Chapter 7
Managing Conflict: An Examination of Three-Way Alliances in Canadian Escort and Massage Businesses

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Review of the Literature

Weitzer (2009) notes that relatively few studies of the adult sex industry consider third parties and that the majority of these studies focus on street-level pimps. Although pimps are often considered predatory exploiters (Farley 2004), a number of recent studies suggest that claims of regular, intensive abuse by pimps seem exaggerated. In their research on pimp–worker relationships in Montreal, Morselli and Savoie-Gargiso (2014, p. 264) conclude that "coercion and control are not as salient in these relationships as is often believed, and that the notion of inherent exploitation must be qualified" (coercion may be more prevalent when sex work

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involves younger, pre-adult sellers, see Marcus et al. 2014). A study of 92 "facilitators" (i.e., pimps, managers, business owners) in Tijuana also reports that only a minority use violence, "persuasion, flirtation, and other manipulative tricks" to recruit workers (Zhang 2011, p. 519). Likewise, Canada's Parliamentary Subcommittee on Solicitation concludes that "people who are forced into prostitution against their will by a third party are by no means in the majority" (cited in Bruckert and Law 2013, p. 16). Instead, research on third parties increasingly highlights "the meaningful heterogeneity in domination and coercion within sex work" (Brady et al. 2015, p. 1124). In a study of 13 managers of brothels and full contact bars in a Swiss city, Buschi (2014) notes four management styles that intersect with gender, commercial setting, and experience in the sex industry, resulting in different potentials for exposure to violence. Buschi's (2014) typology complicates common narratives that suggest that being woman-identified or having a personal sex work background necessarily result in a management style that is more protective of sex workers.

Recent studies also underscore the various activities that structure interactions between third parties and workers. In an analysis of police-recorded conversations, Morselli and Savoie-Gargiso (2014) find that maintaining order and managing workers are common themes in conversations between managers and workers. Zhang (2011) also notes this in his research on Tijuana; he describes a conversation with one facilitator who remarked that much of his management involved trying to diffuse conflicts between workers. Chapkis (2000) makes the same point, arguing that some managers minimize workplace conflict by creating polices and rules that help workers establish authority when working with clients and that reduce disagreements with each other; other managers, however, institute procedures that undermine workers' power vis-a-vis clients and increase workplace conflict.

Although insightful, previous research on third parties focuses mostly on pimps, brokers, or facilitators who work primarily with street-level workers (Mossman 2010, is an important exception). We consider a different group, people who operate or manage an off-street, licensed sex industry business. Most managers in this part of the industry work in small, independently owned businesses. They combine the personality-based management styles associated with owner-operated small businesses with a hierarchical approach associated with larger, more bureaucratic ones (Edwards 1979; also see Callaghan and Thompson 2001). The concept of a manager is often associated with direct involvement in the following

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three workplace activities: pacing and direction of work; monitoring and evaluating workers' performance; and rewarding and disciplining workers (Edwards 1979).

We situate employment in licensed sex industry businesses within the theoretical context of "front-line" service work (e.g., food and beverage service, aesthetic and therapeutic body work services) which is a growing part of Canada's labor market (Godin and Kittel 2004). Many frontline service jobs are low-paid, have high levels of exposure to workplace hazards, and notable instability in terms of hours and earnings (Benoit et al. 2009). For many workers, employment in the sex industry offers more money, flexibility in work hours, and autonomy than other available employment options (Benoit et al. 2015; Jeffrey and MacDonald 2006; McCarthy et al. 2014; Murphy and Venkatesh 2006).

Sociological studies of service work have become more common during the past decade (Lopez 2010) and researchers are beginning to examine managers and their roles (Bolton and Houlihan 2010). Research on interactive frontline service work generally finds that workplace conflict is commonplace (Lopez 2010). According to Bélanger and Edwards (2013, p. 435), much of this conflict reflects "a tug of war" between workers, management, and service recipients who are often embroiled in a struggle over who determines the nature and form of work. Managers try to maintain control by setting expectations for workers, including customer-related norms and the expectation that workers engage in "deep acting" in order to meet customers' demands (Hochschild 1983). Managers also emphasize the emotional labor of work as part of a process of obtaining employees' consent for workplace rules and regulations (Jocoy 2003). Additionally, managers must control customers, typically by setting and enforcing the rules of the sex industry business, and by trying to control various aspects of worker–customer interactions. Managers want these interactions to proceed smoothly and in a fashion consistent with their expectations. Both workers and customers may, however, overtly or covertly challenge managers' authority and expectations, sometimes resulting in the eruption of conflict between parties.

