

Work–life management in legal prostitution: Stigma and lockdown in Nevada’s brothels

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Abstract

Across occupations, people contend with the difficult task of managing time between their work and other aspects of life. Previous research on stigmatized industries has suggested that so-called ‘dirty workers’ experience extreme identity segmentation between these two realms because they tend to cope with their occupational stigma by placing distance between their work and personal lives. Through a qualitative study of Nevada’s legal brothel industry, this article focuses on the prevalence of boundary segmentation as a dominant work–life management practice for dirty workers. Our analysis suggests that work–life boundaries are disciplined by legal mythologies and ambiguities surrounding worker restrictions, occupational ideologies of ‘work now, life later,’ and perceived and experienced effects of community-based stigma. These legal, occupational and community constructs ultimately privilege organizations’ and external communities’ interests, while individual dirty workers carry the weight of stigma.

Keywords

brothels, dirty work, prostitution, sex work, stigma, work–life balance, work–life management

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For centuries, people have grappled with the difficult task of managing the boundaries between paid work and nonwork pursuits (Boris and Lewis, 2006; Crittenden, 2001; Douglas and Michaels, 2004; Golden, 2000; Kirby and Krone, 2002; Medved, 2004). Most people face constraints – organizational, familial or economical – that hinder their ability to successfully arrange work and the rest of life in ways that are meaningful for the individual. This difficulty in achieving appropriate boundaries between work and life has prompted the creation of federal laws and organizational policies to address how individuals manage work and nonwork time.

Work–life laws and policies usually serve to protect workers (such as the eight-hour workday, leaves of absence and child labor laws). However, work–life laws and policies do not apply uniformly across occupations, leaving some legal workers without access to a wide range of strategies for managing boundaries between work and nonwork time. Workers doing *dirty work* (Hughes, 1951) are often subjected to additional regulation of their work and nonwork activities, beyond those required of non-stigmatized business license holders (Hubbard and Colosi, 2013). Further limiting their strategies for managing work–life boundaries is the tendency of dirty workers to cope with the taint of their occupations by distancing their work from their personal lives, identities and experiences (e.g. Ashforth et al., 2007; Goffman, 1963; Thompson et al., 2003). Although it is already well-known that dirty workers segment their lives in these ways, much can be gained by examining segmentation as a dominant practice among workers in stigmatized industries.

This study focuses on the prevalence of segmentation as a dominant work–life management practice for dirty workers. Specifically, we examine these practices within the context of Nevada’s legal brothels. Our analysis suggests that work–life boundaries are disciplined by legal mythologies and ambiguities surrounding worker restrictions, occupational ideologies of ‘work now, life later,’ and perceived and experienced effects of community-based stigma. These legal, occupational and community constructs ultimately privilege organizations’ and external communities’ interests, while individual dirty workers carry the weight of stigma.

Our study responds to calls for more research on the work–life management practices of marginalized populations and people in non-normative work situations. These calls emanate from criticisms of work–life research for focusing almost exclusively on work–life management practices of white, heterosexual, dual career couples (Gill, 2006). Our purpose in this article is not to argue for or against the existence of legal sex work; rather, we seek to focus our attention on work–life conditions surrounding a stigmatized occupation in order to consider implications for scholars of work–life management. Through this analysis, we extend work–life theorizing to consider how laws, regulations and organizational policies governing work and life boundaries emerge from particular contexts to oppress workers in unfair ways.

Brothel prostitution in the state of Nevada provides an ideal context for examining these issues because of the complex political, economic and social environment around legal brothels in the USA. Although prostitution has long been an occupational option to facilitate work–life ‘balance,’¹ laws, regulations and organizational policies dictating the boundaries of work and life interfere with an individual’s ability to determine how and when they engage in work and nonwork pursuits. This contradiction led us to ask the following research question:

How are legal prostitutes' work–life management practices shaped by the legal, occupational and community contexts in which they are situated?

We attend to this research question through qualitative analyses of ethnographic observations at brothels; interviews with legal prostitutes,² other brothel workers, and city and county administrators; and archival research involving all brothel laws, statutes, ordinances and codes. Before describing our methods and analysis in greater detail, we provide important contextual information about work–life management and work–life laws in the USA, followed by relevant information about occupational stigma and 'dirty work.'

Conceptualizing the work–life problematic

Individual employees and organizations continue to grapple with how to manage their work and nonwork responsibilities (Golden, 2000; Kirby and Krone, 2002; Kunin, 2012; Medved, 2004; Sturges, 2012). The ways individuals manage competing expectations and desires is frequently positioned as 'work–life balance' and is exemplified by the image of a scale with work on one side and family or other 'life' interests on the other. While this dichotomy has been useful to illustrate competing expectations between organizations and home concerns, it does not accurately capture the experience of many individuals. Balance, of course, implies two opposites given equal weight that can teeter in undisturbed harmony as long as each side is even. Scholars have readily problematized this notion because it assumes balance is possible and because it puts pressure on individuals (Kirby, 2006).

