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"I'm Not a Pimp, but I Play One on TV": The Moral Career and Identity Negotiations of Third Parties in the Sex Industry

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ABSTRACT
Goffman described the moral career of stigmatized persons as a process by which an individual acquires a stigmatized identity. His analysis, which assumes that individuals recognize and adopt the normative framing of their behavior, glosses over individual identity negotiations. Drawing on 50 interviews with sex industry third parties, this article examines stereotype consciousness—defined as the interactional processes that lead individuals to recognize that they have a discreditable identity. We explore how participants negotiate their identities in response to the social and legal constructions of pimps, procurers, and traffickers, and examine their resistance to the stigmatizing stereotypes that characterize their work.

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The pimp is arguably the quintessential folk devil. Mere mention of the word (in a North American context) conjures a remarkably ubiquitous image that is at once gendered, racialized, classed, and uniquely aesthetic. Rather than being solely defined by the economic and power dynamics of his relationship to a (presumed female) sex worker, we imagine a black man sporting flashy attire, attended to by a "stable" of young sex workers. This image, pivoting on sexist, racist, and classist tropes, reflects deep-seated fears of black men's sexuality (Davis 1983; O'Connell 1998). Over the last decade or so we have seen the pimp narrative become increasingly entwined in the public imagination with other (perhaps even more egregious) characters, and a trilogy of folk devils in the sex trade—the pimp, the procurer, and the trafficker[1]—has emerged. While the visible markers of gender, race, and class are assumed, there are clusters of stereotypes about the kind of person who is a pimp/procurer/trafficker[2] that reverberate through the public narrative. Sex industry third parties[3] are constructed as (obviously) unethical individuals who use drugs, violence, and/or their victims' psychological vulnerability in order to financially and sexually exploit. It is a classic, if somewhat archaic, morality tale of evil men and naive girls, and these constellations of stereotypes coalesce in the stigmatized identity of the "pimp." In fact, third parties fulfill a range of roles in the sex industry including management, security, driving, promotion, and booking, and have a complex range of relationships to sex workers (Bruckert and Law 2013; Bruckert and Parent forthcoming).

Drawing on qualitative interview data with sex industry third parties, this article examines the process of identity construction in light of prevailing stereotypes. We highlight that although individuals' behaviors may meet the legal and social definitions of sex industry third parties, they are not necessarily aware that they could be defined that way, nor of the possibility that the

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[1]Farley et al. (2004) argued that "that prostitution is [not] qualitatively different from trafficking" (p. 33). This is also the language employed by the conservative Canadian government, most explicitly when it tabled the Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act on June 4, 2014.

[2]The stereotypes do not operate in isolation. They are legitimated by clusters of assumptions about both the sex industry more generally (sex work is violence) and sex workers more specifically (as naïve, drug addicted, incompetent etc.)

[3]Third parties are individuals involved in the commercial sex industry but are not one of the two primary parties to the transaction (the sex worker and the client).

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stereotypes of pimp/procurer/trafficker could be ascribed to them. We explore the ways in which the cultural constructions and stereotypes of sex industry third parties obscure ambiguous legal definitions, creating conceptual dissonance that insulates individuals from a criminalized (personal) identity. At the same time, sex industry third parties carry discreditable identities and may be subject to stigma if this identity becomes salient in a social interaction (Goffman 1963). This article examines the interactional processes of stereotype consciousness[4] that may lead individuals to recognize that they are discreditable (Goffman 1963). We also discuss how sex industry third parties in Canada resist normative framing and negotiate their identities in response to stigmatizing social and legal constructions. We begin by discussing the representations of pimping in scholarly literature and unpacking the stigma bound up in the laws.

Pimping in culture and law

Scholarly research on pimps, traffickers, and other third parties is remarkably sparse. Since Milner and Milner's (1972) ethnography of "Black Players," the contemporary extant literature largely relies on sex workers' description of interactions between themselves and third parties, and their understanding of third parties' perspectives (Gillies 2013). When sex industry third parties are engaged as participants in research, analysis is frequently based on small numbers (Antonopoulos and Winterdyk 2005; Williamson and Cluse-Tolar 2002). Third party narratives are also implicitly discredited when, as is often the case, they are framed exclusively as "techniques of neutralization" (see Antonopoulos and Winterdyk 2005; Copley 2014), with inherent assumptions of deviance (Christensen 2010), and little or no consideration to either the interview context or the broader social context of third party involvement in the industry.

There are notable exceptions such as Morselli and Savoie-Gargiso's (2014) network analysis of a prostitution ring in Montreal, which counters many stereotypical representations of pimps and third parties in the industry and draws attention to the complexities and variances in relationships that exist between sex workers and third parties (see also Bruckert and Law 2014). Similarly, Marcus et al.'s (2014) study of 85 active pimps in Atlantic City and New York City disrupts traditional narratives by highlighting the diversity of experiences and the role of external constraints in the "recruitment" of young women into prostitution.