The divide between workers and customers may however not be as rigid as is often assumed (Bélanger and Edwards 2013; Leidner 2006; Sallaz 2002). Williams and Connell (2010) note, for example, that strict boundaries between the categories of workers and consumers may no longer hold. In high-end retail, they claim that

> Workers consent [to regulations pertaining to physical appearance] despite the deplorable conditions because these stores resonate with their consumer interests, not with their interests as workers. The typical high-end retail employee represents what we call a hybrid "worker-consumer" who identifies with and finds pleasure being associated with particular brands (2010, p. 351).

According to Korczynski (2002, 2007; also see Korczynski and Ott 2004) thinking of customer-oriented service work as involving a "service triangle" highlights managers' role in managing their interests, as well as those of customers and workers. Additionally, Bruckert and Law (2013) find that the divide between third parties (including managers as defined here), and sex workers, is somewhat fluid:

> The difference between sex worker and third party is also not as distinct or hierarchical as the stereotypes would suggest—we found that these roles overlapped, informed, and alternated for many of our participants. In this regard, 29 were sex workers at the same time as being third parties and 13 were former sex workers (p. 13).

Although managers working in the legal sex industry in Canada may share a number of similarities with other interactive service work, there are important differences. Many sex industry businesses operate in a legal "grey zone" and part of the informal economy. They also involve "the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services that have economic value, but are neither protected by a formal code of law nor recorded for use by government-backed regulatory agencies" (Reimer 2006, p. 25). Sex workers may also be more likely than other service workers to see themselves as self-managed independent contractors, rather than employees, and thus may be more willing to challenge management. Finally, because sex work is a stigmatized occupation (Benoit et al. 2015; McCarthy et al. 2014) mangers may experience a "courtesy-stigma" because of their involvement with sex workers (Phillips et al. 2012).

As previously stated most research on third parties in the sex industry focus on pimps, brokers, and others who work with street-level workers; however very little studies examine the roles of managers working in legal or licensed sex industry businesses (Weitzer 2009). Furthermore, few studies have examined how conflict plays out within these work sites. This chapter fills these gaps in the research by examining managers' ability to prevent and intercede in conflicts between workers and clients, as well as between workers, exploring how managers' actions affect safety and health in the workplace. We begin by presenting methodological considerations followed by a summary of findings. Strategies to prevent and resolve conflict will be presented, followed by a discussion of the findings and concluding remarks.

Methodology

The data we present in this chapter are from a Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) funded project that sought to obtain a better and more extensive understanding of the sex industry in Canada (Benoit et al. 2014, 2015). The project included five interlinked studies, each of which focused on a particular group: sex workers, workers' intimate partners, customers, regulatory agencies (i.e., police, municipal legislators, etc.), and managers. Data were collected in five cities: Victoria, Calgary, Montreal, St. John's, and Kitchener-Waterloo. Four of these cities—Victoria, Calgary, Montreal, and Kitchener-Waterloo—had municipal licensing provisions for sex industry businesses. Many Canadian municipal and city governments used bylaws, ordinances, and business licensing to control sex industry businesses (Craig 2011). These regulations ranged from specifying who could and could not legally be in a sex industry business, where a business could

operate, and how many businesses could operate in a particular area to prohibitions on particular activities (e.g., nude encounters or outcall massages).

Individuals were eligible for the sub-study on managers if they met the following criteria: (a) were 19 years of age or older; (b) earned an income for at least six of the last 12 months from managing sex industry workers; and (c) managed workers in licensed sex industry businesses. Speaking about the sex industry, Weitzer (2009) uses the term manger to refer to individuals who have control over a worker and extract profit from their work. We included persons whose work duties included all or most of the duties associated with supervisors: hiring, training, monitoring, and disciplining workers, and setting workplace standards. Two types of sex industry businesses were semi-legal and licensed in the cities we studied: in-call and out-call escort and erotic massage. We did not include street-level pimps; however, several studies find that street-level pimps do not dominate the Canadian sex industry (Bruckert and Law 2013; Gillies 2013; Jeffrey and MacDonald 2006).

The study used a number of methods to reach potential participants: advertisements on websites and newspapers; lists of escort and massage businesses advertised on the internet; and phone books/yellow pages. Study personnel emailed or phoned each business and hand-delivered a research invitation to businesses that had a physical address. Team members working on other projects also referred a small number of participants to the study.

