municipal by-law (e-mail exchange with a representative of the City of Toronto police). Between September 2001 and September 2002, 482 charges were laid and revenues of \$16,305.00 were received under the municipal by-law (City of Toronto, *Prosecution Statistics - Body Rubs*, 2001–2002).

It is evident that there are a number of grey areas in the laws governing sex work. It can also be noted that there is considerable provincial disparity. That being said, *all* women working in the skin and sex trades are not only vulnerable to criminalization but are, by virtue of the organization of the labor (own-account) and/or the illegality of their labor site (bawdy house), denied the protection afforded by federal or provincial laws: They cannot take advantage of, among others, the provisions of the *Employment Insurance Act*. Nor are they protected by the *The Occupational Health and Safety Act* in Ontario, or the *Industrial Accidents and Occupational Diseases Act (Loi sur les accidents du travail et les maladies professionnelles)* and the *Occupational Health and Safety Act (Loi sur la santé et la*

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<sup>12</sup> Having said that, Montgomery J. of the Ontario Superior Court of Justice stated that "the fee disparity between body-rub parlour [*sic*] and other licensed endeavours was not sufficient to render the by-law void for being discriminatory or non-regulatory". *Re Delesie and Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto et al.* (1987), 43 D.L.R. (4th) 308. The Supreme Court rejected a request for appeal of this judgement (*Re Delesie and Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto et al.*, [1989] S.C.C.A. No. 390).

<sup>13</sup> But the issue is perhaps a false one, in that the regulation limits the number of establishments to 25 and this has already been reached (correspondence with a representative from municipal Licensing and Standards, City of Toronto). So, even at a lower cost, permits would still not be available.

*sécurité du travail*), in Quebec. Moreover, unlike other professions (ie realtors, massage therapists), they are not afforded validation through provincially-authorized professional associations. The implications of this particular marginal and vulnerable position will be explored in the coming section of the report.

## VI. Sex Work in Erotic Establishments

### A. Workplaces

The sample of workplaces represented in our sample of workers was more diverse than we had anticipated: we found women who work in massage parlours; women who provide sexual services in houses or establishments designated as in-call escorts (as opposed to out-call escorts, who travel from one location to another in order to provide their services); women who work in dungeons and provide domination or submission services; and even women who work in establishments providing private erotic shows.

### B. The reasons for their choice

For half of the workers, their current labour situation was their first experience in this profession. For the remainder it was a change to a new direction within the industry.

Why decide to enter the sex industry? Contrary to common beliefs about work in the sex industry, it is neither duress nor despair that led these women to make this choice, but rather reasons very much like those motivating the choice to enter other professions. The main reasons provided relate to the need to meet people, to be able to provide basic necessities, to experience an enjoyable social life and/or explore sexuality. Annabelle, for example, who had been living on social assistance and had to stay home with her little girl, justifies her choice with the need to escape her isolation and to participate, as do her other friends, in the consumer society. Karen needed to save money in order

to be able to afford an apartment and regain custody of her child. Maud explained that she had always been attracted by eroticism and sex work and made the decision to enter the trade when she found herself in a hostile labour situation.

Why choose this type of sex work? For many of those working in dungeons, this type of work is a natural extension of their lifestyle. Jacqueline said:

I was out of work, um, for about a month, and I saw an ad (...) that, uh, the Dungeon was looking for girls to play dominate, dominate and submissive, and that there was no sex involved, so... and I was kind of into S&M personal...in my personal life, so I thought it wouldn't be so bad, so I went in, checked it out and it seemed okay, and started doing it (Jacqueline, p. 2).

Other workers explained their choice with specific reference to the benefits associated with working in erotic establishments compared to other types of sex work. Several explained their decision based on their personal taste and interests: they do not have any affinity for public performance, so they prefer work in massage parlours or in-call agencies rather than as dancers in a bar. Lea feels this type of work suits her personality well:

[Translation:] Well, with respect to my personality, I am someone who is not too public. And working in a small space and you are one-on-one with just the person, and all that, I think, it suits my personality (Lea, p. 33).

For some of them their decision to work in this type of sex work was engendered by their desire to not to have 'sex' with clients which, for the most part, meant that they did not want to offer full sexual services. These women express their choice in comparison to the work of an *out-call* escort.

Legal issues also have an impact on their choices. Two of the participants chose to work in erotic establishments in which the services were restricted by legal parameters, another indicated that she initially thought that all aspects of her work were legal although she has since received conflicting information. Several mentioned that work in a massage parlour or in-call agencies ensure their anonymity more than other forms of sex work (erotic dancers or escorts). Angelica raised this issue:

I think massage seemed easier to me because I didn't want to work as a dancer because of too much, uh, exposure, like I think it's easier to work one-on-one with a client (...) (Angelica, p.1).

They also noted that this type of work afforded greater protection from physical assault than did the out-call escort trade. Notably, although the women explained their choices in relation to other forms of sex work, none mentioned street sex work as a potential option.

In short we see how laws that regulate sex work and the social stigma that affects the workers motivate some of them to elect labour locations that minimize their visibility and mitigate their risks of violence.

### C. Organization of labour

The interviewees reveal that there is no clear boundary between the sexual services available in the various types of erotic establishments, be they massage parlours, *in-call* agencies, dungeons or erotic performance establishments. For the purposes of clarity, we used the following categories: massage parlours mean establishments where the services primarily include massage with masturbation; notably these locations, rarely offer sexual services with penetration. *In-call* escort agencies offer various sexual services, including intercourse and, should a client request it, an erotic massage. Dungeons offer domination and submission services. As a rule, with domination services, complete sexual services, masturbation and fellatio are excluded. With submission services, workers may offer sexual services. In erotic performance establishments, workers provide nude erotic performances and the client may also select the option of touching certain parts of the dancer's body, her thighs, buttocks or breasts, within the parameters of the law.

In massage parlours and erotic services establishments, services are generally offered by the half-hour and hour; in dungeons, the minimum duration is an hour, with some sessions lasting up to six

hours. Most appointments are during business hours. Massage parlour workers who participated in our sample are paid between \$20.00 and \$100.00 per hour. Some workers also charge for additional services. In the erotic service establishments we identified, fees vary between \$40.00 and \$80.00, to which additional charges are invariably added. In the dungeons listed, rates vary between \$25.00 and \$100.00. Daily income fluctuates enormously from one worker to another; it also differs greatly day-to-day or week-to-week for the same worker. On average, the women earn a net income of between \$200.00 and \$1,200.00 per week.

It should be noted that the organizations in which our sample of workers laboured, are very small (two to five workers) or of average size (five workers and more). Moreover, although services offered vary from one establishment to another, they may also fluctuate somewhat from one worker to another within the same establishment. Some will offer some extra options in addition to the basic services, while others will not.

Consistently we found that in addition to providing the sexual services for which they are hired, the employer requires the women to perform a number of unpaid duties. In almost all of the establishments the women are expected to also, alternating with other workers present during their shift, to fulfill the function of receptionists. As part of these duties, the women must present services available in code, match the client with a worker according to the client's expectations and the worker's skills, deal with difficult clients, screen out undesirables (aggressive or drunk clients, representatives from police forces), and identify bogus customers. In a number of cases they must also perform maintenance duties, including washing sheets and towels and disinfecting equipment. In dungeons, experienced workers assist in training newcomers.

Shifts are generally very long (10 to 12 hours) and in a number of locations, workers are expected, although they are not being compensated for their time, to remain on-site between clients. Some of them pass the time in activities such as watching television, reading, studying, cooking. They

are however able to choose to work three or four days per week and then have days off for other activities. Annabelle, for example, has custody of her son and can devote four consecutive days to him. During the other three days, since her shifts are very long, he sleeps at the babysitter's. This organization of work is not very different from other jobs such as hairdressing, but since some aspects of their work are illegal, the women have little recourse for negotiating their working conditions, and can lay a complaint neither with a potential union, nor with the labour board.

In other locations, the organization of work is different and imposes other types of expectations. Women work on-call seven days a week for 12-hour shifts. When a call from a client is received, the employer gives him an appointment with the worker of his choice or another worker who is available during that time. He then contacts her, and she must be able to come to the worksite within an hour. If she goes out, she must take her cell phone and her work paraphernalia with her. If she has a doctor's appointment, for example, she must suspend her on-call status for that time. If she does not respond to a call without notifying her employer that she is unavailable, she may be fined up to \$100.00. For some workers, this availability requirement makes it difficult to plan other activities. Anaïs identified this as a source of stress:

...the lack of structure, in a way, where...some days you don't know what's happening, if you're gonna have a client or not, so planning the rest of your life can be difficult (Anaïs, p.21).

