

Escort Clients' Sexual Scripts and Constructions of Intimacy in Commodified Sexual Relationships

Zoey Jones

Carleton University

Stacey Hannem

Wilfrid Laurier University

This article draws on fourteen in-depth semi-structured interviews with men who hire female escorts to examine the role of intimacy in their interactions with sex workers. Using the concept of social scripting, we examine the cultural, interpersonal, and intrapsychic meanings that shape the commodified sexual interaction. Focusing on the clients' intrapsychic scripts, we argue that previous typologies of client behavior ignore the role of intimacy and the meaning that individuals ascribe to their own experiences and actions. We suggest a typology of clients that goes beyond previous classifications of "regular" and "non-regular"—the latter referred to as a "hummingbird" client from the perspective of one sex worker. Our four-part typology of committed regulars, hybrids, searchers, and industry insiders takes into account the role of intimacy along with the client's perception of frequency and motive, even in seemingly casual sexual encounters. A video abstract is available at https://youtu.be/IK_UiGzWT_E.

Keywords: intimacy, sexual scripts, social scripting, sex work, clients, sexuality, prostitution

INTRODUCTION

Sexual behavior is social behavior and sexual interactions are socially produced, drawing on existing cultural narratives, scripts, gendered expectations, and accepted motivations (Gagnon and Simon 2005; Kimmel 2007). Although it is commodified and subject to marketization (Bernstein 2007), sex work—the exchange of sexual

Direct all correspondence to Zoey Jones, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Carleton University, B750 Loeb Building, 1125 Colonel By Drive, Ottawa Ontario, K1S 5B6, Canada; e-mail: zoey.jones@carleton.ca.

Symbolic Interaction, Vol. 41, Issue 4, pp. 488–512, ISSN: 0195-6086 print/1533-8665 online.

© 2018 Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction. All rights reserved.

DOI: 10.1002/SYMB.379

services for money or other consideration — is not immune to the cultural scripts and narratives that shape noncommodified sexual interactions. Participants in sex work, both clients and sex workers, actively construct encounters that reflect the cultural expectations of sexuality as an “intimate” interaction, but also retain the boundaries of a consumptive practice — what Bernstein (2007) has called “bounded authenticity.”

Intimacy is often a crucial aspect of the client experience in sex work, and has been studied directly and peripherally from the perspectives of both sex workers and their clients (Bernstein 2007; Lever and Dolnick 2010; Sanders 2008a, 2008b). Researchers attempting to classify sex work clients often draw on sex workers' descriptions of their clients' behavior, and on self-report surveys of clients examining quantifiable behaviors divorced from individuals' understandings of what those behaviors represent. Drawing on in-depth qualitative interviews with clients of escorts, and utilizing a symbolic interactionist framing, this research challenges the existing dichotomy of “regular” and “non-regular” clients by presenting a typology that engages with the role of intimacy in sex work. Using Newmahr's (2011) framing of intimacy as a function of *access to privileged information and experiences*, we argue that the role of intimacy in sex work challenges narrower framings which rely on a characterization of the relationship as a reciprocal experience of positive emotions. Most of the research participants claim to value intimacy and “connection.”¹ Building on this discovery, we argue that previous typifications of clients ignore the meanings that individuals ascribe to their own behavior, fail to capture diverse motivations, and erase the experience of intimacy in seemingly casual sexual transactions.

Literature on Intimacy in Sex Work

The existing sociological and psychological scholarship on intimacy generally does not address the sex industry as a site of potential inquiry. Sanders (2008a) argues that this gap in the literature exists because researchers instead emphasize the physical, sexual aspects of the interactions between sex workers and clients, and neglect emotional interactions. The disconnection of sex work and intimacy is also present in the client literature. Some research depicts the sex worker/client relationship as fundamentally different from sexual relationships not involving monetary exchange, claiming that sex work encounters are “focused entirely on sexual release rather than love and intimacy” (Milrod and Monto 2012:794; see also Campbell 1998; Monto 1998, 2010), and suggesting that payment creates a buffer between the parties involved, preventing authentic bonds from forming (Milrod and Monto 2012). Other studies refer to the “illusion of intimacy” (Frank 1998) and “counterfeit intimacy” (Boles and Garbin 1974; Enck and Preston 1988) often found in strip clubs. Such assertions are predicated on the assumption that there is, then, a “true intimacy” which presumably is not commodifiable, is reciprocal, and has overtones of romantic attachment.

The discussion of intimacy in sex work is also limited by varying usage of the term intimacy, and lack of a clear definition (see also Moss and Schwebel 1993). In some cases, authors clearly belie a conceptual conflation between intimacy and love, assuming that the two are synonymous or, at the least, co-present (see Milrod and Monto 2012). Many researchers use Giddens' (1992) characterization of intimacy as a "healthy and desirable condition of a relationship, fueled by open but bounded communication between partners" (Newmahr 2011:169). Giddens' (1992) macro-sociological analysis is concerned with how relationships and sites of intimacy have been transformed via shifting social expectations of sexuality and relationships. Sanders (2008a) argues that the presence of intimacy in sex work is a part of this transformation, while Milrod and Weitzer (2012:4) interpret Giddens' theorizing of the "pure relationship" to imply that intimacy "transcends any economic relationship between the two parties." Evidently, even with a common foundation, sex work researchers have yet to reach a shared conceptualization of intimacy and its relationship to the transactional aspect of sex work.

Researchers have also engaged only peripherally with the existential aspect of intimacy. For example, Milrod and Monto (2012) imply that intimacy is a necessarily two-sided experience, and clients' desires for companionship and mutual enjoyment are framed as burdens upon the sex worker, requiring emotional labor (Hochschild 1983). Reciprocity (or lack thereof) seems crucial to define whether there is "authentic" intimacy for some researchers (e.g., Enck and Preston 1988; Milrod and Monto 2012). This approach has also been referred to as "self-focused sexuality," suggesting that the exchange of sexual services for money makes this closer to a consumer relationship than an intimate one (Milrod and Monto 2012; Monto and Julka 2009). Alternatively, some researchers accept that the experience of intimacy may be present in a commercial context. For example, while Frank (1998:184) acknowledges the assumption that intimacy in a strip club is illusory, she found that intimacy between erotic dancers and regular clients is "constantly negotiated in repeated interaction" and can challenge traditional ideas of "authentic intimacy." Similarly, Bernstein (2007) is clear that recognition of the emotional labor and "deep acting" that many sex workers engage to fulfill their clients' fantasies of desire and connection does not invalidate clients' experiences of that connection, and Sanders (2008a, 2008b) utilizes the word intimacy to describe clients' emotional experiences, without problematizing her respondents' representations of their feelings.

Newmahr (2011:171, emphasis in original) describes intimacy as "not necessarily about love, sex, or tenderness, but about *access* to emotional and physical experiences of others that we consider inaccessible to most people." This effectively separates the concept of intimacy from that of relationship, highlighting that intimacy is interactional and is neither inherently "good" or "bad," nor necessarily tied to feelings of love or pleasure. The importance or "depth" of the interaction is of less concern than the sense of exclusivity or privilege that is afforded in the interaction; if an individual believes that s/he is engaged in a form of interaction that would not be offered to others, then a sense of intimacy will emerge. Newmahr argues that any interaction,

even violence, can be experienced as intimate if it meets the conditions of providing access to another's thoughts, experiences, or physical body that are normally subject to selective boundaries and not readily available. In this sense, the pursuit of intimacy is competitive; individuals strive for access to others and achieving intimacy represents a conquest (Newmahr 2011). While Newmahr does not examine paying for access, the possibility is not precluded. This conceptualization provides a rich theoretical framing to situate the interactional negotiations of intimacy described in our data.

In the limited research on intimacy in sex work there are two distinct approaches: (1) intimacy requires equal partners with reciprocal emotions, leading researchers to assess whether or not both parties have "real" feelings or (2) intimacy can be experienced without reciprocity, and researchers can explore and identify intimacy with data from one side of the relationship. Drawing on a rich tradition of phenomenological and existential inquiry (e.g., Berger and Luckmann 1966; Douglas and Johnson 1977; Schutz 1962) we adopt the second approach which recenters subjectivity and recognizes that while shared meanings permit social action, two actors may experience their interactions and the situation very differently. We acknowledge the emotional labor required of sex workers when clients pursue intimacy; however, we also respect our participants' convictions that their experiences are real.