A number of alternative conceptualizations have cropped up to describe the relationship between work and life, such as work–life 'management' (Kirby et al., 2003); 'integration' (Kossek and Lambert, 2004); 'juggling' (Loflin and Musig, 2007); 'spillover' (Crouter, 1984); 'imbalance' (Kunin, 2012); 'collision' (Pocock, 2003) and 'failure' (Blithe, 2015b). While all of these metaphors offer useful conceptualizations, we align our research interests with those scholars using the term 'work–life management' (Golden and Geisler, 2007) to describe the ways individuals make decisions about how to allocate their time between competing responsibilities at work and in other areas of their lives.

Scholarship on work–life management originated from separate sphere ideologies (Golden and Geisler, 2007; Kirby et al., 2003). Separate sphere theories assume that work (public sphere) is distinct from home (private sphere), and that individuals must navigate their roles and responsibilities in each realm by constructing distinct boundaries between the two (Gill, 2006; Jorgenson, 2000; Nippert-Eng, 1996; Wieland, 2011). Clark (2000: 748) described this process in her *work–life border theory*. She explained, 'People are border-crossers who make daily transitions between two worlds – the world of work and the world of family. People shape these worlds . . . they are, in turn, shaped by them.' Clark (2000) goes on to explain that borders may be physical, temporal and/or psychological (see also Cowan and Hoffman, 2007).

Early scholarship about work–life focused primarily on work–*family* boundaries (Clark, 2000; Kirby et al., 2003). However, more recent scholarship has moved to a more inclusive notion of work–life management (Blithe, 2015a; Kirby, 2006).³ This broader

definition of life includes parenting, but also other forms of care work, such as housework, elder care, pet care and self-care, as well as personal health, community engagement, spirituality and physical fitness (Blithe, 2015a; Brewis and Linstead, 2000b; Kirby, 2006; Tracy, 2008; Zoller, 2003). A broader notion of life pushes against backlash toward work–family policies, and seeks to make organizational work–life policies more equitable (Kirby and Krone, 2002).

Currently, workers manage work and life using a variety of techniques, including engaging formal policies, working part-time, flexing work hours, adapting work arrangements to meet personal needs, and blending work and life tasks (Lambert, 2008; Sturges, 2012). Some scholars argue that the driving force behind these work–life management practices is people's desires to manage conflicts between their work and personal *identities* (Blithe, 2015a; Kuhn, 2006; Trethewey et al., 2006). Questions of how to be a good parent and a good worker, for example, are fundamentally rooted in issues of image, identity and impression-management. Building on these previous studies' claims about the significance of identity- and image-work in work–life management, we begin from an assumption that when a person's work role is spoiled by some form of physical, social, moral or emotional taint, *stigma management* becomes a work–life issue. Our interest, therefore, in prostitution as a context for studying work–life issues is driven by the particular work–life conditions characteristic of stigmatized occupations.

Managing work–life boundaries in 'dirty' occupations

Hughes (1951) described *dirty work* as work that was often considered disgusting or degrading. Ironically, while dirty work meets the needs of some consumer base in society, society as a whole condemns and stigmatizes dirty work and *dirty workers* (Hughes, 1962). Simply put, dirty work is defined by tasks that contain *taint* in a physical, social, moral or emotional sense, such as funeral home operators, oilrig workers or sex workers (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999; McMurray and Ward, 2014). Legal prostitution is an occupation characterized as tainted on all of these dimensions (Ashforth and Kreiner, 2014).

Dirty workers cope with the stigma associated with their occupation by adopting strategies of taint management (Ashforth et al., 2007; Meisenbach, 2010; Sanders, 2004), attempting to construct positive occupational identities (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999; Chiappetta-Swanson, 2005; Jervis, 2001), and (dis)identifying with their occupation or organization (Kreiner et al., 2006). Scholars have suggested that, as a means of stigma management, dirty workers divide their social worlds (Goffman, 1963) by isolating themselves from potentially stigmatizing audiences (Hudson and Okhuysen, 2009; Wolfe and Blithe, 2015). In so doing, dirty workers adopt work–life management practices that serve to separate their work persona from their personal 'self' (Sanders, 2005; Thompson et al., 2003; Tracy and Trethewey, 2005).

To the extent that dirty workers experience this stigma as an occupational-level threat, they tend to reify boundaries between insiders and outsiders, believing more strongly in the entitativity of the in-group and distancing themselves from occupational outsiders (Kreiner et al., 2006). Prostitutes retain control over the boundaries between their public and private lives through a variety of distancing techniques, including laughing at clients, classifying types of sexual encounters (i.e. romantic vs work), and/or using drugs

(Brewis and Linstead, 2000a; Sanders, 2004). So much of this research suggests that many dirty workers cope with the stigma of their work by compartmentalizing their work and personal lives. However, these studies have left underexamined deeper questions regarding the broader legal, occupational and social pressures that constitute segmentation as such a dominant coping strategy.

Work–life laws and legal prostitution

Work–life laws guide how and when individuals can or should work. An early work–life law included the contentious eight-hour day law. Those in opposition to the law claimed limiting work hours interfered with individuals' rights to earn higher wages. However, the courts determined that issues that can affect the public (including health, morality or safety) should be determined by state or federal legislature (Hand, 1908). Other early examples of work–life laws include compulsory school attendance and child labor laws (Lleras-Muney, 2002), laws limiting the work hours of women (Landes, 1980), and laws guaranteeing mandatory paid holidays so workers can celebrate with their families (Jones et al., 2005).