Charlotte, on the other hand, simply fits it into her life without too much difficulty. By the same token, almost all the workers emphasize that this type of work allows them to earn enough money and still leaves sufficient time to participate in other types of activities.

It is evident here that while shift work provides more opportunities for support from colleagues, on-call work allows workers to avoid the tensions of having to work closely with colleagues they do not like.

## D. Labour relations

In general, workers share the fees with the owner (50% each; or 40% for the workers, 60% for the boss) and keep additional fees for themselves. In principle, the women can set their own fees for additional services but, for the most part, must adjust their rates and services to those of the other women in the same establishment or even neighbouring ones. A number of the women suggested that the income distribution worked in the favour of the owner, but few of them think of negotiating changes, and simply opt to move to a different employer in order to obtain a better income. Overall, it can be said that their relationship with the boss ranged from good to very good. Several of the women made particular reference to the professional nature of the association. In these cases, the employee-employer relationships resemble those found in many small, service-based businesses.

The relationships with work colleagues are also extremely significant. First of all, a newcomer learns the house rules and the skills of the trade with her co-workers. Lea says:

[Translation:] And sometimes, sometimes, there are not many clients, so you spend most of the time with another girl who is working and you develop a kind of bond. That's pretty much how I learned, talking with the girl, and with clients (Lea, p. 5).

In dungeons, as previously discussed, new employees receive their training from the more senior workers.

In their daily work, the woman can also rely on support from their colleagues. Maud's words attest to this:

...It was a regular habit of ours after one person left the room with a client to ask how it went, to talk about anything that might have been unpleasant or disturbing....this sort of ongoing house therapy (Maud, p. 4).

In general, these relationships are limited to the professional sphere; few of the women exchange personal phone numbers. However some workers were already friends prior to becoming co-workers, while others develop friendships within the work environment.

At the same time, workers ability to support each other in the workplace depends in part on the organization of the labour. When the massage parlour does not officially offer sexual services, talking about that aspect of the work must be done very discreetly and is therefore likely to be quite limited. When women work on-call, they generally only come to the worksite for their appointments, arrange their shifts by telephone and, for the most part, leave the workplace shortly after completing their duties. This restricts their opportunities to interact with colleagues.

Most of the workers made reference to the competition between women: this is not surprising since, in order to generate earnings, workers must be chosen by the client. In this context, colleagues are also competitors. To ensure that work is equitably distributed, a rotation system may be used, or the client may be required to select a worker based on a physical description of the women given over the phone. This latter method however confers a great deal of power to the receptionist or the worker who answers the telephone, and sometimes creates tension. The workers must also deal with frequent, relatively lengthy 'down times'. While, in this respect their work conditions are similar to those of, for example, firefighters, it is nonetheless notable that this type of organization keeps the women in a context of forced intimacy and encourages gossip, creating another potential source of tension.

Most workers are fond of their clients, and find them generally pleasant and respectful. Jade, however, in contrast to the other workers asserts, several times, that she hates the clients. She prefers to provide the services expeditiously and to minimize her social interaction. Most workers try to build a regular clientele. Annabelle has succeeded in establishing good relationships with her clients:

[Translation:] I like to work, but you have to, have to, but I know them, anyway, my regular clients, and I always have fun with them, it always goes very well with them (Annabelle, p. 4).

In the professional relationship between workers and clients, some workers integrate elements of fantasy according to their interpretation of clients' expectations.

The illegal nature of the work affects the relationships of workers and employers with clients. First of all, the business cannot openly and publicly advertise its services. The employer is thus faced with a difficult choice. Either he favours fairly provocative advertising and runs the risk of being reported, or he uses caution and risks losing clients. The information offered on the telephone must be given in coded language. Thus, the new client really does not know what services he will be receiving before he comes to the location and has paid his money. Even on location, the sex worker does not, at the onset, necessarily clarify which services are offered and which are excluded until they are assured of the client's identity. Consequently there is a risk that the client will be frustrated, which in turn may lead him to lay a complaint.

In addition, all the workers report having to deal with some clients who attempt to push their personal boundaries. Some ask for services that are not offered such as sexual services without a condom. Others are manipulative: sulking, flattering the young women, or threatening to use the services of another worker at the establishment or at another parlour. The client can also rely on his economic power to influence the worker's resolve, as well as the ever-present spectre of the potential complaint to police. The workers therefore face the difficult task of maintaining their boundaries while trying to avoid alienating the client. In domination services, the workers must also manage the demands of clients who erroneously believe that they will be receiving severe domination services. In the case of submission, activities that surpass eroticism and slip towards cruelty must also be avoided.

## E. The everyday spectre of the law

Workers do not have a great deal of information available to them with respect to the laws on 'prostitution' (Sections 210 and 213 of the *Criminal Code*) and our inquiries revealed their knowledge to be, for the most part, incomplete. This is not surprising considering the complexities of the issues such as this one. Twelve of the fourteen women in our sample work in establishments that provide services which include elements that violate criminal laws. In general, while they are cognizant that some of the activities related to their work are illegal and are, for example, very discreet on the telephone, they are largely unaware of the specific laws relating to work in "bawdy-houses". They also have a number of misconceptions regarding the value of employing certain precautions in their exchanges with clients. Thus, some of them think that they are protecting themselves legally by, for example, asking the client to undress first; not touching the money, not offering full sexual services. Furthermore, workers believe that respecting certain laws, such as prohibiting the presence of minors and the use of drugs, gives them immunity. Although adopting those measures may decrease the likelihood of police attention or even encourage them to be less zealous, we know this strategy to be completely unreliable.

The illegal nature of aspects of their work is also source of stress and anxiety for the workers and affects their ability to negotiate with clients. In addition, when the owner of the establishment feigns ignorance that sexual services are being provided, the workers are denied the opportunity to openly discuss their work and the difficulties they encounter. They are therefore deprived of a method of relieving pressure, and of receiving protection. Lea talks about this:

[Translation:] You know, he didn't really give a damn, what might go on in the rooms. When someone was, not violent, really, but a little bit too aggressive, you know, it was difficult to talk about it because you're not supposed to be doing anything with him. But I have talked about it, [to say] okay. He, um, I can't take it anymore, or he gave me trouble, or um (Lea, p.16).

Furthermore, when this is the prevailing strategy, the house does not provide condoms. Accordingly the workers must procure them for themselves, store them and dispose of them discretely.

The illegal aspects of sex work in erotic establishments also restricts the option of going to the police for protection from a client who is aggressive, harassing or threatening, or from individuals who disrupt the work by making endless obscene phone calls.

Finally, arrest causes significant trauma. Annabelle recalled the treatment to which she was subjected had her fear during arrest:

[Translation:] (...) I opened the door, I saw six of them in the doorway, coming in with flashes, cameras, they took my photo and everything, I was wearing only a g-string, I was 21 years old, I was shaking like a leaf, I had the fright of my life. The fright of my life, it's not complicated, they don't let up, and they take your photo, and they take your photo, and they don't let up. You try to get dressed, three or four of them are looking at you. They're all men, anyway, 21 years old, you know, I like getting clients, but I don't feel like having four or five guys looking at my ass all at the same time (...) (Annabelle, p. 18).

For women who have experienced arrest the process can also change their relationship to the work. After having been arrested in a massage parlour, Maud no longer felt safe providing sexual services in that environment and went into escort work.

In establishments providing erotic services that are within the boundaries of the law, the situation is very different. The workers must be vigilant (and their employers remind them of this) to keep their services within authorized legal limits.

## F. Risks and challenges of the profession and protective measures

Work in the sex industry exposes women to risks that can vary substantially in quantity and intensity. On the one hand they can be exposed to sexually transmitted infections (STIs), physical and sexual assault and, in some cases, to robbery. On the other hand, for workers who don't provide either vaginal or anal penetration, the risk of STIs is largely diminished. Moreover, condom use is widespread. When owners do not provide them, the workers are conscientious in obtaining them. Karen even ensures that the condom is sufficiently lubricated not to break. Some women wash their

hands with alcohol between each client, wear gloves or use some type of protective hand spray. The women also examine clients' genitals to ascertain that there are no signs of infection. They wash their equipment carefully and some of them supply their own equipment (vibrators).

It should be recalled that sex workers have chosen to work in erotic service establishments because they perceived them as affording greater safety than other forms of sex work. However, they are all conscious of the physical dangers of assault. Catherine explained:

[Translation:] Physical safety, well, maybe yes. When I have finished working... that's it... I go home, and um... you finish late, hurry to get into the taxi because you never know if there's a client waiting for you downstairs. Because there are clients who get really hooked. Who get hooked and who never really let go. You know, I mean... the client can just wait for you and well, decide that, well, I'm going to screw her tonight because she turned me on (Catherine, p. 15).