Literature on Clients

The majority of sex work research focuses on sex workers or service providers (SPs) rather than clients. This may evidence a male-centric bias in the study of deviance and sexuality which positions male behavior as normative, while women's violations of notions of femininity result in extensive speculation, interest, and research (O'Neill 2001). The notion that purchasing sex is "normal" (and that the men who buy it are, therefore, not of great interest to scholars) has a strong historical foothold (O'Neill 2001). However, societal and academic interest in sex work clients has increased over the past three decades; since the early 1980s, moral censure has been "incrementally extended and, to a degree, transferred from women who sell sex to men who pay" (Kinnell 2006:212). The 2014 Canadian legislation that criminalized the purchase of sex, but not the sale, is explicit evidence of this shift.

In the past two decades, researchers from a variety of disciplines including sexuality, gender, and masculinity studies (Bernstein 2001; Joseph and Black 2012; Katsulis 2010; Khan 2011; Milrod and Weitzer 2012; O'Neill 2001), criminal justice (Tewksbury and Golder 2005), sociology (Giusta, Di Tommaso, and Strøm 2009; Sanders 2008a, 2008b), and psychology (Plumridge et al. 1997) have attempted to address the dearth of literature on sex work clients. While Holzman and Pines (1982) were among the first to employ a phenomenological approach to the study clients of sex workers, using in-depth, qualitative interviews, the more contemporary literature has moved away from intersubjective methodologies (notable exceptions include Bernstein 2007 and Symons 2015²). Many studies focus on describing the demographics

of clients, finding that clients are a heterogeneous group, spanning ethnicities (Armstrong 1978; Monto 2010), a wide range of ages (Jordan 1997; Sanders 2008b), and education (Lowman and Atchison 2006). Research also examines the services that clients seek, and identifies a wide variety of motivations (see Busch et al. 2002; Jordan 1997; Lowman and Atchison 2006; Monto and McRee 2005; Pitts et al. 2004; Tewksbury and Golder 2005), including unsatisfying sexual relationships with partners (Jordan 1997; Monto 2010; Sanders 2008a), desire for minimal emotional connection and involvement (Monto 2010), attraction to the “thrill” or “taboo” of hiring sex workers (Kinnell 2006; McKeganey and Barnard 1996; Monto 2010), or meeting unfulfilled emotional needs (Earle and Sharp 2007; Sanders 2008a). Participants are often recruited from “John Schools” (e.g., van Brunschot 2003; Wahab 2005, 2006; Wortley, Fischer, and Webster 2002), suggesting involvement in street-level prostitution. There is also a growing literature which studies and surveys clients’ virtual worlds, through analysis of client engagement on online erotic review boards (ERBs) and special interest sites (Blevins and Holt 2009; Earle and Sharp 2007; Holt and Blevins 2007; Milrod and Monto 2012; Pettinger 2011; Pruitt and Krull 2011). This seems to have marked a shift away from relying on the stories of sex workers to gather secondary information and draw conclusions about clients (e.g., Armstrong 1978) toward clients as primary data sources.

Although there is a strong, if relatively small, body of literature on clients from which to draw, much of the research investigates clients through online observation or survey research. Further, their hypotheses are largely informed by previous research on sex workers and assume that client experiences will mirror the perspectives of SPs. Few studies employ qualitative interviews with clients, and even fewer allow the voices of the clients to shape the research process.

EPISTEMOLOGY AND METHOD

For this project we adopted a constructivist grounded theory stance — an approach that reflects an interpretive paradigm and views “both data and analysis as created from shared experiences and relationships with participants” (Charmaz 2010:130; see also Glaser and Strauss 1967). Consistent with a symbolic interactionist framing, constructivist epistemology approaches data and analysis in a relational manner; the participants’ narratives provide rich data for analysis as we engage with the intersubjective and social elements of their perceptions, examining how clients interact with symbolic “objects” (Blumer 1969) to construct meaning in the sexual transaction.³

Participants for this study were recruited from an online ERB serving a medium-sized city in Ontario, Canada. ERBs represent an online space where clients can be relatively anonymous (or pseudonymous), and the particular site chosen for this study included discussions ranging from ideal rates for sex work to Canadian politics. However, an ERB is essentially built around sharing reviews of sex workers’ services. Clients using this site discussed all types of sex work including street sex work, massage parlors, indoor escorting, and sugar babies, and there

appeared to be a locked section for sex workers only (which was not accessible to us as researchers). Clients could choose to remain anonymous online, but many sex workers asked for online handles (i.e., online names) during their screening process, which would allow them to check references with other sex workers and review their online presence. As such, for some clients their online handle represented a “real” name in that they had a reputation with positive and/or negative associations that they built up over time. Other clients boasted at the fact that they did not share their online handle with sex workers, allowing them to escape social consequences for negative or rude online comments. However, most people who actively reviewed sex workers on this website would presumably be identifiable to those sex workers, as they often recounted specific activities and interactions during their review of services.

The first author explored several online ERBs and chose one that appeared to have a regular group of clients who frequented the site. This ERB, given the pseudonym “Eros,” is a virtual community of active, retired, and prospective clients, and sex workers. After obtaining ethics clearance from the university, we received permission from the owner/administrator of the ERB to post a recruitment thread to introduce the project and request participation.

After choosing a location for recruitment and study that appeared to reflect some community cohesion, recruitment was as broad as possible. The recruitment post targeted all participants of Eros who hire sex workers and was inclusive of all adult ages, ethnicities, genders, and styles of sex work interaction. This post emphasized that the core purpose of the research project was to gain and share a better understanding of clients' lived experiences in the sex industry. The initial guiding research questions focused on these lived experiences, with a sensitivity to experiences of stigma and perceptions and management of risk, as well as an intention to pursue *criminological verstehen*⁴ (Ferrell 1997). The emergence of “intimacy” as an emergent theme across each interview intrigued us, and influenced later interviews and analysis to adjust to this prevailing topic of conversation.

Initially, some clients enthusiastically volunteered to interview, while others publicly and privately expressed concern at being outed or arrested through the process of research. One of the first author's initial positive contacts was with a moderator on the forum, who volunteered to monitor the discussion and provide her with “insider” information, although he was too nervous to participate himself. The first author built trust with participants by thoroughly and transparently sharing information in follow-up comments regarding methods, research question, and assurances as to criminal law relating to sex work, and this was significantly bolstered by participants who subsequently posted “reviews” of the interview and/or researcher in the recruitment thread. After participants shared positive experiences in this manner, a second, smaller wave of volunteers came forward. These comments emphasized that the experience was positive, respectful,⁵ and, most importantly, did not involve any surprise police officers or journalists. Recruitment was significantly aided by the fact that many of these clients felt that they were unfairly represented in media

(particularly news/crime media) about sex work and were worried about potential future legislation criminalizing the purchase of sex (which subsequently came to pass in Canada in late 2014).

The initial interview questions asked the participants to discuss any concerns they had about criminalization or being arrested for soliciting to purchase sex, experiences of stigmatization connected to being a client, how much of their identity and self was invested in being a client or “hobbyist,” and their impressions of clients in the media. However, the first three clients arrived at their interviews prepared to tell the story of how and why they hire sex workers, and gave succinct and distracted answers to our intended line of inquiry. The first author decided to adjust the interview schedule to better suit what the clients wanted to talk about: what they felt was misunderstood by the public and researchers alike, which was, chiefly, the nuanced experiences that they had hiring sex workers.

The first author interviewed fourteen men who hire women sex workers⁶ in a semi-public location⁷ – thirteen in person and one over telephone. These interviews were semi-structured, in-depth, guided by a thematic interview schedule, and lasted from 45 minutes to 3 hours. Most clients indicated that they viewed around \$200 per hour as the ideal rate for sex workers, which positions them in a fairly middle-of-the-road demographic as far as sex work is concerned (see Jones 2013 for more analysis of this price point). All participants identified as Caucasian and heterosexual (one identified as “straight but curious”), and ranged in age from “early 30s” to “over 65.” The participants represented a range of socioeconomic statuses; one participant was unemployed and receiving government assistance, while the remaining thirteen reported income from \$25,000 to \$300,000 per year. Occupations varied widely, and included employment in the service industry, information technology, science, finance, factory work, and business. The marital status of those involved in this study was often a point of discussion (albeit a delicate topic), as this frequently was cited as a motive for seeing sex workers, whether single (six participants), married (six participants), or divorced/separated (two participants). The majority of participants expressed no difficulty finding sexual partners outside of the sex industry and so their decisions to see sex workers were generally not related to a lack of access to potential sexual partners, consistent with Bernstein’s (2007) findings in which she suggests that it is a particular kind of commodified and bounded intimacy that clients are seeking in pursuing paid sexual encounters.