Occasionally, work–life laws also dictate how people act when they are away from work and blur the lines between work and nonwork time. For example, seafarers have either maximum working hours per day or minimum rest hours per day to help reduce accidents at sea caused by fatigue (Reyner and Baulk, 1998). Other transportation operators, such as freight or delivery drivers are subject to the Hours of Service Act of 1907 (Jones et al., 2005) and 'Maggie's Law' (and similar legislation) which determine that, if a driver has not slept in the last 24 hours before a vehicular homicide, the accident is a criminal offense (Maggie's Law: National Drowsy Driving Act of 2003; Jones et al., 2005). In this way, most work–life laws exist primarily for two reasons: (1) to protect and benefit workers or (2) to protect communities. Work–life laws for legal prostitutes largely emerged from this latter tradition (Goldman, 1981).

Legislating sex work

Current laws governing sex work vary in meaningful ways depending on location and the particular sex-related services being regulated. The global sex industry includes a multitude of occupations, including video and internet pornography actors and producers, pornographic magazine owners and models, lap dancers, exotic dancers, erotic massage, telephone sex operators, public sex performances, and, of course, prostitution in all of its various forms (McCarthy et al., 2012; Sanders-McDonagh, 2015; Seals, 2015; Weitzer, 2012). Nevada's legal brothels and their workers do share some traits and experiences with both illegal prostitution and legal prostitution or sex tourism in international locations (Brewis and Linstead, 2002; Weitzer, 2012). However, local culture, history, economics, politics and geographic location deeply impact the lived experiences of the world's prostitutes.⁴ Minor differences in location, clientele, worker demographics and sexual services offered subject similar sex work occupations to, at times, dramatically different legal penalties and protections. In light of these differences, it is a gross inaccuracy to conflate all 'prostitution' as the same (Dewey, 2012; McCarthy et al., 2012).

Despite claims regarding potential benefits of offering sex services in legal locations, the conflation of prostitution with sex trafficking, assumptions about the victim status of legal sex workers, and the growth of religious conservatism have increased the stigma leveled toward all sex workers (McCarthy et al., 2012). An unlikely friendship between the Christian right and radical feminists has led the way in attempts to dismantle the sex industry. These groups view prostitution as violence against women, in every circumstance, and assume that women have no agency in any 'decision' to engage in sex work (Farley, 2007). Anti-prostitution activists consider legal brothels (and the use of terms such as sex worker, exotic dancer or escort) as a dangerous normalization of insidious activities (Weitzer, 2006).

While legal prostitution in Nevada is part of the global sex industry, it is important to recognize that it is vastly different from other kinds of sex work in meaningful ways. Parsing out these differences is important (Brewis and Linstead, 2002), particularly because almost all academic work on prostitution focuses on illegal (and mostly street) prostitution (Weitzer, 2000, 2006, 2012). There is very little empirical research on Nevada's legal brothels (Brents et al., 2010; Kuo, 2002; Read, 2013). However, the legal, social, political, geographical and occupational contexts in which sex work takes place are relevant to understand the kinds of work-life implications, 'choices,' opportunities and constraints that individual sex workers might face. Workers in Nevada's legal brothels, for example, must worry less about safety (a major concern for many street prostitutes, or legal prostitutes in some international locations) but they must still contend with occupational stigma, which impacts their work-life management, similar to most other sex workers (Brents and Hausbeck, 2005; Hausbeck and Brents, 2009).

Nevada's legal brothels

Although houses of prostitution have been legal (or not illegal)⁵ for most of Nevada's history, laws have always been in place to confine the practices of the organizations and workers in brothels. Prostitution as a form of labor is 'routinely stigmatized and rendered dangerous through laws, public policy, and social complicity, all of which hold sex workers accountable for the violence they face' (Dewey, 2012: 115). Currently, legal brothels in Nevada exist in precarious harmony with the counties in which they operate. They are major economic contributors, yet remain continually under public scrutiny because of moral objections to their work (Brents et al., 2010; Weitzer, 2012). This precarious position is often used as a rationale for policies that constrain individual legal prostitutes' actions. Keeping legal prostitutes out of sight and away from the communities where they work allows brothels to avoid some stigma associated with the occupation (Brents et al., 2010). This desire to keep prostitution out of sight also drives specific laws and regulations, such as those limiting brothel advertising and zoning.

Of greatest interest to this study, however, are those laws, regulations, and organizational policies that encourage or mandate some degree of segmentation between legal prostitutes' work and nonwork lives. Today, prostitutes in Nevada's legal brothels are independent contractors and determine the length of their contract. Many women work for a few weeks straight and then take the rest of the year off; others work two weeks on and two weeks off – the options for flexible scheduling depend on how much money a worker wants to earn and how much time she wants to be away from the brothel.