But this aspect of their work does not concern them all to the same degree. Many find the security strategies implemented by the employer and their own tactics reassuring. These include the protective measures taken by the parlour, agency or dungeon to prevent intruders: identity checks, by telephone or at the entrance, hidden cameras at the entrance, on-site alarm systems, or even observing the client from a distance prior to admittance. For the most part, the women rely on the presence of a bouncer, colleagues or sympathetic neighbours who can be alerted quickly. One of the workers keeps cayenne pepper with her and if necessary threatens the client with calling the police or a virtual bouncer. Generally, the women recognize they must be alert when they are at work and do not use alcohol or drugs. Some of them refuse to provide submission services or impose limits on the clients (refusing, for example, to be gagged). Others emphasize that they use intuition and that with experience they learn to quickly discern, on the basis of the small indicators from the client, that the situation could become volatile, and organize their service provision accordingly.

As is the case in other service sector jobs, such as restaurant servers, sex workers must perform work that is physically demanding. Although the majority of workers are still in their twenties, they are nonetheless aware of this fact. Natasha points out that she experiences cramps in her hands after having given several massages and often suffers from colds since she is continually in and out of

the whirlpool bath and works with wet hair all day. Crystal notes that busier days, especially when she gives full sexual services, are hard on her body.

The workers also shared some of the challenges that they must face in order to maintain personal equilibrium and well-being. It is difficult for them to work and at the same time maintain a positive image of themselves and their self-worth. The sources of attack are many. First of all, this type of work relies in part on physical appearance and youth: women are therefore subject to rejection on this basis alone. In Catherine's workplace, the clients make the choice of worker on site, and in front of all the workers:

[Translation:] Physical appearance is the priority because you don't speak to your client until he chooses you. You have to be at the door first thing, so it really doesn't have anything to do with [speaking with them]. Certainly afterwards you can get regular clients if you're nice to them, if they like you and all that. But first it's really, you have to pay attention to your appearance (...) (Catherine, p. 12).

This is the one source of potential attack on their ego. They can also face very condescending and even contemptuous treatment from some clients. Angelica commented:

The massage clients, yeah, yeah, as if I'm an object or I'm not a person, so, not that they're disrespectful, but they can be condescending (Angelica, p. 9).

As previously noted, workers must repeatedly remind clients about the limits of the sexual services they provide. In some cases, clients manage to manipulate them so effectively that they succeed in causing a significant breach in the boundaries established by the workers – and then treat the worker contemptuously. It can take some time for workers to heal from such an insidious attack on their professionalism and on their self-esteem.

The fact that some aspects of their work are illegal also constitutes a constant source of stress, to which is added stigma and social condemnation. Annabelle explains this difficulty well:

[Translation:] But it's difficult to go against society, it's not easy, going against people's morality, we are a minority. It's not easy to fight against the whole population and against ideas that are so entrenched in people's heads... (Annabelle, p. 26).

Some workers identified the consequences associated with the various sources of pressure. Crystal who has been in the profession for five years notes that she has become cynical and has more and more difficulty feeling emotions. She even experiences difficulty trusting her partner. She, like Jade (who, it should be noted is in the profession despite the fact that she does not like it), commented on the danger of depression and burn-out.

Sex work can also have an effect on workers' sexual intimacy, but not necessarily in a negative manner. Several of the workers identify positive elements, whereas others express fears. In fact, a number of sex workers confirm that their experience in the profession makes them more comfortable with their sexuality; providing them with the opportunity to explore and develop confidence in their sexuality. Tamara, who was sexually very shy, now feels more at ease:

Yeah I guess I'm trying to, for me, to use it as a bit of therapy for myself, because I've always been so shy, um, and when it comes to sex, really, um, afraid, and especially with, even with my boyfriend, like touching, you know, it's like I have so much hesitation and thought before I can do, actually do anything. And so, I'm trying, like I opened up to be more comfortable with sex and with, um, bodies, so it has been, it is helping me with that, so...yeah (Tamara, p. 8).

Other workers identify different limitations. Annabelle and Angelica note that after a long day of work, they don't desire sexual relations. Angelica, who has only been working five months, expresses fears about her own sexuality: she doubts she will be able to work if she is having an intimate sexual relationship, and she is concerned that her professional life might interfere with her personal life. She suggests that she must be attuned to her feelings and ensure that she is emotionally balanced. Jacqueline, who provides submission and domination services, also has some concerns. She prefers not to provide services that are too similar to her personal sexual activities:

and I don't know, and it's sort of in my personal life I'm more, I'm more of a submissive at home anyway, not that I really particularly enjoy doing that for work because it's a

little too close to sex for me. It's more, it's closer to what I do at home, kind of thing bondage and stuff like that (Jacqueline, p. 6).

To deal with this, workers in the sex industry, as in many other labour sectors, must remain cognisant daily that this is just a job and that it does not involve their entire being. Catherine identifies this requirement very well:

[Translation:] To work in this kind of field, yes. Listen, you really have to be mentally strong, not everyone can... listen, you see clients, you have to dissociate from your private life, you have to... see it as a job, you have to be really strong (...) (Catherine, p. 12).

This dissociation between sex work and personal intimacy is a crucial factor in the fight for recognition of sex work as a profession. But this is also a struggle, as we have mentioned elsewhere, which is a fundamental challenge to the association between sexual intimacy and a person's identity (Parent, 2001). Catherine fully understands what this challenge entails. Accordingly workers employ a number of strategies both at the labour site and outside of it, which enable them to neutralize these sources of tension and difficulty. A number of women emphasize that it is important to communicate and share their experiences with other workers at the labour site in order to maintain their equilibrium and well-being.

Outside of work, the workers use measures to manage work-related stress and the social stereotypes of which they are the target. Notably, that pervasive prejudice reduces their options for support and also generates its own day-to-day stresses. Their way of dealing with these challenges depends upon their personal situation, their needs, and the consequences associated with disclosing the nature of their work.

Some women elect to separate their work from their personal lives and for the most part live a double life. This is how Annabelle, who is a mother, chooses to protect her child and avoid any risk of losing custody. She also considers that this division allows her to "stay alive, to stay on the right path" (Annabelle, p. 31). Crystal has chosen the same type of strategy:

[Translation:] Yes, yes, yes, it's like work ends and then there's my life, I don't mix them. Not at all, I don't mix them, I don't hang out with the girls, I try not to make friends, I really go there to work and when it's over, it's over, I go home and forget all about it (Crystal, p. 8).

But although this tactic provides protection from social stigma, it also tends to minimize the support available outside the workplace. In addition, this strategy does not work equally well for everyone. Jade tried to use the same strategy as Annabelle and Crystal but experienced very different results. When she is at work, she can set aside her personal life, but when she comes home, her work continues to resonated in her personal life:

[Translation:] A lot of them, when they get to work, it's work, and when they go home, it's not work, it's home. I am not able to do that, I bring everything with me (Jade, p. 28).

At the other end of the spectrum of adjustments to the profession, there are workers who prefer to integrate their professional and personal lives. Angelica, for example, identifies her need to include her identity as a sex worker as part of her daily life by establishing social relations with other sex workers and people who are able to accept her not only as a person but also as a sex worker. She also notes, as does Lea, that she is more personally balanced when she has a companion. This strategy offers support but opens up the possibility of facing social prejudice.

To summarize, most of the workers in our sample try to integrate their personal and professional lives to some degree, but they all choose not to disclose their occupation to some people who would be likely to disapprove and/or reject them. Moreover, despite their efforts, reconciling work and personal life is nonetheless usually quite a delicate exercise. The first source of support for the workers is, without a doubt, their colleagues in the sex industry. However, not all of the women work collectively, nor can they count on a significant number of colleague-friends. Of course they can make friends outside of the trade, however although these friends may not judge the workers, they are generally unable to listen to the workers without expressing fears about their health and safety. In addition, for each problem the workers share, their friends' solution is often the same: leave the sex

industry. With respect to family, the issue seems quite complicated. Most of the workers disclose to some people but not all of them; some receive a degree of support but none receive unequivocal acceptance of their choice.

That being said, the organization of work for most of the women in our sample provides them with resources to succeed in reconciling work and personal life and maintaining their equilibrium. In fact, because they have substantial amounts of time off work they are able to take on other projects and become involved in other activities – they read, paint, write, travel and study. A number of women emphasize the need to take time off while others meditate and invest time in the spiritual dimensions of their lives in order to maintain their well-being and equilibrium.