We interviewed forty-three managers. As Table 7.1 indicates, most managers had graduated from high school and most reported themselves to be "White." The median age was 39 years old. Almost two-thirds of respondents identified as female. These managers almost exclusively oversaw female workers (only one manager worked with transgender workers and few noted some fleeting experience with male workers). Just over half had worked as a sex worker in the past. These

Table 7.1 Sample attributes ($N = 43$)

Female	62.8%
Median age	36.9 (range 21–64)
Visible minority	19.0%
Completed high school	87.8%
Ethnicity: white	81.4%
Visible minority	18.6%
Ethnicity: aboriginal	11.6%
Other ethnicity (black, North African, West African, Chinese, South Asian, Southeast Asian)	7.0%
Manages male workers ("sometimes" to "all the time")	9.3%
Manages female workers ("sometimes" to "all the time")	97.3%
Has worked as a sex worker	51.2%
Has worked as a sex worker, female	69.2%
Has worked as a sex worker, male	20.0%

findings are similar to Bruckert and Law's (2013) study, in which they report that 38 of 55 third parties identified as women and just over half had been sex workers (also see Zhang 2011).

The following analysis is exploratory and focused on managers' experience with conflict/aggression in their workplace in one of three contexts: between clients and workers; between themselves and clients; and between themselves and workers. Thematic codings of the data were based on responses to the following question(s): As a manager, have you observed conflict/aggression in your workplace? Have you observed conflict between service provider and yourself? Have you observed conflict between client and yourself? Have you observed conflict between client and service provider? (5) What strategies do you use to deal with conflict/aggression?

We coded conflicts within the dyad that was most prominent but noted that some conflicts involved more than two people. To begin, a team of four co-investigators identified codes independently. Two additional team members (a co-principal investigator and research assistant) used QSR NVivo qualitative software to code and analyze the data. Following this, we compared our findings in a series of meetings in an iterative process, making inferences about what the coded data meant to each member of the team. We then went back and forth about our own interpretations of the data (language, terminology, and relevant themes) and how to make "sense" of it, including how the data were able to provide answers to the research question(s) listed above. When we reached consensus we used the revised coding scheme for further analysis. Two additional co-investigators re-checked everything following coding of the relevant data from all of the transcripts based on the updated scheme to ensure that the findings were relevant and reproducible.

Coding of conflicts from a series of structured interviews were classified into one of four types: (1) verbal which includes name calling, threats, and shouting; (2) nonverbal which includes theft or actions such as stalking; (3) physical which includes physical intimidation such as condom removal and hands-on violence; and (4) ambiguous which refers to instances in which the participant did not provide sufficient details to classify the conflict. These categories were not mutually exclusive; for example, conflicts that included insults and physical violence were placed in both the verbal and physical categories. The steps that managers took to prevent conflict were also coded into categories: (1) screening and black-listing; (2) physical security; (3) psychological security; (4) check-ins; (5) communicating boundaries; and (6) direct interventions with employees and clients.

Findings

Conflict/Aggression Between Workers and Clients

Seventy-seven percent (33 out of 43 managers) of managers reported conflict/aggression between workers and clients (see Table 7.2). In these accounts, verbal aggression was the most commonly described, followed by physical aggression. Several managers

Table 7.2 Conflicts between workers and clients

Total	$N = 33$ (managers)
Verbal	36.3% (12)
Physical aggression	24.2% (8)
Nonverbal	1.5% (5)
Ambiguous (not indicated)	2.2% (8)

described situations in which workers initiated conflicts with clients, but most often they spoke about clients as being the instigator. Although the majority of managers reported some worker–client conflict, most emphasized that conflict was the exception, not the norm. As one noted, "Generally [conflict] does not happen."

The conflicts between workers and customers that managers attributed primarily to their employees typically involved poor service. Poor service could take a number of forms and a common one involved providing less service than the client had purchased. An account by one manager provides one example of this:

> She [the employee] fucked up because he [the customer] had 40 minutes left and she just called it way too early. She could have got away with it if she left at 45 minutes [15 minutes shy of the hour he was expecting]. If she just would have laid in bed and chit-chatted a bit and talked it out another 20 minutes, she would have been fine. But she called it way too early, she called it in the first 20 minutes and he was like, "this isn't over yet," and she said, "yep, you're all done" and he's like, "no I'm pretty sure it's multiple shots."