While the literature on pimping as a phenomenon is scant, several studies engage with media representation of pimping, particularly as it intersects with late-twentieth-century black American urban culture (see Boyd 1997; Kelley 1996; Quinn 2000; Rose 1994). Perpetuated and proliferated in mainstream culture through "gangsta rap," pimp imagery invokes a "long-standing matrix of subcultural, popular-cultural, and folkloric inheritances" (Quinn 2000:116). This includes references to style, street credibility, marginalized racial identity, sex appeal, misogynistic commodification of women, violence against women, illegal drugs, conspicuous consumption of brand-name clothing, "bling," expensive cars, and other markers of an extravagant lifestyle (see also Mensah forthcoming; Staiger 2005). As discussed by Quinn (2000), the cultural imagery of the pimp aesthetic should be understood as "highly mediated and emblematic," rather than as a straight-forward reflection of "*real-life* pimps and their practices" (p. 117, emphasis in original).

Although it is writ large in social and cultural discourse, the pimp does not exist as a legal construct in Canada. The laws prohibiting third party engagement in the sex industry are Criminal Code section 286.2, which makes it illegal to receive a financial or material benefit from the commodification of someone else's sexual services, section 286.3, which criminalizes procuring sexual services for consideration, and section 286.4, which criminalizes the advertisement of someone else's sexual services.[5]

[4]Pinel (1999) discusses "stigma consciousness" as the expectation that one will be stereotyped by others and the tendency to attribute negative interactions to one's stigmatized identity. We deliberately choose "stereotype consciousness" to differentiate the focus of our comments from Pinel's concept.

[5]Prior to the change in Canada's prostitution laws on December 6, 2014 and during the collection of the interview data, it was not illegal to advertise sexual services and third party involvement in the sex industry was criminalized under CC section 210 (keeping or being found in a bawdy house), and CC section 212.1(j) (living on the avails of another's prostitution). See Bruckert and Hannem (2013) for a full explanation of the rulings on the *Bedford v. Canada* charter challenge that overturned these laws.

Additionally, Canada's laws prohibiting human trafficking (Criminal Code s. 279.01–279.03) and exploitation (s. 279.04) are also used to criminalize sex industry third parties. Indeed, the narrative of traffickers and exploiters has become fused to the specter of the pimp (see, e.g., Raphael, Reichert, and Powers 2010; Agenda 2016).

As we have previously noted, the laws that criminalize third parties in the sex industry hinge on a set of assumptions about both the relationships between sex workers and third parties and about the kinds of people who become involved in the sex industry (Bruckert and Hannem 2013). Rather than acknowledging that relationships between sex workers and third parties are varied and often instrumental in nature for both, the laws construct all third party involvement as inherently exploitative. The provision in Criminal Code section 286.2—"material benefit from sexual services"—states that "evidence that a person lives with or is habitually in the company of a person who offers or provides sexual services for consideration is, *in the absence of evidence to the contrary*, proof that the person received a financial or material benefit from those services" (emphasis by authors). The law does include a list of exemptions, including those in "legitimate living arrangements" with the sex worker or those to whom s/he has a "legal or moral obligation." However, it is unclear how it would be determined that a living arrangement is "legitimate" or to whom a legal or moral obligation is owed, particularly since the law retains a reverse onus presumption. This means that individuals charged with materially benefitting are called on to demonstrate that their involvement provided services or benefits in proportion to the value that they received from the sex worker.

Given the pervasiveness of the pimp/procurer/trafficker construct in our social discourse about the sex trade, and the serious legal penalties attached to third party engagement in the sex industry, we might assume that those working as third parties in the sex industry would be aware not only of their precarious legal status, but of the stereotypes and stigma that might be applied to them because of their occupation. In fact, interviews with third parties revealed that even some individuals with long histories in the sex industry had apparently not considered the applicability of the pimp stigma to their own activities and were seemingly unaware of their discreditable status (Goffman 1963). In the next section we discuss Goffman's work on the moral career of the stigmatized before describing our methods and data analysis.

Stigma theory and identity

The literature on stigmatized identity begins with the presupposition that individuals whose identity is marked are aware of their discredited or discreditable status (Kusow 2004). In many instances this is true. However, stigma theory generally glosses over the process by which one comes to learn that one is marked in this way. Goffman's (1963:32–37) discussion of the "moral career" of the stigmatized provides four models of the acquisition of a stigmatized identity. In the first, an individual who is born with a stigmatized characteristic is socialized to recognize his or her difference, assuming that socialization into a normative worldview creates the backdrop against which one's own deviance becomes evident. In the second, a child who is born with a stigmatized characteristic is sheltered from the stigma through the careful control of information until such time as s/he can no longer be protected and encounters the stigmatizing response of outsiders (e.g., on the first day of school). In these cases, the individual is likely aware that s/he possesses the attribute in question (e.g., the attribute of being deaf), but is not initially made aware that the attribute is viewed negatively by others or that s/he will be treated differently because of it.