It is interesting to note that few of the women identify drugs and/or alcohol as a strategy for coping with work. Several of those who mentioned the use of these substances did so in order to emphasize the importance of excluding their use during work. Annabelle is very explicit about this:

[Translation:] In other words, at our place, where we work, you aren't allowed drugs, this is very important.(...) Because you will draw the police there. Because sometime, pushers are spotted more, and that can attract the police, um (Annabelle, p. 17).

One of the workers, Jade, who appears to have employed drugs and alcohol as a mechanism for adjusting to her work in the past, talked about the effect this had on her health: she experienced serious sleep disturbances and, despite her youth, her liver has been affected. Faced with these problems and the concern of her partner, she elected not to use during work and to use only limited amounts during her free time. Nonetheless, sleep is still one of her strategies for dealing with work. Crystal's path has been a similar one, but, after losing a great deal of money, she assumed control and went through a detoxification program. The others stated that they use drugs and alcohol in moderation and did not perceive this to be a problem.

## G. Qualities and skills required

Upon examining the qualities and skills necessary to perform this work, it is important to recollect that this is a service profession and as such, it has requirements similar to those of other jobs in this sector. In the first instance, whether you are a sex worker, a restaurant server, or a hairdresser, you must be sociable, patient, courteous, polite, a good listener and be able to deal with a variety of people. You must also be to project a confident, serene, positive and professional image to clients. To work well as an employee in an *in-call* agency, you must be open-minded about sexuality, and you must, as the sex workers remind us, "like men." Creativity and imagination are also significant assets.

The women also report that some physical qualities and skills are required such as projecting a pleasant, well-maintained body and an aura of sensuality. Physical strength and being in good shape are especially important for workers providing domination services. Women who offer submission services must have a certain tolerance for pain.

The workers emphasize the qualities and skills that must be developed as part of the work. Some of these are technical skills: knowledge of the male body, massage, and sexual stimulation techniques. In domination and submission, workers are required to become familiar with, and know how to use, the equipment safely. This is a complex aspect of the work, since workers must not only be familiar with the apparatus but they are also responsible for respond to clients' requests while at the same time assessing the patron's specific reactions to stimulus. The workers cannot always rely on the client's word; some of them do not know their own limits, especially when they are being initiated into domination or submission practices.

As in many other jobs in the service sector, interpersonal skills are essential. Workers have to be able to rapidly gauge a client, identify his needs, and put him at ease. Anaïs explains that this requires finesse and intelligence, and that these attributes are necessary in order to build a regular client base:

Well, you know, just do, whatever the client wants, you have to be able to provide for them, you have to be able to read them, and give them, fulfil the fantasy, whatever they're looking for and to put on a certain facade, (...) You have to be personable (...).

You have to be intelligent, I think to a certain degree, hum...smart in how you manage your life and manage your profession so the clients come back (Anaïs, p. 19).

The women must also control interactions with the client and, as sex workers dissociate sex from intimacy. This boundary should not be crossed, as much for the workers as for the clients.

Catherine understood this right away:

[Translation:] So finally, I tell them, straight out, listen, it's my job, you come here, OK, fine, we have some fun, some pleasure together, that's my job. I have clients, I have to respect... you know, there are things I have to respect, I cannot get into a relationship with the clients, I can't have relationships with clients outside [the workplace] afterwards. I explain this to them clearly (Catherine, p. 8).

This aspect of the work is especially delicate, given the requirements of the work, the traditional masculine authority or domination over women, and biases against sex workers. The sex worker must control the situation with clients, be vigilant with respect to any danger of assault, set her boundaries and impress her authority as a professional. At the same time she is required to create a sensual environment, establish a pleasant relationship with the client, and in some cases, carry out a sexual fantasy.

We can appreciate that, unlike other service sector jobs, the workers are expected to play roles, and must adapt their performance to the clients' inclination. Crystal takes ideas from pornographic films:

[Translation:] Yes, I play a role, I don't know, I, I watch a lot of porn films, to get ideas, (...), whether you like it or not sometimes you run out of ideas and um, I really play a role, what they did, I end up doing the next day at work (Crystal, p. 9).

Dominatrixes must truly demonstrate acting skills when they are expected to take on specific characters, such as schoolgirls or nurses, for the duration of the session.

Workers also develop business skills as a result of their clerical responsibilities and as they assume administrative duties. In addition they use strategies to develop and maintain a regular client

base. A number of workers emphasize the need to expand upon their knowledge about sexuality in order to provide better service. As we have seen, Crystal takes ideas from videos; Anaïs reads a great deal about domination and submission, watches films and attends fetish nights.

The prerequisite skills develop with experience and several workers note that they have acquired greater competence over the years. Furthermore, these skills also reverberate in their personal life. The workers indicate that they are more confident in their daily lives and that they have developed a greater capacity to assume control over situations.

## H. Changes in the organization of work

The women's experience in the sex industry does not, for the most part, span a sufficiently long period of time for them to be able to assess changes in the industry. However, those who had more than five years' experience shared their perceptions with us. The majority observed an increase in competition and a resultant drop in fees. For Annabelle, the market situation is now very difficult:

[Translation:] Well, I, I think that the market price has really dropped too low. (...) And they want more and more for less. So what I find hardest, I think we do a lot for what we earn. (...). So that is what is demoralizing, working for 40 bucks, I have a hard time with that, I find it disgusting. We're not selling candy (Annabelle, p. 28).

According to Annabelle are working in *out-call* escort work, and more 30- and 40-year-old women are providing sexual services at lower rates. Anaïs is convinced of this as well. Competition is fiercer, she says, and workers must provide more and more specialized services in order to be noticed. The words of the sex workers are echoed in the interviews conducted with representatives from the sex workers' organizations. They report that the sexual services provided are now more visible as a result of advertising, as well as more accessible and more diverse. Advertisements are found in the newspaper, telephone directories, on television, and on the Web. The services run the gamut from street work to escorts, erotic phone lines, web-based services. Competition between the workers has increased and has negatively affected working conditions and fees. It also increases the pressure to provided services without protection. But Delphine, one of the representatives from a sex workers'

organization, points out a positive implication of the current trends. She reports that more and more women are becoming independent workers, going into business for themselves:

[Translation:] Except there's one thing I find more and more fun: more and more girls are either starting their own agencies or going out on their own, um, now that they understand how it works (...). So we give the girls the tricks of the trade, but they can go out on their own, you know, so more and more girls are going to work on their own, for themselves (Delphine, p. 11).

It would appear that the organization of work in the sex industry, consistent with the trend in the service sector more generally, is experiencing changes as a result of the economic restructuring of the 1980s. For workers this increases the precariousness of their situation. Nonetheless workers still identify a number of positive elements of the labour and most often refer to decriminalization as the change most likely to improve their circumstances. We conclude our analysis by presenting their reflections on the benefits of the trade and the required legal changes.

## I. Benefits of work in erotic service establishments

When asked what benefits are associated with their work, the women all reply, money. They do not however stop there but proceed to identify a series of other positive aspects. They appreciate the flexibility of the work schedule. Catherine speaks eloquently about this:

[Translation:] What I like about my work...um... well I'm a person... I have to feel free in what I'm doing. It seems bizarre...well, okay, for sure I have a schedule, but it's still me who gets to decide. I feel free in my work, free to go to work, in the end. I wouldn't go anymore if I worked 8 to 5... I couldn't do it (Catherine, p. 17).

They note that their work leaves them free time to do other things. They also appreciate the pace of the work, which is not excessively stressful, and the atmosphere in the workplace. Several find contact with clients to be attractive. Lea sees this as an opportunity to meet new people:

[Translation:] It seems to be that in daily life we, like, we often live with, um, a computer screen. It's like, stop and take some time, and like, it, it does some good. To be able to, um, well, welcome someone, and you know, give him space that way, sharing and,

whether it's someone you would never meet in your daily life, so I also like meeting new people (Lea, p. 24).

In addition workers get pleasure from role-play and from assisting clients while some specified that they appreciate working in a marginal labour sector (Charlotte, Jacqueline, Anaïs).

## J. Changes in the law

A number of the women expressed their inability to comprehend how sexual behaviour between consenting adults can be condemned and criminalized. Charlotte explains this position:

Just because why should it be illegal, it's between consenting adults...nobody's forcing anyone to do anything, it doesn't make a lot of sense. It's backwards (Charlotte, p. 15).