In other instances, workers took advantage of clients' state to avoid providing the service purchased:

> I had one girl who was going to calls and if the guy was drunk I'd tell her [beforehand] "He's a little bit drunk." She would just go in there, take the money [without providing promised services], go out to the guy to drive away. And these customers were calling me with complaints about it. So, I got rid of her.

Other conflicts resulted from employees being unprepared to work, often because of substance use. The following comment highlights this type of interaction:

> It was, she was supposed to be there for a certain amount of time. Half an hour before she was supposed to be calling out [ending the session], client called and told me the girl, part way through the call, seemed to be very messed up and she did a lot of drugs. So that could be true, [the employee] appeared to be very messed up, all of a sudden went weird and just left.

None of the managers interviewed reported having to deal with employees physically attacking customers, but one reported having to fire a worker because a client accused her of stealing from him

Conflicts between workers and clients that originated with the latter take a number of forms. One type of conflicts was captured in the remarks of one manager, when asked under what circumstances she had seen aggression: "Usually if the client wants to do something with the girl, or forcibly tries to do something she doesn't want to do or doesn't want to pay." Another manager recalled an incident

that typified verbal conflict: "Um, one time a girl, she was, it was, he didn't even doing anything physical, he was just verbally disrespectful to her."

Dissatisfaction with service was another common source of these types of conflict. Dissatisfaction often began with a customer's complaint that the service did not last long enough, the worker was not enthusiastic enough, or that the worker was unwilling to do certain sexual acts. Many clients then refused to follow through on their end of the service exchange: payment. This scenario was reflected in one manager's description of the conflicts she encountered:

> Uh, in the in-calls I've seen, let's say, the most often that I've seen, is guys in the in-calls unsatisfied with the service, um, and uh, wanting their money back. And then like the girl, obviously, they can't, and not just because we need, we want the money, look as soon as the girl is naked, you owe her, okay? She gave you a blow job, you had sex with her, I don't care, even if it lasted fifteen minutes, like, you owe her that money. I'm sorry, that was the price.

Another manager described how conflict arises from customers' misunderstanding about prices and unrealistic expectations of the service they will receive for the amount they paid:

> If you brought $50 because you thought you're going to get, like, Greek [anal intercourse], and it turns out, you're not. You have to be realistic about it and that's what I tell the clients. They're "How much is it?" and I'm like "It's negotiated in the room." "Well how am I supposed to know what to bring?" And I'm like, "Well just gauge it on what your expectation would be."… [And] most of them are pretty aware that this is going to be an extra 100 bucks, easy. And some girls, the guy shows up and he's got 80 bucks and he's like, "I want a BBBJ" [oral sex without a condom] and she's, "I'm not going to give you that but I'll give you a little bit of the deeper kissing and this, on top of it or whatever." And that's a combination sort of thing and that would generate their [the workers'] extras or like they would pump up things.

A smaller number of managers, eight out of the 33 who spoke about conflicts, described physical aggression between the worker and client. In many cases, the conflict arose because clients tried to remove their condoms:

> The worst thing I've ever seen was a girl was very upset because one client was incessantly trying to remove his condom, and he was intoxicated, and he just would not get over the fact that he had to keep it on, he wanted it off, and she wanted it on, and she said "Ok well look, I'm leaving because I'm not going to let you do me without a condom," and that's it.

Five managers reported instances involving nonverbal aggression that did not involve direct physical contact. One described a situation in some detail:

> [The client] insisted to accompany her [the employee] to the bus stop and then he got on the bus and fucking went all the way to the metro with her, and she was super uncomfortable and like … and so we had to write back to him and let him know like, "Listen, this is not acceptable."

This manager explained to the client that following the worker intruded on her personal life, and emphasized that it put her in an awkward position if someone she knew saw her being followed by a client.

Table 7.3 Conflicts between managers and clients

Total	$N = 22$ (managers)
Verbal	72.7% (16)
Physical aggression	4.5% (1)
Nonverbal	9.0% (2)
Ambiguous (not indicated)	13.6% (3)

Conflict/Aggression Between Managers and Clients

Fifty-one percent of managers (22/43) reported direct conflict between themselves and clients. Consistent with the conflict patterns between clients and workers, most conflicts between managers and customers were verbal; indeed, almost three-quarters (72%) of the conflicts described fall into this group. As one manager succinctly described, "verbal abuse is common" (Table 7.3).