Despite legal prostitutes' status as independent contractors, most brothels still enforce policies that prohibit prostitutes from leaving the brothel during their contract period. These *lockdown* policies are regulations that stipulate how, when and if legal prostitutes are allowed to leave the brothels during their stay. Although lockdown is not mandated by state law, county code or city ordinance, it is a pervasive practice, and brothel workers, including prostitutes and brothel owners, refer to non-existent or mythical laws that govern curfews and places that prostitutes may or may not go. Because lockdown practices account for the strictest controls on the mobility of legal prostitutes in Nevada, investigating the legal and mythological bases for these practices is a crucial component to understanding the nature of work–life issues and the resources available for managing these issues in Nevada's legal brothels. In the following section, we describe our methods for conducting this investigation.

Methods

We used a qualitative, interpretive framework to answer our research question:

How are legal prostitutes' work–life management practices shaped by the legal, occupational and community contexts in which they are situated?

Specifically, we analyzed data from ethnographic observations at nine brothels in three different counties; in-depth interviews with 18 people working in the brothel industry. We conducted six supplementary interviews with two rural sheriffs, two rural city managers, a rural county clerk and a US District Court clerk; and archival research involving all Nevada state, county and city statutes, ordinances, and codes on legal prostitution. After gaining approval from the Institutional Review Board to conduct our study, we contacted brothel owners and asked if we could come to the brothels to observe and to conduct interviews. In the following sections, we elaborate on the details of our observational, interviewing and archival research practices.

Brothel observations

Nevada is the only state in the USA with legal brothels and currently there are fewer than two dozen brothels in the state. We observed work in nine brothels, including six suburban locations and three remote locations. All of these are located within three counties, although counties in Nevada can be quite large, and the brothels were often hundreds of miles away from each other. Two of the brothels we visited were large multi-acre resorts with over a hundred women contracted; while three were quite small, with only three to five women contracted at a time. The remaining brothels could be considered mid-sized. Our engagement in the brothels varied. At five of the sites, we spent between two to five hours observing organizational practices, such as staff meetings and official tours, and conducting interviews. In these sites, we spent significant time in many common areas and private rooms. At the other locations, we were only invited in for a brief tour and talk with a brothel representative. Two brothels we contacted refused to participate in the study. Both of these brothels were located in the same town, and we were able to tour one

other brothel in this same location. In the end, we conducted 18.5 hours of observation, including the interviews.

Our data collection required extensive travel because most brothels in Nevada are geographically remote. We used the travel time to debrief and compare our observations. We recorded our debriefing and early analysis through this process, which McDonald (2005) termed a 'tape dump.' We attempted to capture observations that were not included in the audio recording, such as conduct documents we were allowed to read (but not take), signs, décor, interactions and so forth. We recorded our perceptions, feelings and reactions to unexpected moments, possible deception, conversations that occurred when the audio recorder was off, and questions about the industry or community that were unclear. Our tape dumps produced 134 single-spaced pages of data and included four hours of audio-recorded debriefing notes.

Participants

We conducted interviews with a total of 18 people working in the brothel industry. Ten of these interviews were with legal female prostitutes from six brothels, and three interviews were with male brothel owners. In addition, we interviewed one female floor manager at a rural brothel in northwestern Nevada, a female bartender in a small city brothel, and a female office manager and male risk manager at a suburban brothel, and the Nevada Brothel Owner's Association lobbyist.⁶ Although our primary research interest centered on the work-life management practices of legal prostitutes, interviews with other people involved in the industry provided context for prostitutes' reported perceptions and experiences.

All participants volunteered to speak with us and consented to participate after being told at the beginning of the interview that these interactions would be audio recorded and used for research publications. We did not pay for the interview time, even though tipping is customary for tours and time in the industry. However, we did not wish to induce any perception of coercion, so all time was unpaid. An interview protocol loosely guided all interviews, which ranged from 15 minutes to three hours, with an average time of about one hour. We audio recorded and transcribed all the interviews, which produced 303 pages of single-spaced text covering 17 hours and 42 minutes of recorded interviews.

Archival research

Our interviews with industry insiders generated, at times, confusing and contradictory information about Nevada laws and regulations. For that reason, it became necessary for us to conduct our own archival research on state statutes, county codes and city ordinances. The Nevada Revised Statutes are available online, as are all county codes except for Esmeralda and Humboldt counties (county clerks were able to provide information for these counties). We also included in our archival research city ordinances for all cities with active brothels: Carlin, Elko, Wells, Winnemucca, Pahrump and Ely. Although legal brothels exist in Battle Mountain, Mound House, Mina, Amargosa Valley, Crystal and Patrick, these places are unincorporated communities or census-designated places so

they defer to county jurisdiction for regulating brothel activities. We searched each set of statutes, codes and ordinances for entries on ‘brothel’ and ‘prostitution,’ resulting in 154 pages of single-spaced notes on laws and regulations referring specifically to the practice of legal brothel prostitution.

As we reviewed these laws and regulations, we found little legal support for some of the lockdown ‘laws’ our interviewees discussed. This discrepancy inspired us to call local sheriff’s offices and through particularly helpful interviews with two rural sheriffs, two interviews with rural city managers, two interviews with rural county clerks, and one interview with the US District court clerk in Reno, we acquired ‘Regulations for Prostitutes’ (sometimes referred to as ‘police rules’), which all legal prostitutes must sign when they apply for their work cards in some towns. We discuss the details of these regulations in our analysis.