Almost all the women indicate that one of the first solutions is decriminalization. They are confident that this would solve a number of the significant problems that they must deal with directly, as a part of their work. Karen believes that this would give women more rights, provide them with safer working conditions, and would decrease assaults on them. She states:

More rights for women. Like um, if a woman gets raped on the job it's not considered rape. Um...isn't it ...I don't know maybe if it was legalized there'd be better ways to run it... or not legalized, decriminalized. It would feel a lot safer because you'd know that if anything did happen people would listen to you and that there would be a place to go. Um you wouldn't have to worry about going to jail or telling a cop (...). um. Maybe people wouldn't try stuff as much as they do if they knew this was legal (Karen, p. 10).

Lea also thinks that sex workers would receive more respect. In addition, sex workers could unionize and demand better working conditions, which would give them the power to define the boundaries of the services they provide. Jacqueline is convinced of this:

Yeah! Yeah, exactly, I mean, um, if not actual, like, I don't know, union or whatever, like we could sort of, uh, have a little more power. Cuz at this point, I mean really, if I complain too much then he's just gonna stop selling me on the phone (...) (Jacqueline, p. 12).

## VII. Erotic Dance and Sex Work in Erotic Establishments: Factors for Comparison

In this last section, we present a comparison of the work of women in erotic service establishments analyzed in the previous section and the work of strippers in bars in Ontario that was the subject of previous research (Bruckert, 2000)<sup>14</sup>. When we look at the organization of work, the skills and labour practices of women in these sectors (which both belong to the larger category of consumer services) it is not surprising that some common aspects can be identified. At the same time we also identify significant differences that confirm the need to analyze the particularities of each type of work.

### A. Changes in the labour market

Since work in erotic service establishments includes aspects that are illegal, this work remains largely outside of public scrutiny. It is therefore difficult to follow the economic changes that affect this sector of the labour market. We can therefore only tentatively note that, according to several individuals we interviewed for this study, the economic decline has resulted in an increase in competition, a diversification of services, and in Montréal at least, to downward pressure on wages<sup>15</sup>. By contrast, since strip bars are legal commercial enterprises it is possible to trace industry transformations and situate these within the context of more global trends in the labour market and the economy. During the second half of the 1970s, strippers were performance artists who, for remuneration of between \$300.00 and \$600.00 per week, were required to provide five strip-tease

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<sup>14</sup> This research, directed by Chris Bruckert as part of her PhD thesis, involved a year of participant observation in a strip bar in Southern Ontario, 15 qualitative interviews with women working as dancers, and a series of interviews with various actors in the environment, including managers, doormen, bar employees, servers and disc jockeys. For more information on this research, see Bruckert (2000). It should be noted that erotic dance bars are organized similarly in Quebec.

<sup>15</sup> One of the representatives from a sex workers' organization also mentioned that the workers were strongly encouraged to work as freelancers.

sets lasting four songs each during a six-hour shift. However as detailed in the theoretical framework, during the 1980s and 1990s, Canada underwent a period of recession marked by very high rates of unemployment (Phillips, 1997: 64). In this context, we observe a general trend of job displacement from the manufacturing to service sectors and a destabilization of the position of women in the labour market (Luxton and Corman, 2001). Many women, especially those whose professional qualifications were limited, found themselves employed in the service sector, working in non-standard labour arrangements - part-time, temporary or seasonal jobs, with low salaries, limited job security and in poor working conditions.

It is in this context that the phenomenon of table dancing (a one song strip-tease performed at a client's table) in strip bars in Ontario and Quebec. This change came about in combination with adjustments to dancers' pay. Claiming that the soliciting and performing table dances increased the opportunities for tips, managements reduced wages to between \$30.00 and \$40.00 per day and implemented bar fees of \$10.00 per shift. It was also during this period that shifts went from six to eight hours. Toward the 1990s, champagne rooms, and shortly afterwards, lap dancing, were introduced. At the same time, and as the economy continued to spiral downward threatening even the "bad jobs" in the service sector jobs, dancers' wages were eliminated. Since that time, the majority of dancers labour for "tips" only. In short, between 1973 and 1995, the work of erotic dancers was "de-professionalization"; workers went from being salaried performance artists, to service sector employees labouring for tips.

At the same time, it must be emphasized that these changes have also had some positive consequences for workers. When their work was defined in relation to performance, dancers were compelled to work full-time and travel 'the circuit'. The job was therefore inaccessible to a number of women, given their social and domestic responsibilities. Since 1995, bar owners have been offering continuous shows with several women, resulting in an opening up of the labour market and the creation of new labour opportunities. Thus, dancers can now have some choice with respect to when, where

and how many hours they work. A dancer can choose to work at one bar as a regular dancer or rotate between several bars. She can decide to work full-time, part-time or occasionally. She can refuse to tour, or do so only on occasion, when there is financial need. Furthermore, since they are freelancers, dancers now have a measure of power to negotiate with bar owners. In fact, although the owners still try to regulate the dancers' work through a system of fines, suspension or exclusion, their control has been greatly undermined, since they no longer pay salaries but simply give dancers access to the workplace in exchange for payment of a daily fee. Moreover, since owners must be able to rely on a steady workforce, they must take care not to alienate the women on who, in large part, the success of their business is based.

## B. Organization of work

As we have seen, most of the dancers now work freelance and receive no remuneration from the bar. Only a few bars whose customer base is too small to attract dancers will agree to put dancers 'on-schedule'. A dancer will, in general, be scheduled one week out of four or six and receive between \$35.00 and \$45.00 for each shift. The rest of the time, she freelances. In all cases, the workers must be present for a pre-determined period of time,<sup>16</sup> provide between one and five shows of three songs each, comply with the house rules and remain available and attractive to clients. In exchange for fees and free labour workers earn access to the clients on whom their livelihood depends.

Comparing this organization of work to that of sex workers in erotic establishments, we observe many commonalities, but there are also a number of differences. On the one hand, both

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<sup>16</sup> Dancers who work shifts are required to be on duty eight hours at a time, whereas those who work freelance must be present in a bar for a period of time set by the house (usually four or five hours).

groups of women are own account workers who receive payment in a fee-for-service arrangement; without the benefit of a guaranteed income.<sup>17</sup> In both cases, the employer provides physical space, equipment, material, advertising and (sometimes) support services for the employees. In short, both types of work fall into the growing trend towards non-standard labour practices.

On the other hand, these two types of jobs are organized differently. Erotic dancing is similar to the work of a real estate agent. Both sets of workers are recruited by intermediaries; they are hired and can be fired. While neither receives a salary from their employer, they do obtain access to a legally authorized work context (institution name, permit, insurance), to the associated legal protection as well as to the physical space, equipment and technical support necessary for their job. The work of women in erotic service establishments is comparable to several jobs in the service sector including, for example, beautician, massage therapist and hairdresser. Work schedules for these jobs are generally set on a weekly basis; the women must remain on-site during the entire shift or be quickly available *on-call* during this time period. They must perform a number of unrelated, unpaid tasks, such as answering the phone, receiving merchandise, doing the cleaning. They must pay the business a percentage of their revenues (between 40 and 60%, depending upon the case) but may augment their income with tips.

In summary, sex workers in erotic establishments, erotic dancers and other workers in the service sector must navigate a precarious work space. Although they are treated as employees and subject to the expectations and rules of their work environment, they are deprived of the benefits associated with salaried employment. They receive neither a wage nor do they have either the job stability or access to the protection afforded by a union or by the labour code.

## C. Labour relations

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<sup>17</sup> Dancers' salaries vary widely. Some days, they may barely cover their bar access fees and transportation costs, or worse, run a deficit; on other days they may earn \$500.00 or more for an eight-hour shift. Their income depends upon their physical appearance and professional skills, client availability, services rendered and luck. Since more and more women are working in erotic dance bars, there is stronger competition and generally, incomes have fallen.

The municipal regulations implemented during the 1980s led to the closure of many small bars and the establishment of owners' associations through which they fight to protect their economic interests. Unlike erotic service establishments whose size and management style can vary widely, bars are generally large commercial establishments organized in very similar ways. Initiatives that are profitable (for the business, of course) are rapidly implemented throughout bars in the region. This may be why dancers have a very polarized vision of labour relations and believe that owners view their bodies simply as a source of profit: "*we are meat*[pause] umm that's all we are, no more. We can come and go, they don't care, as long as there's someone on stage"<sup>18</sup> (Debbie). Not only are relationships with their employers much more hostile than those of the sex workers in our sample but relations between dancers are more nuanced. On the one hand, dancers offer each other emotional support, share information on clients, protect one another from the violence, and give each other advice. On the other hand this cohesion is somewhat undermined by competition between dancers for access to good clients, by the tension generated when there is 'dirty dancing' (unlawful touching) and by the favouritism used by employers as a control tactic.