The third and fourth models concern those who become stigmatized later in life; Goffman suggests two different processes. In one, those who are socialized into a different culture (whether within the dominant culture, as in a "sub-culture" or in a different geographic location) later come to learn that some characteristic they possess, or behavior in which they engage, is considered deviant by others (see, e.g., Kusow (2004) on how Somalian immigrants to Canada understand blackness). These individuals are not initially aware that the characteristic or behavior is stigmatized and may, as Kusow (2004) found, attribute discriminatory behavior to factors other than the stigmatized attribute[6]. In the final model, Goffman

[6]This phenomenon is the inverse of Pinel's (1999) observation that stigmatized individuals exhibit stigma consciousness—attributing all negative interactions to their discredited identity (see footnote 4).

describes an individual "who becomes stigmatized later in life, or learns late in life that [s]/he has always been discreditable" (Goffman 1963:34). In this case, Goffman assumes that the individual has some prior knowledge of the stigma attached to that identity but either previously did not belong to that group or was not aware that s/he belonged to that group. However, Goffman is vague on the circumstances that might lead one to have to reorganize one's identity in light of a newly acquired stigma. He focuses on those who acquire physical handicaps late in life and have to integrate this new status into their identity. In this article we examine another case in which an external definition of the situation is thrust upon an individual who may not understand his or her identity to be stigmatized in this way. In this case, the lack of awareness of the stigmatized identity stems from a disconnect between sociolegal definitions, the social stereotypes associated with those definitions, and the actors' individual understandings of their own behavior.

Methodology

The data for this article emerge from a larger Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)-funded project on the management of sex work[7] (see Bruckert and Law 2013), which included semi-structured interviews with third parties in centers in eastern Canada including Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, and Hamilton. The project employed an inclusionary definition of third parties—individuals who do (or did since the year 2000[8]) for (direct or indirect) financial compensation or benefit, supervise, control and/or take part in the coordination of the labor process (what s/he does, when and where) and/or the labor practices (how s/he works) of an adult sex worker(s). This broad definition ensured that the sample captured a range of relationships and actors in the sex industry. Although each of the participants met the Criminal Code definition of living on the avails of prostitution detailed above (section 212.1) (and would equally be criminalized under section 286.2, the new "deriving material benefit" from sexual services provision), they did not necessarily consider themselves as engaging in criminal activity.

The wide-ranging interviews lasted between 1.5 and 4 hours and addressed issues such as tasks, workplace relationships, labor process, and organization. Participants were also asked a series of questions at various point of the interview which touched upon stereotypes, stigma, and identity. These questions encouraged self-reflection in participants and sometimes elicited a verbalized stream of consciousness in which participants described their own thought processes, situating themselves *vis-a-vis* stereotypes of third parties. This data provides a glimpse into *how* the research process itself conditions social actors' understandings of themselves and brings particular aspects of identity to the fore—a dynamic that is largely acknowledged by researchers yet rarely examined.

Anonymized verbatim transcripts were team-coded in NVivo software using a semi-organic codebook that included conceptual codes informed by theory and the existing literature, information codes from the interview guide, and grounded codes that emerged from the interviews. Once the coding of all interviews was completed, a "horizontal" trans-interview analysis (Pires 1997) was undertaken to identify points of convergence and disjuncture, and analytic frameworks were developed that "made sense" of the findings.

This article draws on interviews with 50 third parties from the indoor commercial sex industry.[9] The demographics of this sample challenge the gendered and raced tropes about who is a third party: 40 participants were women (including two transwomen) and 10 were men. In terms of ethnicity, the majority (39) were white, four identified as black, two identified as Asian, one as "*mixed*," one as "*Aboriginal and black*," one as "*half Native and half Caucasian*," one as "*Native [and] French*," and one participant identified simply as "*a woman of color*." The sample varied widely in terms of age and experience; ages ranged from 24 to 62 years (with an average age of 38 years old) and participants had

[7]The project was approved by the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board on June 22, 2010.
[8]Interviews with third parties ceased in 2012.
[9]In addition to 27 focus group interviews with sex workers who worked with or for third parties in the indoor sex industry.

three months to twenty years of experience working as third parties. Twenty-nine participants were sex workers at the same time as being third parties and an additional 13 were former sex workers.

Researchers studying criminalized or deviant groups generally encounter their research participants well after they have come to realize the implications of their actions and associations on their public identity. The self-selection process has the effect of largely filtering out those who have not accepted the applicability of the social identity (Hogg and Abrams 1988; Stets and Burke 2000) that the research recruitment describes. For example, research that focuses on "sex workers" may inadvertently exclude individuals who informally trade sexual services for rent, drugs, or other considerations, but who do not consider themselves to be doing sex work. In this case, the detailed and descriptive call for participants was designed to allow individuals to see their work and themselves as pertinent to the research in a way that merely requesting the participation of "sex industry third parties" would not. The unanticipated consequence of this was that some of the participants had apparently not considered the legal and social implications of their activities prior to agreeing to the interview. This provided a unique opportunity to examine the process by which individuals grapple with the recognition of a stigmatized identity—a process that is glossed over in scholarship that assumes that individuals accept and adopt the dominant framing of their behavior. All too often this results in an analysis that pivots on the notion of rationalization (Christensen 2010); here we avoid "motive mongering" (Mills 1940) by respecting participants' own reflections on their experiences.