The initial phase of coding utilized line-by-line or incident-to-incident coding (Charmaz 2010) using NVivo10, depending⁸ on the richness of the data; axial coding was employed to connect emerging themes and categories together. Focused coding was used to consider each interview in light of the emerging themes, finding new connections and references that aided in defining and exploring concepts. The theme of intimacy was very significant in the data, found in every interview, and served to inform the creation of new theoretical categories for understanding client behavior.

INTIMACY AND THE SEXUAL SCRIPT

Building on Gagnon and Simon's (2005) seminal work on sexual scripts,⁹ much work has been done to understand and unpack the various cultural narratives and socializations that impact the context, shape, and experience of sexual encounters. Gagnon and Simon (2005) identified three layers of scripting involved in the framing and interaction of sexual behavior. The first, and most abstract, cultural scripts, "lay out the playing field of sexuality; what is deemed desirable and undesirable, and where the broad boundaries lie between appropriate and inappropriate sexual conduct" (Wiederman 2015:8). In the case of heterosexual encounters, cultural scripts are not necessarily cohesive and shifting cultural norms will create tensions in actors' expectations. Dominant cultural scripts would place the case of men who seek paid sex with women at the intersections of the broad categorizations of desirable/undesirable and appropriate/inappropriate. Male clients of sex workers at once are pursuing the appropriate cultural script of seeking sexual interaction with (often multiple) desirable women, but violating scripts of romantic sexuality which suggest that such encounters should be organic, rooted in mutual desire, and free of (explicit) commodification. Broad cultural scripts, rooted in puritanical and instrumentalist views of sexuality, also suggest that heterosexual interactions *should* be understood as a site of intimacy, framed as the reciprocal experience of a shared emotional connection that is at once romantic, unique, and monogamous (or at least monogamous for the woman). Some contemporary sexual scripts, such as "the hookup" examined by Bogle (2008) and Wade (2017), explicitly sever sexual encounters from the expectation of emotional intimacy and ongoing relationship. The hookup scripts themselves are understood as deviant such that the expectations for these interactions are not well defined, leaving the interpersonal scripting vague and prone to misinterpretation (Bogle 2008; Wade 2017). However, hookups are understood, in some cases, as a possible precursor to a longer, more traditional, intimate dating relationship, and may, in some situations, evolve to conform to more normative scripts. Paid sex with sex workers violates these cultural scripts as well; introducing the element of payment into the sexual encounter signals a commodified interaction which appears incompatible with our dominant scripts for sexual intimacy and seems to erase the expectations of mutual attraction and connection. However, we would suggest that at the subsequent layers of scripting — interpersonal and intrapsychic scripting — sex workers and clients construct interactions that draw on these dominant cultural scripts, rewriting the script in a way that sets the boundaries of the encounter and allows for clients to experience intimacy within a bounded temporal and emotional frame.

For Gagnon and Simon (2005), interpersonal scripting draws on shared symbols and cultural expectations about sex and sexuality to permit individuals to interact and play out a "scene" without necessarily explicitly discussing the parameters of that interaction. Physical and verbal cues are engaged to maintain a frame of expectations around the interaction — in this case the frame of the paid sexual encounter — and the

intersection of cultural and interpersonal scripts permits shared understanding of the definition of the situation (Thomas and Thomas 1928) that allows the interaction to proceed smoothly. This is true in all realms of social interaction; Emerson (2001) and Lerum (2001) provide insightful empirical expositions of the social scripts involved in gynecological exams and strip clubs, respectively. However, it is at the level of intrapsychic scripting that we can unpack the meanings and emotional engagement that individuals associate with these actions/interactions, realizing that “the same sequence of acts may have different meanings both for different pairs of actors or the participants in the same act” (Gagnon and Simon 2005:14). We now turn our attention to the focus of our analysis, which is the intrapsychic scripting employed by the male clients of female escorts in making sense of their own engagement with commodified sex.

SYMBOLIC OBJECTS AND CONSTRUCTIONS OF INTIMACY

Most of the clients in this study explicitly referred to “connection,” “click,” or “intimacy.” Some clients identified intimacy as their primary goal in hiring escorts, with sexual interaction almost an afterthought; for others, intimacy was a surprising but welcome by-product, or a positive accompaniment to the pursuit of fulfilling sexual experiences. While discussion of intimacy and connection was almost universal, the representative symbols of intimacy varied. These symbolic objects were discussed as indicators of intimacy — proof presented to the interviewer in the client’s explanations of his relationships, experiences, and desires.¹⁰

Many clients discussed the development of a nonsexual relationship with a SP to represent the intimacy that they experienced. In order to explain the connection, consider a statement by a client that expressed his respect and attraction to the *personality* of the SP, his interest in talking and hanging out with his favorite SP(s), and/or his interest in intimate — but not explicitly sexual — physical interaction:

A lot of the time I want to get it [sexual intercourse] done quick, because I like the after time. I like just laying there and relaxing and, oh yeah. It was everything, the first year was just like therapy. I loved everything about it. It wasn’t just the sex at all. Especially the ones I saw multiple times, those were the girls I really liked talking to, so I’d just go back to them. Actually, there were some times I went that I think I just wanted to hang out with them and just talk more than anything, but I spent all that money, so I might as well do everything! (Justin, 39)

Justin’s statement suggests that when a client seeks primarily nonsexual connection, the commodification of the interaction *might* alter expectations of the interaction, prompting him to engage in sex *because* he spent the money, following the scripted expectations for interactions with sex workers. Many participants discussed the connections that they found in conversation, and the development of candid, friendly relationships with SPs as enhancing intimacy, making the client feel as though he is a special and privileged client. As Jonah suggested:

Sexuality is much more than body. Much, much more. And, I don't know. That's not the appeal for me. I was [with] somebody I had seen regularly, and we just started chatting and chatting and chatting and chatting, and then we got into things, and all of a sudden she was like, "Oh my God, somebody's going to be here in like five minutes!" So it's like, clothes on. But it was out of respect, you know. She has a business, and that's how she's supporting herself. And I've been the guy sitting in the parking lot being like, "What do you mean, five more minutes, five more minutes?" No. Okay, I'm way over the time. I was supposed to be there for an hour and we were an hour and a half, hour and 45. (Jonah, mid-30s)

Clients such as Jonah interpret the extension of the session due to chatting and connection, without extra cost, as a measure of mutuality¹¹ — a symbol that the SP enjoys spending time with him as much as he enjoys spending time with her. However, Bernstein (2007) has documented that sometimes these symbols of mutuality are not well received by clients who wish to avoid the messiness of an ambiguous sexual relationship and intimacy that is not bounded by payment and time limits. We did not encounter this in our data, but SPs may, in fact, risk alienating the very clients that they seek to keep by offering additional time or unpaid services. In this sense, the script of the paid sexual encounter is thrown into question by the suggestion of mutuality that might exceed the negotiated limits of a commodified service.

Within the sexual encounter, participants' constructions of intimacy also included sexual mutuality. The nature of the sex industry prioritizes the sexual desires of the client and requires the sex worker to accommodate those desires; flipping this dynamic and providing sexual pleasure for the SP gives clients the feeling of a more intimate connection and that this reciprocation assists with enjoyment of her job. This is consistent with Giddens' (1992:3) definition of intimacy as "a transactional negotiation of personal ties by equals," as many clients find authenticity and intimacy in attempting to create equal sexual pleasure — a experience that they assume does not occur in all of the SP's sexual transactions with clients. Donald explains:

If there's a genuine connection of any sort on any level and you can play that up, if I can give them an orgasm that helps a great deal for me. That's why I like oral sex because then I can at least give them *that*, and they can put up with me for a while. (Donald, 33)

Ralph also prefers sessions if he believes that the SP is enjoying herself:

I'm there because I want a GFE [Girlfriend Experience], number one, and number two is, I care.¹² I want the interaction between us, I want that time together, to be mutually enjoyable. So I want the woman to be pleased as much as me. So I'm really, I focus on them. I want them to come if I can. And I try. (Ralph, over 40)

Clients describe attempting to provide SPs with pleasure for a variety of reasons largely tied to sexual enjoyment, mutuality, and an interest in fostering intimacy. They described prowess at giving women pleasure, with varying degrees of awareness that the enjoyment exhibited by the SP may or may not be authentic. Client desire for

mutuality may, in fact, increase the emotional labor required from the SP (see Lever and Dolnick 2010), as satisfying the client requires her to *perform* enjoyment. At the level of scripting, the performance of enjoyment maintains both the client's *fantasy* (intrapsychic script) of a mutually enjoyable sexual encounter, and the agreed upon interpersonal script of the sexual service which requires that the client's desires be satisfied — the SP would violate the script of the commodified sexual service by expressing displeasure or failing to perform pleasure such that the client was forced to confront the failure of his fantasy. However, her performance of his successful sexual prowess allows the client to feel that he has provided an enjoyable experience that would *differentiate* their interaction from the SP's interactions with other clients, thus creating a sense of intimacy in having access to her sexual pleasure.