## D. Work activities

As we have noted, sex workers in erotic establishments use a significant number of interpersonal, technical, sexual, theatrical and practical skills. In the same vein, the dancers' success depends in large part on a complex collection of skills, including those of performance, seduction, sales, and excellent interpersonal skills.

As part of her work day, a dancer must perform two very different types of duties. First, she is required to remain available to clients and to provide shows on stage. To entertain, she must perform her 'set' on stage. This erotic work before an audience requires not only the ability to perform but also

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<sup>18</sup> Interviewee's emphasis.

the capacity to interact with clients who, by their very presence, legitimize the dancers' work. An erotic dancer must also be comfortable with nudity and carry herself with confidence. Many women develop a strong stage presence and become skilled dancers; able not only to execute traditional stripper 'moves' but perform (in very high heels) an original show that combines posing, ballet, jazz and aerobic movements. On stage, the dancer must constantly be smiling or at least have the appropriate attitude of sexuality. To generate income, she must sell her personal erotic services; a process which first and foremost involves convincing "the guy that he really wants a dance" (Sarah). The dancer then accompanies the client to a champagne room where she may (according to her own boundaries, the rules of the bar and her perception of the risk) perform a table or lap dance for him. The dancer must also encourage the purchase of additional dances in order to maximize her income.

As with all other physical labour, a dancer's work can be very demanding and technically difficult: "pole work is a lot of hanging upside down, it's a lot of balance, muscle technique. It's hard to look sexy when you're upside down and all the blood is rushing to your head!" (Diane) The work can also be dangerous since, in addition to the risks inherent to dancing in stiletto heels, there is the threat of infectious diseases. Many dancers take protective measures,<sup>19</sup> nonetheless in some bars the bathrooms, chairs and poles are not cleaned regularly. Dancers are also vulnerable to physical and sexual violence, particularly in the champagne rooms. Despite the presence of bouncers, colleagues and dancers' vigilance for signs of danger (body language, conversation, approach, degree of inebriation), most dancers interviewed reported incidences of violence (often sexual) against them. Finally dancers are vulnerable to charges under Section 210 of the *Criminal Code*. Dancers, well aware that they may be subject to undercover police surveillance at any time, protect themselves from arrest by not performing dances involving touching, or by looking for indications that there is a police

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<sup>19</sup> For example, dancers can bring their own towel to sit on, and they sometimes bring their own cleaning products.

officer posing as a client. Moreover dancers, well aware that they are liable to charges regardless of their own behaviour police each other.<sup>20</sup>

In short, while some skills competencies and dangers are common to erotic dancers and sex workers, as well for others service sector workers, it is evident that these are very different labour processes. Significant differences also emerge when we examine more closely the issue of sexuality, the source of their stigmatization.<sup>21</sup> Unlike sex workers who must provide certain sexual services, dancers do not have to deal with this reality, or at least not to the same degree. On the one hand a dancer's duties do not relate directly to sex as such, but to nudity, sensuality, and eroticism: "the way you walk, the way you look at them, the way you move on the box" ( Marie). Their performance must elicit emotion in the audience (Hoschschild, 1983: 37), whereas sex workers, with or without demonstrating sensuality or sexual interest, must engage with sexuality.

On the other hand, dancers must also provide a number of interpersonal services that involve emotional work. In fact, many clients are only marginally interested in erotic entertainment. These men go to strip bars because they "want someone to talk to" (Rachel), and are ready to "spend a couple of hundred bucks and the sit there and talk to a girl that's nice to them and who makes them feel good for a couple of hours" (Diane). Although, at first glance, conversing with clients does not seem to be very challenging, it is an aspect of the work that is emotionally difficult and demanding: dancers must simulate sexual attraction and demonstrate interest in the client as if he were someone special. They must adopt personas based on the client's taste: "I used to give each guy a different age depending on what they wanted. I also gave different stories but that complicated to keep track of...It's really weird. Different guys want different things" (Sarah). Most of the dancers use their intuition to read clients and

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<sup>20</sup> To select a workplace, a dancer considers the bar's reputation and the risk of being charged under the *Criminal Code*, and having to deal with the stigma of a police record.

<sup>21</sup> Sexuality as a gender-structuring process is often neglected within labour theory (Adkins, 1992: 208), and gender and sexuality are crucial elements of power relations within *all* work environments [emphasis in original text] (Pringle, 1988: 84). What distinguishes bars and brothels is essentially their entire and conscious

adjust their approach, but some of them ask, "What do you like?" (Debbie). As with women working in the service sector, dancers must be able to control their frustrations and emotions when dealing with difficult clients who attempt to push the limits.

In summary, erotic dance is a job that presents a number of challenges similar to sex work in erotic establishments: they [both erotic dancers and sex workers] must manage client demands, establish and maintain boundaries while at the same time try to maximize their profit and protect their emotional space. Conversely, dancers are faced with the requirements of a job that involves erotic and emotional labour<sup>22</sup>, whereas sex workers must provide sexual services while maintaining a distinction between intimacy and sex work. In addition, the work of a dancer involves "role overload," an aspect identified as contributing to increased stress in the workplace (Levi *et al.*, 1986: 55).

Erotic dance work also provides a number of benefits similar to work in erotic establishments. As with sex workers, dancers appreciate the income, autonomy and flexible schedule. They also acquire skills that are useful in their personal life: a self-assured presentation of self; interpersonal skills, and boundary maintenance. Many of them believe that they have become more self-confident, more comfortable with their bodies and sexuality. These are valuable skills that still challenge many women in our society.

## E. Stigmatized labour

In considering the social response to these two labour activities, we note that dancers' work is public and legal, whereas a number of activities in sex work are criminalized and relegated to the

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dependence on women's bodies. Other types of service businesses (restaurants and airlines, for example) can use women's bodies in order to make the product or service more attractive (Adkins, 1992).

<sup>22</sup>

According to Hochschild (1983), contemporary service sector workers have to sell not only their physical and intellectual labour, but also must engage in a type of emotional work. To get paid, they must induce or suppress their emotions in order to ensure that their body language produces the desired state of mind in others (Hochschild, 1983: 7). They must engage in deep acting, recreating personal experiences in a commercial context.

private sphere. However, both kinds of work are stigmatized. The dancer must confront a series of stereotypes and prejudices in her personal life and in her activities as a citizen. A dancer may encounter a landlord who won't rent her a place to live, or be refused credit at the bank. Dancers therefore experience the concrete consequences of social stigma. Their occupation is an identity marker with real implications for women's lives that, to a degree, shapes their experiences and their views on the world. However, they can legally occupy a space of resistance to affirm the legitimacy of their work. Sex workers can avoid judicial reaction and stigmatization by not revealing their occupation but they must also live a double life and cope with the secrecy. Their struggle for recognition of their activities is fraught with pitfalls.

## VIII. Conclusion

As our literature review revealed, to this point there has been little research on sex work and erotic dancers based on these practices as work. The view of these practices as deviant has traditionally marked research on 'prostitution' and erotic dance and these prejudices still guide much of the research in these areas. Most of the feminist analyses have endorsed the traditional moral condemnation while also attempting to provide support to "prostitutes." They have not recognized them as workers but perceived them as victims of patriarchy. Since the 1970s and 1980s, a discourse that affirms 'prostitution' and erotic dance as professions and as choices has emerged and is becoming increasingly dominant. But there is still scant empirical research on these activities that employs the sociology of labour as its theoretical base. It should also be noted that up to this point there have been few distinctions made between the various forms of sex work. Our research sheds new light on sex work in erotic establishments and on erotic dancing in bars.

By looking at the laws and regulations that surround work in these two sectors, we were able to identify a number of elements of these labour practices that are illegal or only marginally legal. We also observed that although the *Criminal Code* is the foremost form of control over sex work and frames the

activities related to erotic dance, municipal regulations can play a significant role in the control of these activities. Toronto has, for instance, implemented municipal regulations that affect dancers and sex workers (body rub parlours) and that provide, at least in principle, some protective space for the workers. As we have seen however there are negative implications to the provision and application of these regulations.

Analysis of the interviews enabled us to describe how work in erotic establishments and strip bars is similar to that of a number of jobs in the service sector. For example, women choose various professions for very similar reasons: they want to earn a living, they want to meet people, and they prefer work activities that are compatible with their personality and interests. The organization of work also has a number of points in common with other jobs including hair stylist, real estate agent with respect to, for example, shifts, duties and income structure.