Goffman (1963) described the moral career as becoming conscious of one's deviant identity. However, even Goffman's analysis failed to attend to the interactional process by which an individual comes to realize that a social identity *of which s/he is already aware* applies to him/her. We will refer to this as *stereotype consciousness*. In the following paragraphs we will describe the moral careers of sex industry third parties and examine the process of stereotype consciousness.

The moral careers of third parties

Our analysis uncovered that stereotype consciousness occurs in three stages. First, social actors must have knowledge of the existence of a stereotype. This knowledge emerges through socialization and immersion in the expectations and definitions of dominant culture. Individuals who labor in the sex industry are well versed in the norms and dominant framing. The participants in this study clearly had the precursory *knowledge* of the pimp stereotype and could readily present the script of "somebody controlling a girl for their own profit, and not in the best interest of the girl" (Brenda). Indeed, as Sandy recognizes, this understanding permeates "everything you've ever seen in a movie about hos and pimps." That said, perhaps precisely because the script is inextricably bound up with stereotypes about the nature and actions of the pimp, individuals who engage in behavior that meets the legal and normative definition of third party (but who do not match the stereotype of a pimp) do not necessarily understand that they could be labeled in that way. In the case of many participants there was a decided lack of awareness—in effect, there is stigma unconsciousness or blindness.

Second, individuals come to be aware that they themselves may be defined as members of this devalued group. Research participants described the interactional processes through which they became aware that the stigmatized pimp identity might be applied to them. Rather than being a natural or inherent consequence of normative socialization, the understanding that one has a potentially discreditable identity emerges in response to an external catalyst—it may be criminalization, an article outlining the law and its applications, a media event, or even a casual conversation: "One of our clients, a younger guy, let's say early 30s, is like, 'Say EJ, you know you're like Toronto's biggest pimp.' It's like, what? No, I'm not a pimp" (E.J.). Another participant was alerted to her potential deviant status by the research: "It wasn't really until I saw the posting for this study that I realized that I was in a management sort of role. It didn't really occur to me that that was something that was also not legal" (Vicky).

Finally, once they are aware of their newly identified discreditable status, individuals engage with the stereotypes and negotiate their identity in response. This stereotype consciousness—an

awareness of the ascription of a stigmatized identity—engenders self-reflection. As Lilith explains, this is not rationalization (a process that assumes a resolution), but an ongoing engagement:

> I know deep down I'm not, but sometimes, all the stereotypes make me wonder, "Am I? Am I doing something wrong?" […] It's a personal moral question. I think that the reason I ask myself that question so often—because you'd think I'd just ask it at the beginning before I did it and then I'd be okay with it—but I think the reason I keep coming back to that question is because of the stereotypes.

The interviewees offer revealing glimpses into this process as they reflect on the stereotypes. The complex tensions are palpable in the following self-talk narrative where Brenda navigates specific pimp stereotypes, repeatedly asserting the need to remind herself of her contribution:

> At any point where I feel like I'm profiting here, there's a sense of guilt. And I have to remind myself that I put in a lot of time and effort to keep this running. And I put a lot of risk, my own risk, to provide this situation for girls. And there's got to be, for me, there's got to be some reward. It's not like I'm going to get rich off of it, and it's not gouging. I have to remind myself that. And I get reminded when the girls thank me. You know, the rates, everything is reasonable. But again, I can't do it for free. There's […] the stigma of being the pimp and profiting off of girls—but I'm doing it in a fair [way]. If I make a profit it's because of the hard work that I've put in. And I'm not just sitting back collecting on the work that they're doing. You know, I know I'm working as well and I'm putting in effort for them, and being here for them. I have to remind myself once in a while about that.

Resisting the stereotypes; negotiating identity

Once an individual has been made aware that they may be assigned a discreditable identity, he or she must determine how this new status fits within his or her existing sense of self. The participants in this research demonstrated their engagement with the stereotype(s) of the "pimp" as part of their own identity negotiations. To this end they draw on defensive othering and distancing from stereotypes, counternarratives, challenging the stereotype and subversion.