Data analysis and verification

Data analysis began in the tape dumps, when we verbally began to articulate common answers, consistent themes in word choice, framing and experiences. These early themes shaped analysis throughout the project. When the data collection ended, we began a more formal analysis, coding the transcripts of the interviews and tape dumps. Analysis proceeded inductively, grounded in data, and happened through iterative waves (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). We formed initial codes and then refined, reduced, expanded and collapsed categories as some themes proved more salient than others. A few themes emerged about work–life management. After refining the data, some themes emerged as more relevant to our interviewees, through the passion of expressed opinions, frequency of similar comments, or both. We discuss the three most salient themes pertaining to work–life management.

The multiple methods used in this project provided triangulation for data validity; the interviews supported the data collected through observations and vice versa (Creswell and Miller, 2000). In addition, we compared our observations and started early analysis together through the tape dumps, noting points of disagreement about the interpretation of comments and events. In the remainder of this article, we discuss the results of our analysis. Specifically, we explain how work–life boundaries are disciplined by three themes: (1) legal mythologies and ambiguities surrounding worker restrictions; (2) occupational ideologies of ‘work now, life later’; and (3) perceived and experienced effects of community-based stigma.

Legal mythologies and ambiguities

The first theme revealed a confusing, controversial and constricting way in which legal prostitutes’ work–life boundaries are disciplined through beliefs and policies surrounding worker mobility. These *lockdown* policies regulate how, when and if legal prostitutes are allowed to leave brothels during their contract periods. Lockdown is not mandated by any state law, county code or city ordinance, and yet it is a pervasive practice. The ambiguity and misinformation surrounding the existence and legality of these policies contributes to their power in limiting the movement of legal prostitutes in Nevada. In this

section, we first describe the actual rules regarding restrictions on prostitutes' activities inside and outside of some brothels. Then, we describe the mythology surrounding lockdown policies – that is, what constraints workers *believe* exist. Finally, we explain how these laws, policies, rules and mythologies are related to legal prostitutes' work–life management practices.

Actual constraints

Although lockdown is not explicitly protected by state, county or city law, these practices remain encoded in some towns and counties under 'Regulations for Prostitutes,' sometimes referenced informally as 'police rules.' Both officers interviewed for this project explained that the legality of these rules are questionable; therefore, neither department enforces them. In the words of one officer: 'There isn't a law. The police don't patrol for it. The only thing they could be arrested for is soliciting.' Despite the legal impotence of these police rules, state and local solicitation and medical examination laws, which *are* more easily enforceable, can be interpreted in ways that incentivize the continued practice of lockdown in Nevada's brothels. We briefly describe each of these sets of regulations, laws, contractual agreements and rules and consider how they inform legal prostitutes' practices of work–life management.

Nevada state laws, county codes and police rules

Every brothel we visited was subject to general state laws and county codes, which they often drew upon to justify lockdown. Nevada State law (NRS 201.420) dictates that:

Any person who shall keep any disorderly house, or any house of public resort, by which the peace, comfort or decency of the immediate neighborhood, or any family thereof, is habitually disturbed, or who shall keep any inn in a disorderly manner, is guilty of a misdemeanor.

Although this law does not mention lockdown, it is sometimes interpreted to mean that prostitutes must stay away from public places. County codes (including codes for the counties in which the brothels included in this study are situated) use similar, general language. For example, Storey County Code 5.16.030 stipulates that brothel licenses are only valid as long as they do 'not constitute a public nuisance or an offense to public decency.' In a similar way, Lyon County Code 5.03.16 states that brothel licenses can be revoked for 'Any other cause which the board may determine, in its sound discretion, to be deleterious to the health, welfare and safety of the general public.' Each county in Nevada that allows brothel activity has specific codes to guide prostitution. However, towns also develop more specific local regulations, sometimes called 'police rules,' outlining additional expectations for sex worker behavior outside of the brothels. Three of the brothels included in our study were located in unincorporated communities (therefore, without local legislative bodies), but some form of police rules existed for all incorporated communities included in our study.

As mentioned above, the officers interviewed for this study claim that the police rules are not enforced owing to their questionable legality; however, all legal sex workers in

these incorporated communities must sign a document listing these ‘Regulations for Prostitutes’ when they apply for a work permit. The details vary by location, but all of the documents we were able to access adopted similar language and rules. For example, in Carlin, Rule #6 states:

Prostitutes are permitted to dine in restaurants and to conduct personal business and shopping in Carlin between the hours of 7:00 am and 7:00 pm. Prostitutes will be appropriately attired in public. Under no circumstances will a prostitute approach or allow herself to be approached by a potential customer when out of the house. Prostitutes shall not be absent from their place of employment between 7:00 pm and 7:00 am.

Wells’ regulations for prostitutes Rule #6 is identical, except that prostitutes are only allowed to leave the house between 8:00 am and 5:00 pm. Beyond these rules regarding curfew and public behavior, different areas’ regulations include other rules such as: local working women are not allowed to go home at night; legal prostitutes are not allowed in town, bars or casinos; legal prostitutes may not have family members reside in town; legal prostitutes must take days off in a different town; and, if traveling to another destination, legal prostitutes on vacation must take the most ‘expeditious transport’ out of town. All of these documents end with an item stating that failure to comply with regulations will be grounds for denial or termination of working privileges. In some cases, the document claims that non-compliance can be punished by revocation of the brothel’s business license.