In addition, we were able to highlight how laws and regulations affect workers in these two types of work, both professionally and on a personal level. More often than not, sex workers live with the imminent danger of police raids and being charged under the *Criminal Code*; erotic dancers, who may be under police surveillance, must be vigilant to ensure that their activities remain within legal parameters.

On a personal level, the stigmatization of these jobs conceals the many competencies required in these occupations. If these workers want to change careers, it is difficult for them to identify the skills they have acquired, although, as we have seen, they can be numerous and very valuable on the job market. This stigmatization also affects their activities as citizens: they cannot reveal their work to the many social actors in civil society (for example apartment landlords, bank managers, social workers) without risk. Even in their intimate relationships, their choice of profession may be a source of rejection. Sex workers in particular must contend with the implications of either secrecy or disclosure.

We have noted that decriminalization of sex workers' activities is necessary, and our respondents made reference to this legal change during their interviews. But decriminalization alone does not ensure a safe working space for the women, nor does it guarantee the protection of their rights as workers. Other steps must therefore be taken in order to encourage the recognition of sex work and erotic dance as legitimate forms of labour rather than deviance or exploitation. It has been noted that the implementation of municipal regulations is in itself no guaranteed solution. It seems that in order to realize measures or regulations that favour workers despite the social stigma they still face, we must work with representatives of these workers. Otherwise, the potential negative effects will be missed completely and the traditional practices of moral condemnation will once again become entrenched. Therefore, training and activities by sex workers' associations such as Stella (Montréal), Maggie's (Toronto) and those for erotic dancers such as E.D.A. (Exotic Dancers Alliance, Toronto) should be encouraged, and mechanisms for cooperation with various relevant organizations should be implemented.

Our research has also shown that in spite of the commonality underlying various forms of work in the sex industry and erotic dance, they are also unique characteristics that must be identified. Furthermore, given the diversification of services in this area and the new options made available through the Internet, there is a need for more research in this area. We must also examine the very concept of sex work, which seems to have undergone considerable transformation since the beginning of the 21st century.

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# APPENDIX I : INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

## Interview Guide for Sex Trade Workers

*As I mentioned before I would like to speak to you about your work in massage parlors/brothels:*

- How did you choose this type of work?
- Could you describe a typical day at work?
- How is your work organized with regards to:
  - your schedule?
  - your income?
  - your working relationship with your employer?
  - your working relationships with your clients?
  - your working relationships with your colleagues?
- Did you receive any information about the laws, policies and rules that structure your work? For example I would like to discuss your understanding of the municipal laws, labour laws and criminal laws.
  - If yes: Who gave you that information?
- Have you ever had any problems with the law?
- What measures do you take to avoid conflicts with the law?
- What is the impact of those measures on your
  - labour practices?
  - relationship with your employer?
  - relationships with your clients?
  - relationships with your colleagues?
- What skills and competencies are necessary to work as a sex trade worker in massage parlors/brothels?
- What competencies and skills have you acquired through your work in massage parlors/brothels?
- What kind of risks do you face with regards to your physical health and security?
- What kind of risks do you face with regards to your mental health and security?
- What measures do you take to protect yourself from those risks to your physical and mental health and security?

- Has the work you do in the massage parlor/brothel changed since you started to work in the trade?  
Specifically
  - has the organization of the work changed?
  - have the working conditions, the services offered or the income changed?
  - have the relationships with employers, clients or colleagues changed?
- What do you like about your work?
- What do you find difficult about your work?
  - What measures do you take to minimize these difficulties?
- What laws, policies or rules might be useful to address the problems you encounter in your line of work?
- How do you reconcile your work and your personal life?  
Specifically
  - with your landlord?
  - with your partner or significant other?
  - with your family?
  - with your children?
  - with your friends?
- How do you reconcile your work with other activities?  
Specifically
  - other jobs and work activities?
  - with studies?
  - with travel or other leisure activities?

## Background Information

- What types of work have you done?
  - If you have changed the type of work you do, Why?
- How many years of experience do you have in the sex trade in general?
  - How long have you worked at your current massage parlor/brothel?
  - How long did you work in the massage parlor/brothel industry?
- Why did you choose to work in massage parlors/brothels instead of a different type of work in the sex trade industry?
- What is your family situation?
  - do you live alone, with friends or as part of a couple?
  - do you have children? If yes do they live with you?

## Information about the Interview and Research

- Did the interview raise questions with regards to laws, policies or rules that effect your work?
- Would you like to have any other information regarding the laws, polies or rules or any other area of the sex trade that we have talked about during the interview?
- Why did you decide to participate in this research project?
- What are your thoughts about this research?
- Under what pseudonym would you like to be identified in this research project?
- Would you like to review the transcript of this interview?
  - If yes: please write down an e-mail or mailing address where we could send the transcripts.

## Interview Guide for Sex Trade Worker Advocates

- How does your agency define sex trade work?
- According to your organization what are problems are related to sex trade work?
- Do you see a discrepancy between your agencies=definition of sex trade work, the problems you identify and the services you provide?
- What are the main problems confronted by sex trade workers in massage parlors/brothels?
- In your experience what are the laws the effect and structure sex trade work in massage parlors/brothels? (We are referring to both criminal justice and administrative regulation)
- What are the initiatives and strategies that your agency has put forward to protect and defend sex trade worker rights?
- What laws could be adopted or implemented to improve the working conditions of women working in massage parlors/brothels?
- Since the creation of your agency have you noticed any changes in the massage parlor/brothel industry?  
Specifically
  - has the organization of the work changed?
  - have the working conditions, the services offered or the income changed?
  - have the relationships with employers, clients or colleagues changed?
  - If yes: How do you explain those changes?

# APPENDIX II: CONSENT FORMS

## INFORMED CONSENT FORM Group One: Sex Trade Worker Advocates

Project: Sex Trades/ Skin Trades: A Comparative Consideration of Marginal Labour

### Researchers

Colette Parent  
Associate Professor  
Department of Criminology  
University of Ottawa  
613-562-5800 ext 1802  
coparent@uottawa.ca

Chris Bruckert  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Criminology  
University of Ottawa  
613-562-5800 ext 1814  
bruckert@uottawa.ca

I \_\_\_\_\_, agree to participate in the research on the sex trades conducted by Colette Parent and Chris Bruckert of the Department of Criminology, Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Ottawa in collaboration with Stella, a sex workers= community-based organization in Montreal. This project is based on the assumption that work of sex trade workers in massage parlours/brothels are labour issues. This project focusses on massage parlour/brothel work as *work*. It starts from the perspective of industry workers and locates the trades within broader socio-economic trends and examines a number of areas including stigma, regulation, labour process and skill. In addition the project will examine the diversity of the trades by comparing the labour of brothel workers and that of strippers.

My participation will consist essentially of participating in one semi-structured interview lasting approximately one hour. During the interview I will be asked a series of questions focussing on the services provided by our organization, the problems we identify, our understanding of labour issues as well as legal and regulatory concerns, health factors, and transformations in the industry. The session will be scheduled at my convenience.

I have been asked if I am comfortable having the interview recorded on an audio tape. If I agree the interview will be recorded and the interview tapes will be transcribed. Upon request the full transcript will be forwarded to me. If I agree to participate but do not wish for the interview to be recorded on an audio tape, detailed notes will be taken throughout the interview. In this case the processed notes will be made available to me as soon as possible. In either case I reserve the right to delete any information which I consider to, in any way, endanger myself, co-workers, agency or any friends, family or associates. I am entitled to a follow-up interview should I feel that clarification or additional information is required.

I understand that the contents will be used only for a report for the Law Commission of Canada; academic articles and/or book chapters by Colette Parent and Chris Bruckert; publications and reports by Stella. I understand that my confidentiality will be respected and that during the process of collection and analysis the interview data will be in the sole possession of Colette Parent, Chris Bruckert and Pascale Robitaille, the research assistant. During transcription the typist will have access to the data but not my name or any personal information that may identify me.

I am free to withdraw from the project at any time, before, during or after the interview, refuse to participate and refuse to answer questions.

I will not be paid for my participation in the research however I will be offered an honorarium of fifty dollars to cover any expenses incurred. This honorarium will be given before the interview starts. Should I wish to withdraw from the project I am not required to pay back the honorarium.

I have received assurance from the researchers that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential. Anonymity will be assured by keeping the personal information collected to a minimum; immediately upon transcription changing any personal or potentially identifiable information including names, agencies, towns/cities, or geographic area and events/stories; and altering any atypical (and therefore potentially identifiable) speech patterns or idiosyncratic use of words/phrases.