Defensive othering and distancing from stereotypes

Some individuals resist the pimp identity by engaging with the constellation of stereotypes and attempting to explain how their behavior and characteristics differ from it. One means of accomplishing this is to establish a "straw pimp" (Bruckert 2001)—to reify the existing stereotypes in the form of archetypal examples of "real pimps" and to then distance themselves from this (Snow and Anderson 1987). Also referred to by Schwalbe et al. (2000) as defensive othering, this strategy of identity management "involves accepting the legitimacy of a devalued identity imposed by the dominant group but then saying, in effect, 'There are indeed Others to whom this applies, but it does not apply to me'" (425). E.J. demonstrates this kind of defensive othering when she describes the pimp and contrasts this to her own behavior:

> A pimp is someone who preys on weak, troubled women, and gets them involved in something that they wouldn't have necessarily sought out on their own. Who controls them in every aspect; controls their money, controls when they work, who they see, who they don't see, who they associate with as far as family and friends. Pimps isolate I think because of that control aspect. Pimps get their girls hooked on drugs, another form of dependency. Pimps will play with their emotions, so you always hear stories about the girl who is in love with her pimp, it's actually not her pimp it's her boyfriend, but you know, her boyfriend also happens to run other girls. […] And I think that's wrong. I don't consider myself obviously a pimp. […] These women get into this business on their own free will—they come to me. I give them an opportunity to see whether or not they really want to do it, why they're doing it, and I have genuine concern for them, so there's a difference.

In order to distance themselves from the stigmatized identity, these third parties draw on stereotypical tropes to affirm their difference. In the process they, perhaps inadvertently, provide powerful legitimation of those assumptions. The use of defensive othering as a technique of identity management does not deconstruct or question the validity of the stereotypes, nor the existence of pimps as a construct. Not all participants engaged in defensive othering; some avoided any reflection on the validity, or invalidity, of the pimp trope. These participants highlighted a series of key characteristics

that they felt distinguished their actions from these stereotypes without evoking a straw pimp. Lilith vividly encapsulates these markers in her discussion of her interactions with workers:

> I'm not exploiting anyone. She's working freely of her own free will, and when she decided she wanted to do massage, she looked at her options of working at different clubs or parlors or going fully independent, and she decided that working with me was her best option. I also—I don't think I'm hurting her. I think I'm helping her. I'm showing her how to conduct her business safely, how to assert boundaries with clients, how to take care of herself, how to be safe, how to, you know, not get a disease or something. I think that I've been beneficial to her and helped her in that sense.

As we can see in Lilith's narrative, participants resisted the pimp identity by explaining that their relationships with sex workers were non-exploitative, highlighting the consensual nature of the business relationship. As Jonathan put it:

> I'm there as an equal, not as a superior. I'm here to help guide, and help offer, and help facilitate. So when I hear that word [pimp] in relation to it, I'm very upset about that. Because again it's the ignorance or that lack of knowledge of what actually goes on there. I'm not selling people, I'm not abusing people, I'm not taking advantage of them; it's a partnership, it's a business. I would say I'm the last thing from that word, pimp.

Participants also provided examples to emphasize that they did not engage in coercion:

> I think there's an idea that you're exploiting individuals, that you're forcing people to do things. I know this isn't the place to justify it, but there was not a worker that said, "Hey I just don't want to work anymore tonight" that I said, "Come on! You said you were working until 1am." It would never be that way. I think that those stereotypes, you're kind of like, almost like you're stealing money. (Kaya)

Second, and relatedly, some participants referred to the agency of the sex workers with whom they interact. Implicit in this assertion is the acceptance that in *other* types of third party arrangements the workers may not be given the opportunity to exercise choice, free of coercion or threat. Jane provides an example that illustrates how she confirms that workers are certain about their decision and reminds them that they can change their mind: "If they were new, and I'd say, 'Are you sure this is what you want to do?' You know, 'If you don't feel comfortable, if you go in that room and you don't feel comfortable, then you come out'" (Jane).

Third, participants would speak of their labor and the value added in return for the monies they received. Again, this emphasis on fair value speaks to a concern that they not be viewed as exploitative and that there was a level of reciprocity in the relationship. Ava discusses the level of care and service that she provided for the workers in her employ:

> I feel I was not a pimp because I did more for—more for those girls than enough. And they definitely got paid their share. And I had to be compensated somehow of what I did for them because I mean I didn't just sit there. I mean I cooked their meals; I made sure they ate. I did their laundry for crying out loud. I mean I, you know, deserved the money that I got paid.

Other participants emphasized the practical business support they provided in the form of advertising, transportation, and security:

> A pimp stays home. And collects the cash when she gets home. They don't pay a penny for advertising the girls, not a penny. Not with us. So, it's all us. That's the deal we've made. We pay to advertise, we answer the phones, and we get you to the call. And that's how they want it to be. (Justine)

Last, the issue of violence, or the lack thereof, is presented as a salient marker that demarcates pimps from other sex industry third parties. Mielle is definitive in her assessment: "A pimp is somebody who's a horrible person. He lives off the avails of a young girl. He beats them. He takes their money. He victimizes them. It's terrible. I don't do that."