Solicitation laws and ‘stealing from the house’

Engaging in prostitution or solicitation for prostitution outside of a licensed house of prostitution is illegal by state law (NRS 201.354). Therefore, if legal prostitutes, in their time off, met with clients outside of the house and were compensated for their time, they could be arrested on solicitation charges. Beyond this legal penalty, most brothels owners consider solicitation by one of their contracted prostitutes to be ‘stealing from the house.’ Typically, prostitutes’ contracts in Nevada’s brothels state that they will give 50% of the proceeds from all deals to the brothel. These funds are used to pay brothel owners, managers, bartenders, security and other organizational members, as well as cover overhead costs of building maintenance, utilities and other business expenses. According to a manager of a rural brothel, lockdown regulations help to ensure that the women do not make money ‘on the side.’ She explained:

You don’t want them to be [taking] the house’s money . . . That’s always a concern, but I haven’t had a problem with any of ’em . . . That’s actually in their contract. There’s no taking customers out of the house, like meeting them on the outside.

Confining legal prostitutes to the brothel or providing a driver for prostitutes anytime they leave the house ensures that the brothels get their contracted percentage on all deals.

One of the brothel owners claimed that he gave all prostitutes free permission to leave at will (although most of the workers we spoke with in his brothel chose to live there during their contract). A few workers in this particular brothel had cars and did leave frequently

during the day and sometimes went home at night. The owner believes that he can manage the problem of prostitutes 'stealing from the house' without lockdown policies. He explained:

With my system it's real easy to steal from us. It's real easy to do things out of the house. Other brothels put in these real restrictive things to try to curtail that, right? I don't. We just let everybody know. You fuck me, I fuck back and I fuck harder. I'll have Goldstein, Goldsmith and Goldheim up your ass for the next two years in court and we do it.

He continued on to describe a current two-year lawsuit in which he was suing a woman who was allegedly paid \$300,000.00 for sex outside of the brothel. This brothel owner mostly viewed lockdown regulations as unnecessary because of the combined legal power of contracts and solicitation laws.

Medical examination laws and the expense of 'clearing'

One legal limitation that is used to justify lockdown practices has to do with state, county and city laws about mandatory testing for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). According to state law, women who engage in prostitution after testing positive for HIV are guilty of a felony (NRS 201.358), and brothel owners are liable for damages caused by employing a licensed prostitute who has tested positive for HIV (NRS 41.1397). County and city codes mandate weekly tests for STDs and monthly tests for HIV. Nye County (9.20.150) and the City of Elko (4.9.14) both mandate that any prostitute who leaves the premises for longer than 24 hours must undergo all medical testing before being allowed to work again. Wells has the same policy for prostitutes who leave the brothel for more than 48 hours (3.6.28).

Rick,⁷ a brothel owner, claimed that lockdown practices helped to ensure a clean bill of health. He said:

When a lady comes into the house, the first thing she must do is clear.⁸ So her first stop is the health department . . . Now if you can imagine if a girl is leaving every night for town, when she comes back the next morning, is she clear? Did she have sex without a condom? Is she still medically clear? . . . While you're here, if you're gonna leave property clear, you must go with one of our runners. He'll take you to the bank . . . so now we can verify to the state health department that you were always under managed supervision from a health standpoint . . . So it's not a lockdown per se, but we're following the procedures set by the legislature and the county and the health department.

Rick wanted to make sure the women in his brothel adhered to strict medical codes, and claimed that he could not control such regulations without these policies. Aside from concern with maintaining health 'clearance,' many of the sex workers claim that they choose not to leave the brothel during their contract periods because leaving means missing a potential money-making party.

Furthermore, very few goods or services available in the community are not already available to sex workers within the brothel walls. All brothels have dining and laundry facilities on-site, and many of them have doctors' offices, spas and exercise facilities as well. Additionally, some brothels bring in 'friendly' members of the community to offer services to the women:

Every week at our [business meeting] we bring in different people in the community. The Avon lady comes in. The gal that's selling the wraps comes in. Every week Wells Fargo has a representative here. We do so much business with them we have our own personal representative from Wells Fargo that comes in every week. There are guest speakers and they'll come in and talk about their products and what's going on in the community.

These efforts to minimize interactions between the sex workers and the communities in which the brothels are situated are explained as measures taken for the safety of women, the health of potential clients, and the convenience of brothel workers. However, even viewed as conveniences, these organizational practices function as glass handcuffs (Blithe, 2015a) because these discourses, practices and material constraints act as an invisible pull that keeps sex workers in the brothels, working nonstop and avoiding spending much time on nonwork pursuits.

Lockdown mythologies

As Boje et al. (1982: 18) claimed, myths play an important role in organizational socialization because these beliefs 'constitute a factual and highly objective reality' that serves as explanation for why given practices and procedures are the 'only way' an organization could effectively function. Therefore, even without enforceable laws legislating lockdown practices, these restrictions on prostitutes' mobility continue to dictate workers' behavior owing to pervasive *beliefs* about the existence, legality, necessity and practice of lockdown in the brothel industry.