The experience of intimacy for clients also appears to be tied to scripted patterns of traditional heterosexual romantic encounters, as indicated by symbols normally associated with a "date":

I like to talk first, chat, if the TV's on, whatever, see what's going on, and all that type of thing. And just basically, I like it to feel like, you know, a date. Start on the couch kissing, something like that. (Kevin, 44)

Clients place a premium on nonpenetrative erotic contact as mirroring noncommodified heterosexual relationships and therefore as indicative of intimacy:

I lack intimacy in my life, so for me it's not about sex. I couldn't care less. I could have sex with anything. But it's the connection, it's the kissing, it's the touching, [and] shower for two after. Nothing goes on in the shower other than talking, touching, washing. Very basic, almost basically what a couple does. (Bart, 35)

Kissing also appears as a symbol of intimacy; in some instances, the client felt kissing was so indelibly linked to intimacy that they could not enjoy a session with an SP who restricted kissing. Jonah told us:

Several girls I've seen advertised in the past have advertised very adamantly, "no kissing" ... that's something I can't *not* have. It's not, there's no link, there's no emotion, if it's just straight sex with no kissing. (Jonah, mid-30s)

Kissing is also sometimes leveraged to demonstrate that the sex worker and client have a *special* or unique relationship. For example, Ralph quickly learned the intimacy value connected to the kiss upon his first visit to a sex worker:

She told me the first time "no kissing," and I was like, (disappointed voice) "no kissing, okay, well I guess." I don't know anything about this, and she said "you know, the girls don't kiss." I go back a week later, started getting intimate with her, oh my God. She kissed me like I've never been kissed in my life. (Ralph, over 40)

Following Newmahr's (2011) analysis, Ralph was granted *access* to a restricted physical experience (kissing), contributing to his sense of a growing intimacy in the relationship and a feeling of privilege. The SP's willingness to engage in kissing when she

had not previously been willing signaled to Ralph that this encounter was moving toward a more traditional sexual script in which intimacy and sexuality are entwined.

Beyond these physical experiences, many clients engage in more abstract meaning-making processes that influence the intimacy they feel in their relationships with sex workers. Jonah suggested that the anonymity of sex work encounters actually *increases* the intimacy:

Especially if you're with somebody that you've already been [with] and got to know, and have a bit of trust built there. The walls are down, and that anonymity between the two of you; she doesn't really know who *you* are, and in a weird sort of way you can both just kind of let go. (Jonah, mid-30s)

Conversely, Kevin expressed concern that women may be coerced into the sex industry or otherwise be unhappy due to the nature of sex work, wondering, "how do they see *themselves* after I leave?" (Kevin, 44). He reported that when these concerns emerged during a session, he sometimes finds himself unable or unwilling to perform sexually, but wants to ensure that the SP's feelings are not hurt by his lack of interest:

You know, I'll sit there and hold hands, whatever, watch TV, if it doesn't go right. I'll make sure, you know, "it's not your fault," because some girls will feel guilty. It's like, "well you know you paid me for ...," and I'm like, "no! I want to sit here, talk, have a smoke, whatever." (Kevin, 44)

Interrupted Intimacy

Clients may develop complex and meaningful relationships with SPs and, indeed, feel that they do. However, the nature of the sex industry creates challenges; many clients inevitably experience some degree of *interrupted intimacy*, an abrupt and often unexpected disruption of intimate relationships, usually triggered by external forces, which results in the removal of access to the SP. One gentle form of interrupted intimacy manifests each time a session ends, as the commodified nature of the session creates an experience that is always temporally bounded, regardless of enjoyment and intimacy. As Robert explains, "I'll be honest, it's not always easy, because sometimes when you're having a great time with, you wish they could stay because it's that good" (Robert, 53). This form of interrupted intimacy highlights the tension between traditional scripts of sexually intimate relationships in which access to one's partner is not temporally bounded and the script of the commodified sexual encounter which is understood as limited, albeit sometimes reluctantly so.

Another manifestation of interrupted intimacy and loss of access is experienced when clients hire SPs through an agency or brothel which prevents workers from directly contacting clients and vice versa. A sex worker who leaves a brothel or agency often loses clients through lack of communication. Jacob expressed some sadness about his experiences with this interruption:

I [saw] her over a three or four month period and she's not there anymore, and because I have no way of contacting her or vice versa, I don't see her at all anymore. (Jacob, 57)

Donald experienced another variation of this problem. He met a sex worker who he connected with at a brothel but found the intimacy too intense:

Basically I was falling for her, and I kept wanting to go. And I was like, "no, this isn't good, she doesn't care. She might think I'm a sweet guy, but she's twenty-three or something, she's got her life. She doesn't need this." Then, about two months later, I was like, I really do want to see her again, because [it was] the best experience I've had, even just physically. And she wasn't doing it anymore. So, I was a little sad because I totally lost touch. (Donald, 33)

In nonpaid relationships, individuals interested in maintaining contact might exchange contact information and notify one another of any changes in this information, making these kinds of experiences less likely. The interpersonal scripting of the sex industry contains unique rules — explicit and implicit — regarding communication, the end of a session, and barriers between "real life" and the commodified encounter that can make it difficult to maintain intimate relationships, even when both parties are willing and interested. Interrupted intimacy can be painful for clients who experienced a strong connection; sex workers who leave the sex industry, contract an illness, or pass away can leave an emotional imprint on clients who cared about them. As Bryan (age 62) shared: "when something happens to them or they decide to leave [the industry] ... there's a loss there."

There are many objects of intimacy and indications of clients' intimacy meaning-making processes. While there is not space here to present each example found in the data, we have presented some of the most prevalent negotiations of intimacy. Next, we will examine how client engagements with intimacy are crucial to our understanding of their behavioral patterns in the sex industry.

Addressing the "Regular"

Sex work research frequently refers to the *regular* — a type of client who sees the same SP over a series of sessions and develops a bond with her (e.g., Brewis and Linstead 2000; Browne and Minichiello 1995; Egan 2006; Joseph and Black 2012; Milrod and Weitzer 2012; Murphy and Venkatesh 2006; Sanders 2005, 2008a; Sanders and Campbell 2007). From the SP's perspective, regulars may be seen as "safe" (Sanders 2005), "easy," and "nice" (Browne and Minichiello 1995:608), and according to an escort on Eros, they represent job security. Further, the relationship between a regular client and SP mirrors traditional heteronormative scripts and notions of romance, making this relationship more similar to unpaid relationships than outsiders believe (Sanders 2008a). Research on sex work describes men who are *not* regulars less often; Sanders (2008a) refers to them as "one off" clients, implying that a subset of clients hire a variety of SPs without forming emotional bonds. Sarah, an escort on Eros,

referred to these “non-regulars” as “hummingbirds” — describing a tendency to flit from SP to SP, pursuing sexual variety. Sanders (2008b:404) wrote that “[n]on-regular clients ... appeared to be different from ‘regular’ clients in both their motivations to seek out commercial sex and the commercial relationship dynamics.” The dichotomy of regular clients and hummingbirds informed this project — we expected to be able to classify participants as regulars or hummingbirds; however, our data did not support this dichotomy.