In each of these quotations, the interview participants both overtly and subtly challenge the applicability of the pimp stereotype(s) to themselves and their own behaviors by engaging in defensive othering or distancing from stereotypes. They do not explicitly question the legitimacy of the stereotypes, but negotiate their personal identity (and public identity, in the interview context)

in relationship to these markers. Another means of resisting this stigmatized status is to engage a counternarrative embracing another, less stigmatized, identity—that of the madam or the businessperson.

Counternarratives

While the notion of the "madam" is still strongly entrenched in folklore about the sex industry and entangled in its own constellation of stereotypes, the identity of the madam is, arguably, less profoundly stigmatized than that of the pimp. Pimps are generally coded as male, subject to the intersecting stigmas of race and class, and understood as dangerous, violent, and exploitative. By contrast, the madam is stereotypically a white, possibly middle class, woman whose relationship to the women working for her is characterized at least in part by care and mothering, if ultimately motivated by the desire for profit. Heyl (1977) describes the phenomenon of the "madam as teacher," emphasizing the madam's tutelage as a means for young women to learn how to protect themselves and increase their security. Tandy's narrative highlights her awareness that madams are also subject to social stigma and sometimes likened to pimps, however, she sees a difference in their orientation toward the workers. She emphasizes her belief that madams care about the workers and want to assist them:

> [People think] that you're just a pimp! That's exactly what they think. They think a madam is just a pimp, just someone putting women out, just living high on the hog, and they are so wrong. […] Because a madam is someone that cares about the women, cares about the girl, cares about what they feel, what they think, what they want in life, and wants to help them to accomplish it.

For some women working as third parties in the sex industry, the madam identity was less problematic than that of the pimp, and sometimes was even a preferred descriptor of their occupation. Jane declared, "I don't classify myself as a pimp, and nobody else did either, you know. You want to call me a madam, call me Madam; I don't care."

Given that the madam identity is gendered, only women could make claim to this. However, both men and women working as sex industry third parties can frame their business as legitimate and, by extension, themselves as good (ethical and competent) businesspersons: "I've never assaulted a girl, customer or anything like that, I just ran a business, raised my family" (Joe). Lilith, who understood her work to be a legitimate form of labor, compared the sex industry to other forms of service sector work:

> My opinion is that the sex industry should be like any other industry. You're providing a service, and to me when I provide an erotic massage, it's just like working at a spa for women. Women—when they want to relax—they go to a spa, and they get their manicure, pedicure, massage and facial and all that stuff. And when a guy wants to relax, he comes to see me, and it's a comparable service.

Lisa described, much as any business person might, her desire for her clients to receive good service and her staff to be content:

> I wanted my place to be a place that men felt that they could, that they wanted, to come back time and time again and spend their money, right? That was really the object. The goal is that everyone was happy, that staff was happy with receiving a fair wage, that clients were happy with the treatment they received and the service they received.

By describing their work in this way, third parties implicitly draw on a normalizing script that locates sex work as service sector labor and positions the roles of managers and workers within a capitalist context that legitimizes the act of profiting from someone else's labor. This framing reflects their sense that an arbitrary moral judgment underlies the criminalization of those who profit (or "materially benefit") from someone else's prostitution, as compared to those who profit from other, non-sexual, forms of labor.

> They think that I'm a horrible person, because I'm living off the avails of these girls that are having sex for money. […] If somebody thinks that about me. I don't want him to think that. I'd rather them see me as running a business. You know what I mean? Trying to keep women safe and not victimized, and not hurt and taken advantage of. (Mielle)

By reframing the sex industry as legitimate, these managers are able to focus on their own actions as business practices and challenge the perspective that all third party involvement in sex work is inherently exploitative and violent toward women. Other third parties embraced a more radical position than defensive othering, distancing from the stereotype, or embracing a legitimate identity. These third parties actively challenged the validity of the pimp trope.

Challenging the stereotype: Pimps are like unicorns

When third parties construct a straw pimp, actively distance themselves from the stereotype, and/or claim a less stigmatized identity, they are negotiating in relationship to the constellation of assumptions that surrounds the notion of pimping, but they do not necessarily challenge the stereotypes. Another form of resistance that is fundamentally more subversive engages in questioning the discourse around pimping. This approach is less about negotiating individual identity and reflects a more politically engaged counter-narrative that would deconstruct prevailing assumptions about the sex industry in Canada. Sandy, a 15-year veteran of the sex industry, was blunt in her assessment of the pimp's authenticity: "I don't actually think I've ever met anybody who was a pimp. I've never met anybody who even knows a pimp. Or worked for one. Like, I don't know. Maybe it's like a unicorn." Similarly, Brad questioned the existence of pimps: "I mean, I didn't have the experience with the traditional street pimp, or whatever. If that even exists, I don't even know."

In suggesting that the stereotypical pimp is a myth, these third parties indirectly point out the irony of laws that are written to address a construct that, in practice, may be significantly more diverse and operate in very different ways. As we will see, the prevailing pimp stereotype sometimes has the unintended consequence of rendering invisible those third parties who do not fit the stereotype and creates a space for subversion.