First, the language some owners, prostitutes, and other brothel workers use to describe lockdown practices implies that violations of police rules are legal offenses for which violators could be arrested. One manager, Teri, told us:

... the girls, it's illegal for them to be out of the house after 5:00 pm unless they're on their day off, which they generally have to take out of town ... and they're not allowed to go in the bars downtown and gamble or drink or anything anymore.

A prostitute at this same brothel referred to the curfew restriction as a 'law' for which violators could be arrested. The fact that police were 'generally pretty lax' about enforcing these believed-to-be 'laws' made the brothel workers feel at once, grateful for the kindness of the local law enforcement but also anxious that at any time an officer could choose to punish them.

Second, some brothel owners and workers believed in the necessity of lockdown practices as a means of protection. In these instances, constraints on movement in and out of the brothel were discursively constructed as protective measures taken to ensure the safety of prostitutes. For example, consider this example provided by brothel owner, Rick, and affirmed by Gisele, a prostitute:

Rick: If the male animal on the outside world identifies you as being a working girl, they will approach you differently. Maybe even dangerously. And so one of the things that the house brings is a safe zone.

Gisele: Yeah, absolutely.

Rick: So it's more dangerous . . . It's for their safety . . . you wanna know you're not being stalked . . . they'll follow you home, they'll find where you live . . . once you leave the safe zone of the environment here within the brothel . . . Outside the gates –

Stories of prostitutes being found dead on the side of the road or in the middle of the desert, presumably killed by violent clients, perpetuate this belief that lockdown serves as a protective measure for the good of the women.

In a similar example, one interviewee explained:

You have two choices and two choices only. You let [prostitution] run rampant and have disease and crime and everything else associated with it or you move it into a regulated and controlled environment where [you can] eliminate somewhere close to 100 percent of the typical problems that you have on the outside.

[Walking outside] around 10:30 at night I recognized a [working] lady standing across the street under a streetlight . . . I had not been standing watching her for less than a minute and a beat up old Plymouth pulled up and double parked. This big black guy gets out. He walks over to her and then the voice raises enough from both of them so I can hear the conversation. I hear her say this to him, ' . . . but honey it's slow tonight. You can see nobody's out in this rainy condition.' He says, 'Listen, I expect you to be able to produce more than the \$60.00 you just handed me. You've been out since dusk.' She says, 'I'm telling you, baby, it's just slow.' He lost his temper. He started slapping her. He knocked her to the street. She was crying. He finally helped her up. He brushed her off, straightened her clothing. Then he said to her the following quote, 'Listen, bitch, I'll be back in three hours. If you don't have \$200.00 earned for me that you can put in my big, black palm I'm going to go home and really badly hurt your baby.' That is what I hear every day from women on the street. That's why the brothel [rules] are a good idea.

For this participant, prostitutes are protected by the confines of the brothel, and are at personal risk of attack outside their fences.

Relation to work–life management practices

The laws, regulations, rules and agreements outlined above help to explain some of the legal and occupational constructs that relate to the prevalence of segmentation as a dominant work–life management practice for legal prostitutes. The differences between these actual policies and brothel workers' beliefs about lockdown also have implications for the ways in which they engage in work–life boundary management. In this section, we discuss how these differences contribute to prostitutes' perceptions and experiences of work–life boundaries in three distinct ways: (1) they view owners/managers as benevolent when they make allowances; (2) they describe people who leave the brothel as 'sneaking out' or 'breaking laws,' behaviors worthy of punishment and scorn; and (3) they frame their work experiences as a retreat, vacation or escape from the rest of the world.

Viewing owners/managers as benevolent when allowances are made

Because prostitutes in many locations believe that lockdown is an enforceable policy, regulation or law (regardless of whether it is or not), many of them expressed gratitude toward owners and managers who allowed them to ‘break the rules’ in exceptional circumstances. For example, Mandy explained how brothel supervisors do not penalize her for leaving without notice for emergencies. She explained, ‘My daughter got really sick a few months ago. And it was like 5:00 and they were taking her to the urgent care and I was just like, “I’m leaving.” And there was no questions.’ Mandy described feeling quite supported in both her ability to go home to her family each night and her ability to leave her shift for emergencies.

Similarly, a prostitute at a different brothel, Carolina, worked as a volunteer fire fighter in addition to her role as a prostitute. She explained that she sometimes worked at the brothel while she was also on call for the fire department. She stated:

[My] pager’s always attached to my hip . . . If, pardon my language, the shit hits the fan, then they see me flying out of here . . . They actually are very accepting . . . They’re very supportive on other aspects of our lives.

The brothel owner and manager supported Carolina’s need to leave for emergency fires and did not fine her when she broke contract in leaving.

The belief that brothel owners and managers are risking potential penalties for making these allowances contributes to the portrayal of these authority figures as benevolent caretakers. This portrayal reinforces feelings of entitlement, which construct brothel workers as a cohesive in-group and outsiders (who are believed to be to blame for the existence or necessity of these lockdown restrictions) as an ignorant, closed-minded or dangerous out-group.