Manager–client conflicts typically involved customers' unwillingness to follow the informal rules of the business or behaving in inappropriate manner. An account by one manager provides details about this type of conflict:

It was a drunk client, who came in the evening. And he knew that I had just one African girl who stayed [late] because we had already finished at five [o'clock]… When the girl came in, he began insulting her: "You're black, get out of here. You're not beautiful. I want another. Give me my money back."

Another manager stated:

[A client just] wouldn't leave. It was just me and a girl; there was no one, so we had no choice but to call the police to get him out. And we called the drivers afterwards because we did not know what was waiting for us on the street.

Conflict/Aggression Between Managers and Workers

Forty-seven percent of the managers interviewed (20/43) spoke about conflict with their employees. Most of these managers described two common sources of conflict: workers' disagreement with company policies or workers' unacceptable behavior. Struggles over rules typically involved disputing scheduling and ignoring fee policies. Unacceptable behavior ranged from being unreliable and using drugs or alcohol while working (which was oftentimes formal rules at some agencies), to stealing, and being disrespectful or threatening. In terms of the former, more than one manger complained about employees "stepping out": engaging in paid sex independently with a customer they had secured through the agency, without giving a portion of the fees to the agency (Table 7.4).

Almost two-thirds of the managers who spoke about conflicts with their employees said that verbal aggression was the most common. In some cases, the managers saw verbal hostility as more bluster than a threat: "Sometimes the girls; as

Table 7.4 Conflicts between managers and workers

Total	$N = 20$
Verbal	65.0% (13)
Physical aggression	10.0% (2)
Nonverbal	25.0% (5)
Ambiguous (not indicated)	0

there are new girls. Because you cannot know the disposition of all girls, they can insult you, threaten you. You don't know who I am, you'll see. But then it's blah, blah, blah. I don't take it really seriously." However, others (5 of 20) described actual incidents of nonverbal aggression. One manger described her experiences this way: "I've had girls steal from me. I've had girls threaten me. I've had girls put stuff on the internet about me, lots of bullshit, right?" Another believed that a break-in at work was retaliation for firing a worker.

Only two managers reported acts of physical aggression and these involved threats rather than actual assaults. An account from one manager captures the dynamics of this type of conflict:

> Another girl threatened to hit me one night … And she just goes, "I'm going to hit you." I'm like "Go ahead, you get one fucking shot, cops are going to be here and your ass is going to be in jail. So you better hit me fucking good, you bitch." She was going to hit me because I told her to turn the music down.

In summary, although rare, about two-thirds of managers described having observed incidents of conflict in their workplaces. Most commonly, these occurred between sex worker and client, but also not uncommonly between manager and client (often as the result of worker client conflict). While most incidents of conflict involved verbal exchanges, worker–client conflict was more likely to have a physical element (i.e., attempted condom removal) often related to disputes over service. Worker–manager conflict was described by just under half of the managers and tended to concern fees and following workplace norms around service.

Discouraging and Resolving Conflict

Our analysis uncovered several strategies that managers used to prevent conflict and to address it once it occurred. These strategies are not mutually exclusive and most mangers used an array of them in their workplace.

Screening

Almost 60% of the managers (25/43) said that they used a variety of screening techniques to avoid conflict or aggression. Those who used them believed that they

were an important technique for ensuring that their business operated smoothly. As one noted,

> In my case, I think I have a good balance of security-risk/security balance I think is pretty good because of all the screening I do. If I didn't do the screening, then I'd probably start thinking about having cameras and a panic button and all that.

Eighteen managers screened clients over the phone or by reading their texts and looking for signs of rudeness, aggression, substance use, and other warning signs. A comment by another manager underscored the value of screening clients:

> We do really demand a certain level of respect here. And they haven't had a problem. I think I'm really picky on the phone. So if somebody phones up and just says, I don't care, any old girl, like whatever, just send me … to stick my dick into. I would never book someone like that. We're by appointment only so that when the client gets here they're excited about who they're coming to see. So they're more apt to be respectful … It's: "I'm coming to see Jane and Jane sounds like a beauty and I just looked at her pictures and fantasized about her on the Internet. Phone girl just got me really excited about how she sounds and her personality". We always try when we give descriptions, we not only always talk about the girls' looks but we also talk about their personality.