Tape recordings, interview notes, transcripts and any other data collected will be kept in a secure manner. Throughout the research process tapes as well as back-up computer disks will be stored in a locked and secure location. Data that is stored on the researchers' computer will be accessible only through an undisclosed password. The tapes and original notes will be destroyed five years after the project is completed. Transcripts will be retained for five additional years.

The research is supported through funding from the Law Commission of Canada, Status of Women Canada and the University of Ottawa Research Partnerships in the Humanities program.

Any information about my rights as a research participant may be addressed to:

Catherine Lesage  
Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research,  
30 Stewart Street  
University of Ottawa  
K1N 6N5  
Phone: 613-562-5387  
e-mail: clesage@uottawa.ca

There are two copies of the consent form, one of which I may keep.

If I have any questions about the conduct of the research project I may contact Colette Parent or Chris Bruckert at the addresses that appear at the beginning of this document.

The goals of the research have been explained to me, this consent form has been reviewed orally and I have had the opportunity to ask questions and receive clarification regarding research goals, methods, researcher-s obligations and the rights of the participants or any other concerns.

I agree to have the interview tape recorded: Yes

No

Date:

Participant:

Signature:

Researcher:

Signature:

# INFORMED CONSENT FORM

## Group Two: Sex trade workers

Project: Sex Trades/ Skin Trades: A Comparative Consideration of Marginal Labour

### Researchers

Colette Parent  
Associate Professor  
Department of Criminology  
University of Ottawa  
613-562-5800 ext 1802  
coparent@uottawa.ca

Chris Bruckert  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Criminology  
University of Ottawa  
613-562-5800 ext 1814  
bruckert@uottawa.ca

I \_\_\_\_\_, agree to participate in the research on the sex trades conducted by Colette Parent and Chris Bruckert of the Department of Criminology, Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Ottawa in collaboration with Stella, a sex workers= community-based organization in Montreal. This project is based on the assumption that work of sex trade workers in massage parlours/brothels are labour issues. This project focusses on massage parlour/brothel work as *work*. It starts from the perspective of industry workers and locates the trades within broader socio-economic and examines a number of areas including stigma, regulation, labour process and skill. In addition the project will examine the diversity of the trades by comparing the labour of brothel workers and that of strippers.

My participation will consist essentially of participating in one semi-structured in-depth interview lasting approximately two hours. During the interview I will be asked a series of questions regarding the nature of the my job, how it is organized, necessary tasks, skills and competencies; positive and negative aspects of the job; laws and regulations which shape the labour; and personal and social implications of my participation in the industry. The session will be scheduled at my convenience.

I have been asked if I am comfortable having the interview recorded on an audio tape. If I agree the interview will be recorded and the interview tapes will be transcribed. Upon request the full transcript will be forwarded to me. If I agree to participate but do not wish for the interview to be recorded on an audio tape, detailed notes will be taken throughout the interview. In this case the processed notes will be made available to me as soon as possible. In either case I reserve the right to delete any information which I consider to, in any way, endanger myself, co-workers, employer or any friends, family or associates. I am entitled to a follow-up interview should I feel that clarification or additional information is required.

I understand that the contents will be used only for a report for the Law Commission of Canada; academic articles and/or book chapters by Colette Parent and Chris Bruckert; publications and reports by Stella. I understand that my confidentiality will be respected and that during the process of collection and analysis the interview data will be in the sole possession of Colette Parent, Chris Bruckert and Pascale Robitaille, the research assistant. During transcription the typist will have access to the data but not my name or any personal information that may identify me.

I understand that since this research deals with some personal experiences it may cause me some emotional discomfort which may, at times, be difficult. I have received assurance from the researchers that every effort will be made to minimize these occurrences. The interview will immediately be interrupted or stopped if I am uncomfortable and, if I wish counselling will be arranged by the researchers through a community agency.

I am free to withdraw from the project at any time, before, during or after the interview, refuse to participate and refuse to answer questions.

I will not be paid for my participation in the research however I will be offered an honorarium of fifty dollars to cover any expenses incurred. This honorarium will be given before the interview starts. Should I wish to withdraw from the project I am not required to pay back the honorarium.

I have received assurance from the researchers that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential. Anonymity will be assured by keeping the personal information collected to a minimum; immediately upon transcription changing any personal or potentially identifiable information including names, agencies, towns/cities, or geographic area and events/stories; and altering any atypical (and therefore potentially identifiable) speech patterns or idiosyncratic use of words/phrases.

Tape recordings, interview notes, transcripts and any other data collected will be kept in a secure manner. Throughout the research process tapes as well as back-up computer disks will be stored in a locked and secure location. Data that is stored on the researchers' computer will be accessible only through an undisclosed password. The tapes and original notes will be destroyed five years after the project is completed. Transcripts will be retained for five additional years.

The research is supported through funding from the Law Commission of Canada, Status of Women Canada and the University of Ottawa Research Partnerships in the Humanities program.

Any information about my rights as a research participant may be addressed to:

Catherine Lesage  
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There are two copies of the consent form, one of which I may keep.

If I have any questions about the conduct of the research project I may contact Colette Parent or Chris Bruckert at the addresses that appear at the beginning of this document.

The goals of the research have been explained to me, this consent form has been reviewed orally and I have had the opportunity to ask questions and receive clarification regarding research goals, methods, researcher-s obligations and the rights of the participants or any other concerns.

I agree to have the interview tape recorded: Yes

No

Date:

Participant:

Signature:

Researcher:

Signature:

# APPENDIX III: RECRUITING LETTERS

Date

Subject: Skin Trades/ Sex Trades: A Comparative Analysis of Marginal Labour

Dear Madam,

We are seeking participants for a research project that we are undertaking in collaboration with Stella a sex workers community-based organization located in Montreal. The research, which seeks to explore massage parlour/brothel work as *work*, will start from the perspective of industry workers and locate the trades within broader socio-economic trends and examine a number of areas including stigma, regulation, labour process and skill. Participation in the research would involve an in-depth semi-structured interview lasting approximately two hours. Questions will focus on the nature of the job, how it is organized, necessary tasks, skills and competencies; positive and negative aspects of the job; laws and regulations which shape the labour; and personal and social implications of participation in the industry. If you would like further information we would be happy to forward the research proposal and informed consent forms to you.

Confidentiality and anonymity will be respected at all times throughout the research process and all identifying names, places and events will be changed in the transcripts and in any subsequent documents. Interviewees will have the opportunity to edit or delete any information from the interview transcripts which they consider to, in any way, endanger themselves or any friends, family, agency or associates. In addition, participants are entitled to a follow-up interview should they feel that clarification or additional information is required. Should you agree to participate and then change your mind at any time during the research process, you are of course free to withdraw from the project and your interview will be destroyed.

Participants will not be paid for their interviews however they will receive \$50 to cover their expenses.

Sincerely,

Colette Parent  
Associate Professor  
Department of Criminology  
University of Ottawa  
Ottawa, Ontario

Chris Bruckert  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Criminology  
University of Ottawa  
Ottawa, Ontario

Date

Subject: Skin Trades/ Sex Trades: A Comparative Analysis of Marginal Labour

Dear Sir or Madam,

We are seeking participants for a research project that we are undertaking in collaboration with Stella a sex workers community-based organization located in Montreal. The research, which seeks to explore massage parlour/brothel work as *work*, will start from the perspective of industry workers and locate the trades within broader socio-economic trends and will examine a number of areas including stigma, regulation, labour process and skill. Participation in the research would involve a semi-structured interview lasting approximately one hour. The interview will focus on the services provided by my organization, the problems we identify, our understanding of labour issues as well as legal and regulatory concerns, health factors, and transformations in the industry. Further information is available in the research proposal and consent forms appended to this letter.

Confidentiality and anonymity will be respected at all times throughout the research process and all identifying names, places and events will be changed in the transcripts and in any subsequent documents. Interviewees will have the opportunity to edit or delete any information from the interview transcripts which they consider to, in any way, endanger themselves or their agency or any friends, family, or associates. In addition, participants are entitled to a follow-up interview should they feel that clarification or additional information is required. Should you agree to participate and then change your mind at any time during the research process, you are of course free to withdraw from the project and your interview will be destroyed.

Participants will not be paid for their interviews however they will receive \$50 to cover their expenses.

Sincerely,

Colette Parent  
Associate Professor  
Department of Criminology  
University of Ottawa  
Ottawa, Ontario

Chris Bruckert  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Criminology  
University of Ottawa  
Ottawa, Ontario