In the existing sex work research, the dichotomy of regulars and variety-focused nonregulars emerged from sex workers' own retrospective or journal-based descriptions of clients (e.g., Armstrong 1978; Holzman and Pines 1982); assumption of this dichotomy seems to have influenced subsequent client studies. Most client research does not justify its use of this binary, nor define it, indicating that the concept of the regular is embedded in assumptions about clients' motivations, frequency, and the nature of sex work. An examination of client behavior informed by understanding of their motivations (intrapsychic scripts) provides a very different, less homogenous view. From our data, four categories of behavior hinging on differential frequency and engagement with intimacy emerged: (1) the committed regular; (2) clients who were regular with one (or two or three) SP(s), while also pursuing variety on the side (this was recognized briefly in Sanders 2008b); (3) clients who saw a variety of SPs, seeking the “right one” with whom to be a regular; and (4) clients who are so immersed in the local sex work subculture that they are familiar with most sex workers in the Eros scene, making their “regular” status difficult to determine. A clearly delineated hummingbird category, whose sole purpose is to pursue sexual variety, did not emerge in this sample. This data suggests that a client's negotiations with desired levels of intimacy and familiarity are more complex than previously represented.

Committed Regular

Several participants fit the traditional definition of the regular; they pursued close bonds with a small number of sex workers (sometimes one at a time, mirroring the serial monogamy of dating relationships) and maintained those bonds over a period of time. For some, meeting a new SP is a nerve-wracking and negative experience, and there is a degree of comfort present in identifying a regular SP. Jacob (age 57), for example, felt that “variety's not the spice of life” — he had been seeing his regular sex worker for about 18 months. Kevin (age 44) likes to “go” with the same girls, for comfort and familiarity — he disclosed that “after three or four, five times ... I don't get nervous anymore. It gets more fun.”

Other committed regulars described their relationships in intense and intimate terms; these clients prefer relationships that mirror the respect, courtship rituals, intimacy, and confidante quality of traditional heteronormative romantic scripts (as identified in Sanders 2008b). They pursue relationships with SPs that often blur the boundaries between sex work and nonpaid relationships. For example, Ralph related a history of long-term, intense, sometimes (asymmetrically) monogamous

relationships with sex workers. He shared that he helped one SP to leave an abusive relationship, unsafe home, and the sex work profession. He became her only client, but hoped she would eventually stop sex work entirely.¹³

Ralph also described developing relationships with SPs in which he no longer pays for individual sessions, preferring instead to exchange shopping trips and vacations for an ongoing sexual relationship. As noted by Bernstein (2007), noncash or “gift exchange” payments may blur the boundaries between paid and nonpaid relationships, requiring additional emotional labor on the part of the SP to fulfill the fantasy the client is seeking while maintaining her status as a professional. In Ralph’s case, the SP continued to see other clients, but allowed Ralph a measure of priority — a privileged access to her time and body that underscored his experience of intimacy:

She knows how I feel; like I don’t want to see her after she’s been working all day.
So she knows she sees me first. (Ralph, over 40)

While Ralph did not appear jealous of other clients or nonpaid relationships, he was aware of men whom his current SP might be seeing. Bryan also shares intense connections with the SPs he sees regularly, although these relationships do not include monogamy or off-the-clock services. He described one SP in particular as “a key component to my emotional landscape.” Bryan only sees new SPs if he “needs” to — if his regulars are ill or out of town — and he indicated a sense of loyalty to his regular SP:

... for some strange reason, this is bizarre, I feel I’m cheating on the other person.
And isn’t that crazy? (Bryan, 62)

Both Ralph and Bryan described characteristics common to heteronormative relationship scripts (Sanders 2008b) including trust, respect, intimacy, mutuality, and even a tendency toward monogamy — or, in Bryan’s case, feeling guilty for seeing other SPs. Joe, on the other hand, experienced a very unusual relationship with his regular SP. He became very emotionally attached to the first sex worker he hired, and then found himself the subject of increased financial and practical demands without reciprocal sexual or intimate interactions, which he struggled to meet. He described being unsure if he could even call himself a client, since she did not frequently provide him with sexual services and he could not afford to see someone else. Joe cited his unrequited feelings for her and pity for her life circumstances — including pregnancy — as reasons why he rarely turned down her requests for financial help.

Jacob, Kevin, Ralph, Bryan, and Joe could all be classified as regulars in the traditional sense, but their narratives demonstrate how varied their individual experiences are. Each of these five clients forms strong and intimate bonds with his regular SP(s) and yet there is radical variation in degrees of personal investment and the resulting impact on their lives.

Hybrid

Some participants described seeing a pattern among new clients on the ERB who see (and subsequently review) many SPs when they are first introduced to the sex industry and then slowly “calm down” over time. Justin’s comparatively short history as a client — around 3 years — exemplified this. Justin is one example of what we will call the *hybrid* client — a client who forms bonds in the midst of variety.

When I started, it was a *lot* of variety. Like just different girls all the time, but there were a few that I’d seen more than 10 times. There were a few favorites over the years. Like one girl I saw was one of the first girls, and I saw her again probably a couple months ago ... I probably saw her 10 times, spread over three years. And then other girls I’ll see five times in two months, and I won’t ever see them again. (Justin, 39)

For clients like Justin, frequency preferences and particular needs for connection may change over time. Another client, Robert (age 53), felt that building rapport and connection over multiple visits could serve a functional purpose that, ultimately, increased the quality of the encounter. Robert was one of the few clients who seemed to acknowledge a sex worker’s service as a dynamic rather than a static variable, and hybrid clients are well placed to see the advantages and disadvantages of different types of relationships within the sex industry. Some, like Phil (age 31), might actively desire multiple types of relationships with sex workers. Phil explained that he sometimes desires connection and ongoing intimacy, while at other times a purely carnal “porn star experience” is more attractive. This is an example of how an individual sex worker may experience a client as either a regular or not, while the client’s own understandings of their behavior, motivations, and frequency might reflect something less binary and definitive.

Lastly, Jonah provides yet another approach to being a hybrid client. He sees many SPs; according to his records¹⁴ he has between 1 and 12 sessions per month — 45 per year. These sessions are split between regular sex workers and new ones, depending on his mood. Jonah described his interest in variety as being not about the excitement of a new body, but the draw of meeting and understanding new people:

I’ve always had an interest in the differences in people, and in women; [it] fascinates me. Like how different one woman is from another. And then when you actually get into an intimate sort of setting with them, how different they all [are] ... The intimacy that happens there is *very* different from person to person. (Jonah, mid-30s)

Five of the fourteen participants shared that they have some degree of attraction to variety, but also form connections with sex workers whether or not they intentionally pursue intimacy. For them, long-term bonds may not be the only way to foster and feel intimacy — once again, drawing on an understanding intimacy as a kind of access that may be temporally bounded rather than an ongoing relationship. An interest in variety can be coupled with a desire for prolonged rapport or short,

intense experiences focused on fleeting discovery. This challenges the archetype of the regular by fulfilling major requirements of the definition (such as repeat visits and connection), while also undermining common assumptions that a higher frequency must result in weaker or less intimate connections. Sarah's analogy of the hummingbird is apt but, for these clients, missing one key detail: while these men might flit from sex worker to sex worker like a hummingbird between flowers, they might still regularly return to their favorite sex workers before flying off in search of new ones.

Searcher

In this research study we identified a third type of client: a client who is *searching*. Their behaviors might be motivated by a search for a particular connection or a particular experience, and their failure to find what they seek keeps them engaged with the sex industry and visiting new sex workers. Alexander, for example, previously had a "regular" type connection, but found his relationship interrupted:

There was one with — I don't know what, click or chemistry or whatever you want to call it. We got along very well, but she's no longer around. So lately I've been *trying*, and I don't go that often, maybe once every two months. I'm trying to find that one person that I'm comfortable with. (Alexander, 44)

Defining Alexander as a hummingbird in search of sexual variety would not encompass his desire and search for intimacy and meaningful connection within the sex industry; yet his recent patterns, when considered quantitatively or from the perspective of the SPs he hires, would identify him as such. Alexander exemplifies the limits of the current client typology. While the literature might define Alexander as a client who pursues variety, his patterns in the sex industry are actually very similar to those dating outside of the industry looking for the "right person."

Similarly, Donald is searching for sexual fulfillment and cannot find the right SP or client pattern to eliminate his frustration. He shared that he sometimes does not reach climax during his sessions, leaving him sexually frustrated, and occasionally visits multiple sex workers in a day searching for sexual release. Donald may be the closest to a true hummingbird client in this sample, but his patterns are driven by dissatisfaction rather than lust or desire for variety — he does not *want* to see multiple sex workers, but feels that he *needs* to in search of one who can fulfill him.