Another strategy for screening clients was collecting personal information of clients. Although some managers noted that keeping information on clients was taboo, others noted that spreadsheets with phone numbers, notes, and other details helped them to keep track of "good" and "bad" clients. Four managers even noted that they kept and cross-checked personal information in an effort to ensure the client was an identifiable person, should there be a problem with a workers safety:

> I have [information] on a hard drive which I keep in a safe, like the chip, the portable hard drive, I have a spread sheet and if you put [a] john [in], all the johns will come up, if you put up [a street name] [like] so, [it] cross references absolutely everything: first name, last name, phone number, address, absolutely everything.

For the most part, mangers did not share the information they collected with people outside their agency. Most were aware of "bad date sheets" and online forums describing dangerous clients, but some had a lack of knowledge about resources of this kind or did not regard these resources as very useful. Only three of the managers discussed using bad date sheets directly, and only in one case was a reference made to using the public bad date list: "I set my girls up with my regulars and I try to screen them to the bad date lists and the black lists and the no shows, and that's all you can do." Another said that she told clients she was putting them on her own bad date list (more commonly referred to as the "backlist)" because of their behavior: "[I tell them] you treat her like crap, now you're on our bad date list. Sorry! You're not coming back here." A third person, who spoke about internal blacklists, also described an instance where it was used to communicate with other managers:

> And then, later that day, or the next day after that I got a phone call from one of the other girls, from one of the other agencies. If something really bad happens we typically, like for a really bad date, we'll phone each other, or at least I do. Some of them do, I don't get many phone calls from them. But I do, for sure, if someone is a real bad date, I phone all the agencies and let them know right away.

Managers spoke of several factors that contributed to the limited use of bad date sheets and to the sharing of client information. First, some worried that the police would use their providing of information as a justification for harassing them or shutting down their business. Second, consistent with the sex industry's "off the grid" nature, most businesses operated in isolation and many mangers indicated that they had little knowledge of, or trust in, others running similar businesses. Third, violent bad dates are relatively rare in indoor environments (Sanders 2005) so managers mostly kept track of clients who caused a hassle, thinking that this information was not important enough to share, especially given the barriers to sharing information. Fourth, other bad date sheets/online forum reports—such as those prepared by sex worker agencies—were regarded as most relevant to street-based work and the information they contain was sometimes too generic to be truly useful.

Psychological Security

Six managers spoke about using psychological security as a way to discourage conflict. They said that creating a perception of security was an effective tool and they described several techniques for establishing a convincing "perception"; identify these included warning clients about their security steps such as having a phone-check and posting someone outside when an employee did an outcall to a hotel room or other place. The following is one manager's description of the techniques she used to create a perception of the business she ran:

> When a client calls, I want him to know that I know where he's going to be. I know his phone number because I'm saying "I'll take your name and phone number and have her call you," so I want him to know that I know his number, I know his address, I know how long she's going to be there for, and I want to say out loud, when she's done "OK I'll call you from the car," so then he knows that she has to do a safety check when she's in her vehicle. So if she doesn't, I'm going to be up her butt, I'm [also] going to be up his butt and I have many times. [One time] they weren't doing anything, they weren't done yet and they were still fooling around and she stayed an extra half an hour without letting me know but he wasn't getting charged extra for it.

Other managers noted that, even when they could not provide certain types of security, they wanted clients to believe that these were in place. As one noted,

> 'Cause sometimes, even in the, with the agency, like, it just wasn't possible to have a driver sitting out front of every out call. But you give the perception that someone's close. Um, you give them, you definitely, [give them] the perception. It's very important to always have somebody else know exactly where you all, and who you're with.

Check-Ins

Nine managers spoke about using check-ins as a way to prevent conflict. Some managers, like the following one, said they checked on workers at the beginning and end of service (commonly referred to as a "check-in/check-out"):

> We are always paying attention, like OK, she went into the call at this time. She's running ten minutes over let's go knock on the door and see if she's … if anything's going wrong or whatever. We do have, you know, procedures in the sense of making sure that people are safe and checking in and communicating with each other or whatnot. Drivers on outcalls stay within a block radius even if it's a guy we've been there 30 times before.

Another manager described an employee calling checking in at the outset of an outcall and the importance of having a phone on hand:

> Yes. I mean aside from the obvious, you know, I always encourage the girl to have their work phone out, they call when they get there so that the client can see it, then they have it beside the bed and then I encourage them to have their personal phone in their purse. And to put their purse in the bathroom, because then, if something goes wrong and you're naked and if you can make it to the bathroom and lock yourself in, you still have a phone.

Some managers also asked employees to use "code" language to indicate if they were safe or needed a manager or a driver to intervene in a situation: "And most of our code word is like, using like Baileys, 'I could use a Bailey's right about now.' And nobody thinks baileys, that's an alcohol right, girls are addicted, right, so that's our code word."