Subversion

Exploiting stigmatizing scripts, in effect inverting power relations and transforming that which would negate, is profoundly subversive. Third parties might simultaneously resist the pimp narrative through the strategies detailed and instrumentally enact the stereotypes. Beatrice explains: "the media has always made agency owners seem we're somewhat of the underbelly of society. Which has kind of worked in our favor because therefore people have these preconceived notions that we're associated with gangsters or mobsters."

The stereotype of association with gangs and violence can be used to advantage by some third parties in the sex industry and may, in fact, be one of the factors considered by sex workers who are considering working with a third party. According to some of the sex workers who participated in the research, "clients are much less likely to try to fuck around with an agency than they are to try to take advantage of an independent provider" (Christina). In the following story Bridgette explains how she manipulated an outsider's lack of critical engagement when she evoked the deeply entrenched organized crime stereotype to ensure payment of monies owed:

> We had a young boy call in and book a call, and the girl got there and his buddies were there, she didn't feel safe. And she wanted money to compensate the driver and he refused. So later on we called the house and spoke to the father and said, "You know, your son hired an escort and he has to pay for her driving fees. You don't have to pay if you don't want to, but keep in mind these types of places are usually associated with things like biker gangs and things like that. So, do you really want someone in that kind of situation to be upset at you and feel that you owe them money?" So you're not threatening them but you're just telling them what could possibly happen if they get involved in this kind of stuff. And nobody wants to be thinking, "Well, bikers could come to my house looking for money. And it's like, 50 or 100 dollars. I'm going to pay that to make sure that my family is safe."

Ironically, although the stereotype of the violent pimp may negatively impact on sex workers' personal and professional relationships,[10] it may also sometimes increase safety by intensifying the protective effect of drivers and other security persons: "She let the new guys know that there was a man waiting in the car if there was ever any problem. So, the stereotype that I was an enforcer. But I'm just a big pussycat. I've never laid a finger on anyone in my life—ever" (John). In other situations, conforming to stereotypes and thereby meeting the expectations of clients is simply good business. According to Miss W, "There is that stereotype which is the fancy madam with the fur coat and the holding court in hotels. That is a stereotype and we do it." Horetta, on the other hand, enacted the pimp role in her interactions with other third parties (whom she characterized as "real pimps") and used that role to assist sex workers to leave negative situations. She described:

> I called her pimp, and I said, "Hi, this so-and-so?—And I'm calling giving you (what we call on the street) a respect call." Okay? "Your girl has decided she wants to be with me. Does she owe you anything?" […] And he said, "No, she doesn't owe me anything." And I said, "Well, when can I get her stuff, or did you want to keep that, and I'll get her new stuff?" Because a lot of times, they'd keep their clothes and everything. "I'll buy her new stuff. It's not a big deal if you don't want her to have her stuff." And he said, "No, no, no," you know, "I'll meet you at Tim Hortons or wherever, you know, and I'll give her bags."

Stereotype consciousness allows individuals with discreditable identities to selectively engage with stereotypes. They may actively reject the applicability of those stigmatizing characteristics (distancing) to their identity but emphasize and use those same stereotypes to advantage in interactions with others.

Stereotype and social privilege

Regardless of personal and public identity negotiations, individuals in the sex industry are cognizant of sex work stigma. Not surprisingly, third parties endeavoring to insulate themselves from social judgment draw on the same stigma management strategies as other marginalized social actors—most commonly by obscuring potentially discreditable information and "passing" (Goffman 1963):

> When you talk to the general public, you have to pretend you don't do what you do. I always just say that I'm a student and I have no money. Because you don't want to go into the whole explanation of why you're helping other girls out, or why you're in the industry that you're in, or why you do that, or whatever comes with that. (Brittany)

Third parties, sensitive to the intersection of stigma and stereotype, recognize that those whose physical attributes are consistent with the stereotype are less able to pass. For example, Daddy,[11] a self-described "Trini-flavoured" man from Toronto who worked as an agent, recognized that he was vulnerable to social and racial profiling and targeting by police, noting, "I'm not a pimp, but I play one on TV." At the same time, failure to conform to the visual stereotype is a resource in negotiating public identity in that it facilitates passing (Goffman 1963) and avoiding legal or social censure. Interviewees' ambivalence about their privilege suggests this is not defensive othering but an articulation and recognition of the absurdity of the social scripts that inform stigma: "Well, people don't look at me as a pimp. Right? I don't look like a pimp. I don't have the big purple hat, and the big pimp cane, and the big car. I'm just a little white girl that knows the sex trade" (Mielle).

Perhaps the most explicit way stereotype privilege is enacted is in the ability to "play" with the pimp identity so that the disjuncture between the reality and the stereotype becomes a source of humor and a means of deflecting inquiries:

[10]Laws that criminalize third parties restrict sex workers' abilities to access the services of third parties, exclude them from accessing the protection afforded by labor and human rights laws, and have the potential to criminalize their intimate partners (Gillies 2013).