In contrast, Bart is searching for a sex worker who can fulfill all of his needs without presenting a potential emotional risk. He has several mental health illnesses and uses the sex industry as a way to manage his depression and anxiety. A sex worker, for him, must meet an extensive list of requirements to set his anxiety at ease and feel safe enough. However, while Bart's primary goal is to find a regular SP he feels comfortable with and fulfilled by, he is also afraid of becoming "too attached" and risking emotional harm. Consistent with Bernstein's (2007) observations, the bounded nature of the commodified sexual encounter is key to Bart's pursuit of paid sexual relationships. During our interview, he shared his ongoing search for the perfect sex

worker who would be able to meet his needs without posing an emotional risk. In this sense, Bart's search is characterized by *attachment avoidance* at the same time as he is seeking a comfortable regular SP.

Each of these "searchers" is looking for something different, in various ways, and with different criteria. In each case their behaviors can be understood as frequent, and yet the intrapsychic scripts that they attach to their behavior and experiences challenge and disrupt simple constructions of variety-seeking clients; to characterize their patterns as hummingbird is to obscure their motivations and desires.

Industry Insider

The final type of client identified in this data, the "industry insider" is a client who is thoroughly immersed and involved in the local sex work community and familiar with many active SPs. The industry insider represents a cross-over category, a client who is not *just* a client and is more involved in the industry than the average client; they see a number of escorts with whom they have existing or prior relationships. In addition, immersion in the community provides uncommon avenues to meeting and seeing escorts. While only a single participant in this research presented as an insider, Bruckert and Law's (2013) study of management in the sex industry provides evidence of others who share a similar experience, documenting third parties in the sex industry (e.g., managers, security, photographers) who are also clients.

Eric is an industry insider; he has been involved in the sex industry for decades and is familiar with the group of regular escorts on Eros.¹⁵ This situation directly affects the intimacy (or lack thereof) that Eric pursues and experiences in the sex industry:

I do get the opportunity to see a lot of new girls, but I don't want to come across as egotistical and I don't want to be seen as... you know, high and mighty, I'm not doing that. But what has happened is, because I've been around so long, because I have networked with a lot of the people, a new girl comes on the board and wants to try the industry out, many times I will be asked to be her first client. Just because I am classified as a good client, I'm not gonna be overly aggressive, I don't have wants and needs that are over the top, and I'm trusted. I'm heavily trusted by most of the girls on the board, I've come to their personal residences, I've met their kids, I know them personally. So I will get that opportunity. (Eric, 39)

Eric does not view himself as solely a client; he sees himself as a trusted friend and confidante, making his role — and the question of whether or not he is a regular or even a hummingbird — more complex. Once again, the industry insider could appear, from the outside, to be in search of sexual variety, based on the number of SPs that he may see and the frequency with which he engages with the industry. However, his own motivations and understandings of that behavior are more complex and hinge on his recognition of a privileged kind of access, based on his status in the community, which is not offered to all clients.

CONCLUSION

These four categories of client — the committed regular, the hybrid, the searcher, and the industry insider — provide an expanded typology that can be utilized to inquire more deeply into clients' experiences of intimacy. These descriptors take into account not only the client's objective behavioral patterns but also the *intent* behind these patterns, their experiences, and their associated desires. Beyond the limited sample size, there are a variety of potential explanations for the absence of an obvious "hummingbird" — seeking only sexual variety — in this analysis. First, it is possible that being interviewed by a woman shaped the information shared by these clients and the aspects of their experiences on which they chose to focus (see Gailey and Prohaska 2011). The participants may have chosen (consciously or unconsciously) to emphasize the emotional aspects of their experiences, drawing on scripts which position emotionality as being key to women's experiences of sexuality, in particular. Second, the men who took part in this study seemed to be particularly engaged in the Eros community (with a few exceptions¹⁶), and these types of clients — sometimes referred to as hobbyists — may be more likely to pursue connection even during casual sex worker encounters. Third, clients who have more intimate (and potentially socially acceptable) interactions with sex workers may have been more likely to respond to the recruitment post and participate in this research.¹⁷ A final explanation might be that the hummingbird client is more rare than prior research has understood. Some of the non-regular clients identified in previous research may actually be engaged in seeking connection and intimacy; this nuance would neither be captured by common survey questions on frequency and length of relationships nor by sex workers' descriptions of their one-time hummingbird clients. Our analysis suggests that future research on clients should attend to their meaning-making processes and intimacy needs, as client behavior is not accurately characterized by dichotomies of regulars and non-regulars.

Drawing on the language of sexual scripts, we can see how interactions in the sex industry are shaped by the cultural scripts that govern sexual relationships more broadly, including the social understanding of sex as an intimate encounter, as well as scripts that are specific to the commodified sexual interaction, including its temporal and emotional boundedness. In some ways these encounters mirror the unpaid casual sex encounters of the hookup scene, described by Bogle (2008) and Wade (2017), replicating patterns of repeated hookups with the same person, and varied expectations and negotiations of nonsexual intimacy or friendship(s). By drawing on Newmahr's (2011) discussion of intimacy as a privileged access to another's thoughts, body, time, or emotions, we open a conceptual space to differentiate the experience of intimacy from the related — and often conflated — concepts of relationship, love, attachment, and connection.

While the clients interviewed for this research described variable experiences of intimacy and connection, it was clear that they most often sought these experiences in a bounded way; that is, they were *not* seeking romantic relationships or love in

these encounters. The intrapsychic scripting employed by clients allows them to experience intimacy in access to the SP, while the interpersonal and cultural scripts around sex and sex work insulate even committed regular clients (and SPs) from being implicated in the emotional and ongoing demands of a romantic, attached relationship. In this sense, our data affirms Bernstein's (2007) observations that sex work clients appear to be seeking a kind of bounded intimacy. The commodification of the interaction does not *preclude* the experience of intimacy — and, indeed, may facilitate the access necessary to the experience of intimacy — but commodification places limits on access, both temporally and in permitting SPs to assert boundaries around their physical and emotional self. Clients who seek a less bounded form of intimacy seemingly prefer less obvious forms of commodification and the bestowing of “gifts,” as described by Ralph, above, and may attempt to blur the lines between commodified and noncommodified interactions and time. The notion of bounded intimacy further reinforces the conceptual distinction between intimacy as access and more emotion-centered understandings of intimacy, which would transcend temporal boundaries. This suggests that a definition of intimacy that draws on access is useful as it is reflective of a wider range of relationships that, while they are experienced as intimate, are not romantic nor based in feelings of love.

While intimacy in the sex industry often parallels intimacy in nonpaid relationships (e.g., Giddens 1992; Sanders 2008b), an awareness of the reality of *interrupted* intimacy between clients and sex workers may allow for more complex investigations into the unique connections, attachments, and detachments that occur within the sex industry, and possibly in other professional settings. The temporal boundaries around access and the removal of the possibility of access may create situations in which one or both parties may be prevented from seeking or experiencing further intimacy. There are other professions where the client-provider relationship offers an intimate experience in terms of access to the clients' body and/or emotional world (e.g., physicians, therapists, midwifery, etc.); however, professional codes of conduct which prohibit fraternization place limitations on seeking continued intimacy. Future research examining intimacy in these contexts may prove fruitful in further unpacking the experience of intimacy in commodified and bounded contexts.

This research study is by no means exhaustive, and our typology of clients provides only a starting point to understand client behavior and patterns in the sex industry. Further research that takes into consideration the experiences and perspectives of clients may recognize further patterns, “types,” or details that continue to illuminate how clients engage with sex workers, how they reconcile their experiences, and how these intimacies affect their lives.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors wish to thank colleagues Chris Bruckert, Tony Christensen, and Christopher J. Schneider for helpful comments on earlier drafts of this manuscript. The first author also wishes to thank the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies and

the Department of Criminology at Wilfrid Laurier University for supporting this research.