Communicating Boundaries

A small number of managers (six) also talked about communicating boundaries by establishing services and rules of engagement before the session with the worker and/or client began. One manager described the approach as telling the worker: "When you agree what you will do and how much it will be, ask for the money right away. This is what we do."

These managers emphasized that they encouraged workers to establish boundaries and to leave situations if they did not feel safe. The following is the advice that one manager said she gives to her employees:

> If you feel in any way that you're not safe; that the situation is risky for whatever reason, even if you're halfway through the call, fucking give the money back to the guy and walk out. Apologize, don't look for trouble, don't—don't look for confrontation, don't get stupid, just walk out give the money back. There's a sea of clients out there, we don't want problems, so avoid him.

Another manager gave similar advice to her employees and emphasized that she saw this as something for which all managers were responsible:

[You have to] make sure the girls understand that they can kick a guy out, that helps a lot, that gives them power to make decisions, makes them understand that they're not going to get in trouble with us if they call it. If it's not working for you then you know … if it's getting to the point you're feeling concerned for your safety, call it. We'll back you on that. I think that's … the number one's [way to protect workers' safety].

Direct Intervention

Managers used several types of direct intervention when responding to conflict. Many said they could diffuse a situation by appearing to sympathize with clients and in some cases, offering to refund or rebook a service with a different worker if they believe there was a genuine misunderstanding or some error on the worker's part. This approach was reflected in the strategy one manager described to appease clients: [I tell them that sometimes workers are] rude and snippy about the time and things like that, in case, it just wasn't the right fit. I keep describing it that way (laughs). I just tell the guys, "It's just the wrong fit, let me make it up to you." Another manager described appeasing customers after the fact, saying that when she receives complaints she tells clients that she will send a different worker next time.

Managers also spoke about situations in which clients were clearly in the wrong and in which they directly intervened and supported their employees:

I just went in and was like, "Sessions over, get your clothes on." Immediately, he was like, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry. What can I do? I'm sorry. I shouldn't have done that, I'll apologize to her. I shouldn't have said that. I misunderstood. I didn't mean to disrespect her." No, it's too late. She doesn't want to see you. You know, she's going to be uncomfortable with you now. So, I'm sorry, like, I'll give you another chance down the road. In that situation I gave him the chance to come here one more time but, you know, [I told him] "You watch it. You treat the girls with respect."

A comment by another manager reflected a similar approach:

Ah, I give them [the clients] shit. I explain to them, to him, I'm like, look, … this is, this is sex okay, it's like you're paying for this, you can't know in advance how it's gonna be, and I don't know you. I don't know how she is in bed or whatever, so look, you're unhappy, lesson for you today, do not call her again. Do not, whatever; it's too late.

Additionally, managers discussed conflicts that originated with employees in which they had to directly intervene. They described resolving these conflicts by verbally reprimanding workers verbally, assigning them fewer shifts, and occasionally, but not too often, firing them.

Sixteen managers similarly mentioned conflict avoidance strategies they do not have but would like to see; these included video cameras to record interactions with clients as well as their license plates, alarm systems, and places to provide services for clients on-site. Others spoke about the need for a different legal regime—one

that truly protects workers and differentiates between those who voluntary choose to work in the industry from those who have little choice:

> There definitely are issues within this industry that need to be rectified, but the problems aren't the industry itself, it's some of the people that profit from this industry and how they're profiting from it. It could be… it could be this very safe thing like what I'm trying to do or it can be this completely dangerous thing like human trafficking … That's what I think about this industry and the laws that regulate this industry.

Discussion and Conclusion

On December 6, 2014, Canada's Bill C-36, *The Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act*, became law. The new law is modeled on the partial criminalization of sex work in places such as Sweden, Iceland, and Norway (McCarthy et al. 2012). It criminalizes a number of acts, including the purchase of sexual services, gaining material benefit from the sale of sex services, and advertising for the purposes of selling sexual services. Critics argue that these prohibitions do little to address issues related to the safety and health of people who sell or purchase sexual services; instead, they simply shift the stigma and shame often associated with sex work from workers to clients and managers (Benoit and Shumka 2015, p. 15; McCarthy et al. 2012). The new law also effectively makes illegal a number of previous legal sex industry businesses, such as escort agencies and massage parlors. As a result, many owners and managers of these businesses either have closed their businesses or operate them in a nearly invisible fashion without standard civil resources and protections such as access to credit scores, management training, industry associations, and support from the police and courts.