[11]Participants selected their own pseudonyms. This individual's ironic use of the name Daddy speaks to his engagement with the stereotype.

> The stereotypical image of a pimp is so different. And sometimes that's why, when people ask what I do, I just laugh or smile and go, "Oh, I'm a pimp!" And they just giggle. "Yeah, okay. Go walk down the street and make sure your hos are making money now." […] So sometimes I use that. And then later, if they find out that I really am in the business, you know, they're just blown away. (Carol)

Sex industry third parties who do not define themselves as "pimps" may nonetheless find the stereotypical tropes work to their advantage; this is most obvious in circumstances where their physical and social markers do not conform to expectations of race, gender, and aesthetic. The disconnect between the legal constructs that define third parties and the cultural stereotypes that condition stigma is rendered visible in these accounts. In the final section of this article we discuss the importance of this disambiguation for our understandings of the diversity of third parties' interactions and experiences of stigmatized identity.

Discussion

In this article we introduce the idea of stereotype consciousness as a key cognitive and interactional moment in the process of stigmatized identity formation and the "moral career" of third parties. While minute, these types of refinements to our understanding of the processes of stigmatization are particularly significant in the current academic context where we see the idea of stigma being used (and misused) in ways that bleed through the boundaries of Goffman's original concept. Imprecise (and often interdisciplinary) usage distorts the concept of stigma, rendering it a less precise mechanism for characterizing the interactional process that results in a spoiled identity. This article draws our attention back to Goffman's (1963) focus on stigma not as the attribute alone, but as the "relationship between the attribute and stereotype" (p. 4). This highlights the role of normative and moral judgments in establishing those attributes that become linked to negative stereotypes and stigmatized. Assumptions that deviant others will automatically recognize and assimilate an externally defined deviant identity are problematic in that they erase the underlying social constructions of deviance. These assumptions result in such uneasy concepts as "self-stigma" (Watson et al. 2007), or the tendency to read accounts of deviance as evidence of rationalization or justification that demonstrate the individual's own acceptance of the dominant framing of his/her behavior (Christensen 2010).

As described in our introduction, this research takes up as its subject the accounts of those who are understood as the quintessential folk devil of our time—their actions may be defined in discourse and under the current criminal laws as "materially benefitting," "procuring," or "trafficking," irrespective of the agency or autonomy exercised by the sex workers with whom they work. The interview context, by its very nature, calls on participants to provide accounts of their actions (Hannem, Langan, and Stewart 2015). The resulting narratives are often framed as evidence of neutralization or justification that normalize or defend their behavior. Nevertheless, in our interpretive framing, it is key that we attend to participants' narratives without engaging in motive mongering or attempting to interpret their explanations as reifying the realist assumption that the individuals are aware that their behavior is "actually" deviant and requires justification to preserve a respectable identity (Christensen 2010). Furthermore, the data in this case indicates that at least in some instances discreditable individuals may be entirely unaware that they could be labeled with a stigmatized identity, until they are confronted with it and "called to account" (Scott and Lyman 1968:55) for their actions. In this case, we have treated the participants' narratives as the verbalized evidence of their internal identity negotiations, rather than imputing motive.

In addition to drawing attention to the process of negotiating a stigmatized identity, this article adds to the literature on third parties in the sex industry, providing insight into the impact of stereotypes on their interactions with others, both inside and outside the industry. As we have described, the laws criminalizing third party involvement in the sex industry are steeped in stereotypes of exploitative and violent relationships between pimps or procurers or traffickers and sex workers (see also Bruckert and Hannem 2013). As a result, the laws do not attend to or make provisions for the diversity of relationships between sex workers and third parties, and do not reflect

the experiences of many people in the sex industry. We would argue that it is precisely the disconnect between the vividness of the pimp stereotype and the ambiguity of the legal definitions that create space for third parties in the sex industry to distance themselves cognitively from these stigmatized and criminalized identities. It is stereotype consciousness that makes it possible for the actor to negotiate or reject the discredited identity on the basis of non-conformity to the stereotype; in their own actions, they see neither the stereotypes, nor the legal definitions. Yet this same stereotype consciousness opens up possibilities for third parties to use the pimp trope to advantage, when required, highlighting the privilege that accrues to individuals who meet the legal definition of a third party, but do not exhibit the stereotyped markers.

In conclusion, this article draws further attention to the complexities of acquiring a stigmatized identity, the intersections of stereotypes and stigma, and the importance of respecting participants' accounts of their own realities. Our discussion of the interactional processes involved in the moral career of third parties highlights the constructed and contested nature of stigmatized identities and the importance of stereotype consciousness to the identities of individuals who are labeled and ascribed a stigmatized status. The acceptance of a stigmatized identity is neither a given, nor straightforward, process and our analysis of third party narratives provides a nuanced examination of Goffman's brief explanation.

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