NOTES

1. Many clients in this study referred to a “connection” but their definitions varied, encompassing sexual, physical, emotional, and/or intellectual components. While the type of connection varied, the term was always used to identify a feeling of *simpatico* that the client experienced with a sex worker.
2. Symons (2015) focused on the male clients of male sex workers.
3. This paper focuses on the meanings ascribed and shared by clients rather than on the more theoretical and political dilemmas of the sex industry. For analysis of the theoretical and political debates on sex work, see Bruckert and Hannem (2013), Bruckert and Parent (2006), Monto (2004), O’Neill (2001), Parent et al. (2013), and Sanders, O’Neill, and Pitcher (2009).
4. To achieve *verstehen* is to “understand behaviour, beliefs, opinions and emotions from the *perspective of the participants* themselves” (Hennink, Hutter, and Bailey 2011:10, emphasis added).
5. For example, the moderator informant told the first researcher that one client was claiming to have knowledge that the first author was secretly a journalist intending to “out” clients to their spouses in an exposé. This was, of course, not the case. Positive feedback from the first round of participants helped dispel this rumor.
6. The data for this project were collected for the first author’s M.A. thesis, supervised by the second author.
7. In most cases, this meant a booked room at a local university, but in one notable exception, the interview took place on the bleachers of a deserted baseball diamond due to the participant’s concern about being recognized.
8. Some clients told lengthy stories and their analytic value was largely per incident, rather than per line.
9. Originally published in 1973.
10. This does not address the legitimacy of the intimacy and connections identified by these participants from the perspective of the workers. Friendships and relationships between sex workers and their clients certainly do occur (e.g., Lever and Dolnick 2010), however, “off-the-clock” interactions and symbols of intimacy may be an extension of the emotional labor and fantasy maintenance acted out by many sex workers (Lever and Dolnick 2010; Milrod and Monto 2012; Sanders 2005).
11. Some literature in psychology refers to the positive impact that perceived mutuality can have on perceived feelings of intimacy within romantic relationships (see Oliphant and Kuczynski 2011; Zimmerman et al. 2002).
12. The importance placed on physical intimacy that does not involve penetration or climax supports recent findings that the “Girlfriend Experience” is widely preferred by the clients of escorts (Milrod and Weitzer 2012).
13. Ralph is not unique in wanting to “save” his favored SP from the industry and her own life circumstances; SPs commonly refer to these clients as “Captain Save-A-Ho.”
14. Jonah keeps track of his SPs and the money he spends each month; he shared this document after our interview.
15. While Eric was the only research participant who described a behind-the-scenes relationship with many escorts, the conversations on the Eros board and the number of people involved in board administration/management suggest that this applies to several Eros clients.
16. Participants identified two motivations for responding: (1) they wanted to talk about their experiences because they had few outlets to talk about this aspect of their lives; or (2) they were not

particularly immersed in being a “client,” but had some experience with academia and wanted to support research on clients.

17. Due to private and unsolicited communication with two SPs on Eros, we do know that at least one of our participants was seen to be a “hummingbird” type (in her language) by the SP who was familiar with him. During our interview, it was clear that his experience did not reflect that understanding.

REFERENCES

- Armstrong, Edward G. 1978. “Massage Parlors and Their Customers.” *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 7(2):117–125.
- Berger, Peter L. and Thomas Luckmann. 1966. *The Social Construction of Reality*. New York: Penguin.
- Bernstein, Elizabeth. 2001. “The Meaning of the Purchase: Desire, Demand and the Commerce of Sex.” *Ethnography* 2(3):389–420.
- Bernstein, Elizabeth. 2007. *Temporarily Yours: Intimacy, Authenticity, and the Commerce of Sex*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Blevins, Kristie R. and Thomas J. Holt. 2009. “Examining the Virtual Subculture of Johns.” *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 38(5):619–648.
- Blumer, Herbert. 1969. *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*. Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.
- Bogle, Kathleen A. 2008. *Hooking up: Sex, Dating, and Relationships on Campus*. New York: NYU Press.
- Boles, Jaqueline M. and Albeno P. Garbin. 1974. “The Strip Club and Customer–Stripper Patterns of Interaction.” *Sociology and Social Research* 58:136–144.
- Brewis, Joanna and Stephen Linstead. 2000. “‘The Worst Thing Is the Screwing’ (1): Consumption and the Management of Identity in Sex Work.” *Gender, Work and Organization* 7(2):84–97.
- Browne, Jan and Victor Minichiello. 1995. “The Social Meanings behind Male Sex Work: Implications for Sexual Interactions.” *The British Journal of Sociology* 46(4):598–622.
- Bruckert, Chris and Stacey Hannem. 2013. “Rethinking the Prostitution Debates: Transcending Structural Stigma in Systemic Responses to Sex Work.” *Canadian Journal of Law and Society* 28(1):43–63.
- Bruckert, Chris and Tuulia Law. 2013. *Beyond Pimps, Procurers and Parasites: Mapping Third Parties in the Incall/Outcall Sex Industry*. Ottawa, Canada: Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.
- Bruckert, Chris and Colette Parent. 2006. “Criminalized Women Workers: The In-Call Sex Industry: Reflections on Classed and Gendered Labour in the Margins.” Pp. 95–112 in *Criminalizing Women: Gender and (In)justice in Neo-Liberal Times*, edited by G. Balfour and E. Comack. Black Point, Canada: Fernwood Publishing.
- van Brunschot, Erin Gibbs. 2003. “Community Policing and ‘John Schools.’” *Canadian Review of Sociology* 40(2):215–232.
- Busch, Noel B., Holly Bell, Norma Hotaling, and Martin A. Monto. 2002. “Male Customers of Prostituted Women: Exploring Perceptions of Entitlement to Power and Control and Implications for Violent Behavior Toward Women.” *Violence Against Women* 8(9):1093–1112.
- Campbell, Rosie. 1998. “Invisible Men: Making Visible Male Customers of Female Prostitutes in Merseyside.” Pp. 155–172 in *Prostitution: On Whores, Hustlers and Johns*, edited by James E. Elias, Vern L. Bullough, Veronica Elias, and Gwen Brewer. New York: Prometheus.
- Charmaz, Kathy. 2010. *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Douglas, Jack D. and John M. Johnson. 1977. *Existential Sociology*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

- Earle, Sarah and Keith Sharp. 2007. *Sex in Cyberspace: Men Who Pay for Sex*. Cornwall, UK: TJ International Ltd.
- Egan, Danielle. 2006. *Dancing for Dollars and Paying for Love: The Relationships between Exotic Dancers and their Regulars*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Emerson, Joan P. 2001. "Behavior in Private Places: Sustaining Definitions of Reality in Gynecological Examinations." Pp. 265–278 in *The Production of Reality*. 3rd ed., edited by J. O'Brien and P. Kollock. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.
- Enck, Graves E. and James D. Preston. 1988. "Counterfeit Intimacy: A Dramaturgical Analysis of an Erotic Performance." *Deviant Behavior* 9(4):369–381.
- Ferrell, Jeff. 1997. "Criminological *Verstehen*: Inside the Immediacy of Crime." *Justice Quarterly* 14(1):3–23.
- Frank, Katherine. 1998. "The Production of Identity and the Negotiation of Intimacy in a 'Gentleman's Club.'" *Sexualities* 1(2):175–201.
- Gagnon, John H. and William Simon. 2005. *Sexual Conduct: The Social Sources of Human Sexuality*. 2nd ed. New Brunswick, NJ: AldineTransaction.
- Gailey, Jeannine A. and Ariane Prohaska. 2011. "Power and Gender Negotiations during Interviews with Men about Sex and Sexually Degrading Practices." *Qualitative Research* 11(4):365–380.
- Giddens, Anthony. 1992. *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies*. Stanford, UK: Stanford University Press.
- Giusta, Marina Della, Maria Laura di Tommaso, and Steinar Strøm. 2009. "Who Is Watching? The Market for Prostitution Services." *Journal of Population Economics* 22(2):501–516.
- Glaser, Barney G. and Anselm L. Strauss. 1967. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Chicago, IL: Aldine Publishing Company.
- Hennink, Monique, Inge Hutter, and Ajay Bailey. 2011. *Qualitative Research Methods*. UK: SAGE Publications.
- Hochschild, Arlie. 1983. *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Holt, Thomas J. and Kristie R. Blevins. 2007. "Examining Sex Work from the Client's Perspective: Assessing Johns Using On-Line Data." *Deviant Behavior* 28:333–354.
- Holzman, Harold R. and Sharon Pines. 1982. "Buying Sex: The Phenomenology of Being a John." *Deviant Behavior* 4(1):89–116.
- Jones, Zoey K. 2013. "'Emotional Landscapes' and the Value of Sex: Exploring the Lived Experiences of Sex Workers' Clients." M.A. thesis, Department of Criminology, Wilfrid Laurier University. Retrieved from Theses and Dissertations (Comprehensive), 1633.
- Jordan, Jan. 1997. "User Pays: Why Men Buy Sex." *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology* 30(55):55–71.
- Joseph, Lauren J. and Pamela Black. 2012. "Who's the Man? Fragile Masculinities, Consumer Masculinities, and the Profiles of Sex Work Clients." *Men and Masculinities* 15(5):486–506.
- Katsulis, Yasmina. 2010. "'Living like a King': Conspicuous Consumption, Virtual Communities, and the Social Construction of Paid Sexual Encounters by U.S. Sex Tourists." *Men and Masculinities* 13(2):210–230.
- Khan, Ummni. 2011. "Running in(to) the Family: 8 Short Stories about Sex Workers, Clients, Husbands, and Wives." *American University Journal of Gender, Social Policy and the Law* 2:495–528.
- Kimmel, Michael. 2007. *The Sexual Self: The Construction of Sexual Scripts*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.
- Kinnell, Hilary. 2006. "Clients of Female Sex Workers: Men or Monsters?" Pp. 212–234 in *Sex Work Now*, edited by Rosie Campbell and Maggie O'Neill. Portland, OR: Willan Publishing.
- Lerum, Kari. 2001. "'Precarious Situations' in a Strip Club: Exotic Dancers and the Problem of Reality Maintenance." Pp. 279–287 in *The Production of Reality*. 3rd ed., edited by J. O'Brien and P. Kollock. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