These recent changes to the Canadian Criminal Code—and many of the various municipal bylaws and ordinances that control the sale of sexual services—are premised on a variety of assumptions about the sex industry, including assumptions about the people who manage sex industry businesses and the nature of the work they do. A prominent assumption is that managers contribute to the exploitation of their employees and do little to protect them from harm.

The data presented here challenge this depiction by examining managers' role in the triangle that includes them, sex workers and their clients, and by investigating how managers minimize or contribute to workplace conflict. While conflict in indoor sex work settings is not pervasive or even commonplace, our data provide some descriptions of the ways managers in the sex industry experience and resolve conflict in their jobs. Managers report that the most common conflicts are verbal, involving workers and clients, and concerning disputes about the services customers believe that they had purchased or clients' ignoring, the rules set by the manager or worker. Managers typically resolve worker–client disagreements about services by reasoning with and placating the client, often by offering refunds or additional services. Other disputes involve clients' refusal to pay, substance use,

attempts to remove condoms, and stalking workers. Managers typically respond to these behaviors by reprimanding clients and demanding future compliance, removing them, and/or banning them. These types of conflict highlight managers' role as security providers for their workers. This role is especially important because managers are reluctant to call the police unless clients are, or appear that they will become, violent.

Conflicts between managers and workers usually involve workplace complaints, such as dissatisfaction with assigned shifts or the rate of pay, although workers' substance use or theft also precipitated conflict, as do workers posting derogatory comments online. Other conflicts occur when workers arrange dates directly with clients, cutting the agency out of the process. Managers address this by assigning fewer shifts or bookings and, in some cases, firing a worker. Ignoring bad behavior by a worker is also common, in part because managers expect it and because it is not easy to find "good" workers. Managers report fewer direct conflicts with customers.

It is a commonly assumed that men who buy sexual services are particularly violent; yet, according to a 2010 Canadian study, only 3.4% of sex industry customers report having used aggression against a worker (Atchison 2010). Recently collected Canadian data from a sample of sex workers also reveals low levels of physical assaults by customers (Benoit et al. 2014). Fourteen percent of sex workers interviewed indicate that a customer had tried to use force by taking something from them, 16 percent state that they were physically attacked by a client and/or forced into sexual activity against their will, and eight percent report they were threatened with a weapon or physical violence. Consistent with these patterns, the current research finds that although conflict occurs in escort agencies and massage parlors, it is typically not violent and instead involves disputes that managers help to resolve before they escalate into physical aggression (which is an extremely rare occurrence in these environments).

Limitations

While this chapter provides a novel contribution to the literature on management of escort and massage businesses, it is not without limitations. First, although a sample size of 43 participants is a good number for qualitative research, the size of the sample and sampling method limit the ability to generalize to managers in the sex industry in the cities' sampled, Canada at large, or beyond. Second, Bélanger and Edwards (2013) argue that many service employees do not express discontent, and sex workers may not for some of the same reasons. As a result, sex workers may not report discontentment to managers. Furthermore, managers may be reluctant to discuss various issues in the interviews. Finally, managers are "absent" from the actual service exchange and their reports may differ from those of sex workers or clients.

It is also beyond the scope of this chapter to explore the ways in which these work sites may be similar or dissimilar to other work sites where stigmatized populations work. Research examining work relationships in multiple sites would allow for a better understanding of how varying work contexts influence conflict and aggression. It would be useful, for example, to compare managers' findings with those of clients and workers in order to examine any differences. A comparative sample would have additional benefits, including observation of potential variances in conflict/aggression based on specific populations being managed, organizational features of worksites, and the demographic characteristics of the workforce. Subsequent research that combines questionnaire-based surveys with interviews would also be useful. It would for example allow researchers to use multiple measures for different coping and management strategies and to examine the effects of different strategies on occupational health and safety in stigmatized settings.

This chapter has illuminated the complexity of relationships within sex work settings (Benoit et al. 2015). Its findings offer insights into a population that researchers and policymakers alike have historically ignored. It provides qualitative data on managers' relationships with the other two corners of a service industry triangle that involves workers and clients. The research challenges the view that managers are akin to predatory pimps and it raises doubts about stereotypes of dominant power relations in the sex industry. It provides a more nuanced picture of the sex industry, situating managers as an integral part of licensed escort and massage businesses.

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