- Lever, Janet and Deanne Dolnick. 2010. "Call Girls and Street Prostitutes: Selling Sex and Intimacy." Pp. 234–253 in *Sex for Sale: Prostitution, Pornography, and the Sex Industry*. 2nd ed., edited by Ronald John Weitzer. New York: Routledge.
- Lowman, John and Chris Atchison. 2006. "Men Who Buy Sex: A Survey in the Greater Vancouver Regional District." *The Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 43(3):281–296.
- McKeganey, Neil and Marina Barnard. 1996. "Sex Work on the Streets: Prostitutes and their Clients." *Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health* 8(2):156–158.
- Milrod, Christine and Martin A. Monto. 2012. "The Hobbyist and the Girlfriend Experience: Behaviors and Preferences of Male Customers of Internet Sexual Service Providers." *Deviant Behavior* 33:792–810.
- Milrod, Christine and Ronald Weitzer. 2012. "The Intimacy Prism: Emotion Management among the Clients of Escorts." *Men and Masculinities* 15(5):447–467.
- Monto, Martin A. 1998. "Holding Men Accountable for Prostitution." *Violence Against Women* 4:505–517.
- Monto, Martin A. 2004. "Female Prostitution, Customers, and Violence." *Violence Against Women* 10(2):160–188.
- Monto, Martin A. 2010. "Prostitutes' Customers: Motives and Misconceptions." Pp. 290–313 in *Sex for Sale: Prostitution, Pornography, and the Sex Industry*. 2nd ed., edited by R. Weitzer. New York: Routledge.
- Monto, Martin A. and D. Julka. 2009. "Conceiving of Sex as a Commodity: A Study of Arrested Customers of Female Street Prostitutes." *Western Criminology Review* 10(1):1–14.
- Monto, Martin A. and Nick McRee. 2005. "A Comparison of the Male Customer of Female Street Prostitutes with National Samples of Men." *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 49(5):505–529.
- Moss, Barry F. and Andrew I. Schwebel. 1993. "Defining Intimacy in Romantic Relationships." *Family Relations* 42(1):31–37.
- Murphy, Alexandra and Sudir Venkatesh. 2006. "Vice Careers: The Changing Contours of Sex Work in New York City." *Qualitative Sociology* 29(2):129–154.
- Newmahr, Staci. 2011. *Playing on the Edge: Sadoomasochism, Risk, and Intimacy*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- O'Neill, Maggie. 2001. *Prostitution and Feminism: Towards a Politics of Feeling*. Cambridge, UK: Polity.
- Oliphant, Amy E. and Leon Kuczynski. 2011. "Mothers' and Fathers' Perceptions of Mutuality in Middle Childhood: The Domain of Intimacy." *Journal of Family Issues* 32(8):1104–1124.
- Parent, Colette, Christine Bruckert, Patrice Coriveau, Maria Nengeh, and Louise Toupin. 2013. *Sex Work: Rethinking the Job, Respecting the Workers*. Vancouver, Canada: UBC Press.
- Pettinger, Lynne. 2011. "'Knows How to Please a Man': Studying Customers to Understand Service Work." *The Sociological Review* 59(2):223–241.
- Pitts, Marian K., Anthony M.A. Smith, Jeffrey Grierson, Mary O'Brien, and Sebastian Misson. 2004. "Who Pays for Sex and Why? An Analysis of Social and Motivational Factors Associated with Male Clients of Sex Workers." *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 33(4):353–358.
- Plumridge, Elizabeth W., S. Jane Chetwynd, Anna Reed, and Sandra J. Gifford. 1997. "Discourses of Emotionality in Commercial Sex: The Missing Client Voice." *Feminism and Psychology* 7(2):165–181.
- Pruitt, Matthew V. and Amy C. Krull. 2011. "Escort Advertisements and Male Patronage of Prostitutes." *Deviant Behavior* 32:38–63.
- Sanders, Teela. 2005. "'It's Just Acting': Sex Workers' Strategies for Capitalizing on Sexuality." *Gender, Work and Organization* 12(4):319–342.
- Sanders, Teela. 2008a. *Paying for Pleasure: Men Who Buy Sex*. Devon, UK: Willan Publishing.
- Sanders, Teela. 2008b. "Male Sexual Scripts: Intimacy, Sexuality and Pleasure in the Purchase of Commercial Sex." *Sociology* 42(3):400–417.

- Sanders, Teela and Rosie Campbell. 2007. "Designing out Vulnerability, Building in Respect: Violence, Safety and Sex Work Policy." *The British Journal of Sociology* 58(1):1–19.
- Sanders, Teela, Maggie O'Neill, and Jane Pitcher. 2009. *Prostitution: Sex Work, Policy and Politics*. London, UK: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Schutz, Alfred. 1962. *The Problem of Social Reality: Collected Papers I*. The Hague, The Netherlands: M. Nijhoff.
- Symons, Emily. 2015. "I'm Not Looking for Mr. Right, Just Mr. Right Now': Men Clients of Men Escorts." Master's thesis, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Carleton University. Thesis retrieved from CURVE Theses and Dissertations database.
- Tewksbury, Richard and Seana Golder. 2005. "Why Do Johns Use Pornography?: Predicting Consumption of Pornography by Clients of Street Level Prostitutes." *Southwest Journal of Criminal Justice* 2(2):101–118.
- Thomas, William I. and Dorothy S. Thomas. 1928. *The Child in America: Behavior Problems and Programs*. New York: Knopf.
- Wade, Lisa. 2017. *American Hookup: The New Culture of Sex on Campus*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Wahab, Stéphanie. 2005. "Navigating Mixed-Theory Programs: Lessons Learned from a Prostitution-Diversion Project." *Affilia* 20(2):203–221.
- Wahab, Stéphanie. 2006. "Evaluating the Usefulness of a Prostitution Diversion Project." *Qualitative Social Work* 5(1):67–92.
- Wiederman, Michael W. 2015. "Sexual Script Theory: Past, Present, and Future." Pp. 7–22 in *Handbook of the Sociology of Sexualities*, edited by J. DeLamater and R.F. Plante. New York: Springer.
- Wortley, S., B. Fischer, and C. Webster. 2002. "Vice Lessons: A Survey of Prostitution Offenders Enrolled in the Toronto John School Diversion Program." *Canadian Journal of Criminology* 44:369–402.
- Zimmerman, Toni Schindler, Kristen E. Holm, Kathrine C. Daniels, and Shelley A. Haddock. 2002. "Barriers and Bridges to Intimacy and Mutuality: A Critical Review of Sexual Advice Found in Self-Help Bestsellers." *Contemporary Family Therapy* 24(2):289–311.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTOR(S)

Zoey Jones is a doctoral candidate at Carleton University. She primarily researches people with criminalized and/or stigmatized sexualities and their communities. She is currently studying the experiences and subculture(s) of rope bondage practitioners, and has recently published on necropolitics and sexuality in *Feminist Perspectives on Orange is the New Black: Thirteen Critical Essays* (McFarland Publishing, 2016).

Stacey Hannem is Associate Professor in the Department of Criminology at Wilfrid Laurier University. She researches the experiences of stigmatization and marginalization, particularly the implications of crime and the criminal justice system for families, and sex work legislation and policy. She is co-editor (with Chris Bruckert) of *Stigma Revisited: Implications of the Mark* (University of Ottawa Press, 2012). She has recently published in *Symbolic Interaction*, *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, and *Deviant Behavior*.