Sneaking out, breaking rules and judging violators

Belief in the legality and enforceability of lockdown practices leads some prostitutes (especially in rural locations) to police each other’s behavior and to view their own violations of the regulations as a serious offense. Sierra shared a story about a time she broke the local lockdown ‘law’ by leaving the brothel after 5:00 pm. She explained:

Well there is a law in [our town] that states between 5:00 PM and 8:00 AM sex workers are not allowed out of the house unless on an out date. Well like I was just about to get my period . . . So I [snuck out] to Burger King drive-thru. I got everybody something in the house and I came back . . . I friggin’ told [my manager] the next day ‘Well I went to Burger King last night,’ so she was like ‘YOU WHAT?’ and I was like ‘Yeah’ [laughing].

Teri and Sierra discussed that if Sierra was caught (a distinct possibility in a small town where all legal prostitutes are known) she could have been arrested, fined and possibly fired. In reality, the local *regulation* states that her work card could have been revoked, although she could not have been arrested or fined and could likely reinstate her work card over time.

Still, the power of these beliefs deeply impact daily practices in the brothels. In fact, beliefs that prostitutes who leave the brothel are rule-breakers generate judgments and claims of superiority from rule-abiding workers. Teri and Sierra knew about a prostitute from a competing brothel who lived locally and went home every night. They explained:

Teri: Jessie lives here in town . . . she pulls her shift and goes back home.

Sierra: It's not really allowed, but they don't enforce it . . . if the police did wanna look into it . . . and things aren't up to par they can get shut down.

Teri and Sierra both took their lockdown policies fairly seriously (except for Sierra's 'illegal' trip to Burger King) and they did not generally approve of their competitor's lackadaisical enforcement of lockdown regulations.

Framing work as escape

Some prostitutes reported accepting or even embracing lockdown as a practice. For these women, mandating this separation between their work and the rest of their lives allowed them to more certainly ensure their work and private lives were separated. For example, Crystal explained her decision to try a new brothel by saying:

I decided . . . to change everything . . . meet new people, make more money maybe, you know stuff like that. Just get away. So it's like a little mini vacation . . . Sometimes you need a break away from what you're used to.

While a few prostitutes described staying at the brothel like vacationing in a resort, some women simply felt like the brothel was another home. Kaya explained, 'The majority of my life is here. I hang out with [the brothel owner]. I work.' In a similar way, Gisele claimed, 'This is all I do . . . I go home and I come back . . . I'll stay here. I live here.' For Sierra:

This is more so my home and my home is like my vacation spot . . . I do have a child, so you know trying to balance that with being here more than at home. Last time I was here for two months; I went home for 10 days. Now I'm here for 18 days, I go home for one.

In all of these cases, the concepts of 'home' and 'vacation' blurred as the brothel became 'home' for some women and a 'vacation' for others. Generally, interviewees claimed to appreciate this separation, although, as Sierra's comments indicate, the distance between the outside world and the seclusion of the brothel also presents challenges for moving between such segmented parts of their lives.

Occupational ideologies of 'work now, life later'

Our second theme revealed that legal prostitutes manage their work and life boundaries by drawing on an ideology of 'work now, life later.' Many of the people we interviewed believed that engaging in *dirty work* for the short term would facilitate a better life in the long term. Citing the tremendous economic benefits of legal brothel work, the individuals we spoke with talked about how their 'choice' to work hard in the present would

result in good future lives filled with money, travel, schooling, leisure or a better life for their children. Sierra, a prostitute in a rural brothel, explained:

I've been doing this for seven years and . . . I was smart enough to know, I was dumb enough to [NOT] know what to do with my money, so I've done nothing but save it for six years . . . My goal is \$1 million [before I quit]. I can work less than a year and be there.

Money figured heavily into Sierra's rationale for prostituting. She wanted to earn enough money to take care of her eight-year-old son, and believed the quickest and best way to accomplish her goal was through prostitution.

In another example, Jada explained that she worked in the brothels to earn a large chunk of money to pay off debt and to grow her small company (unrelated to sex work). She said:

I have two degrees right now and I own a small business. So I have a lot of debt and a lot of things that I want to do with my business and I do want to create growth within that area . . . So I wanna invest in myself . . . We make good money.

Jada spoke passionately throughout the interview about her ability to finance her 'legitimate' business through her brothel work, which would 'set her up for life.' Mandy also spoke about investing the large amounts of cash she earned, by setting up 'money market accounts' to help her secure her future for her children.

The *work now, life later* ideology was also perpetuated through the brothel owners. James explained:

This is an opportunity . . . Whatever number you have in your head . . . \$5,000.00, \$10,000.00, make it in two, three, four, five days and go pursue other things, your education, lay on a beach in Hawaii . . . whatever you want to do or knuckle down and put five years into this and never work another day . . . You work so you don't have to work.

Another brothel owner, Rick, mentioned the ability to quickly earn money without having to work for years. He explained that brothels 'generate so much revenue and it's instant. It doesn't have to build over a period of years.' A brothel manager added, 'He has [a number] of ladies that come in and . . . generate [large amounts] of money . . . That little house and his . . . sales ladies generate [millions of dollars] a year.'

Although most of the prostitutes, owners and managers indirectly referenced the economic benefits of prostitution, a number of women would embark on their 'life later' plan only to return to the brothel. Rachel explained:

I was working a full-time job before but it was too much, I wasn't getting any school done. So I wanted something to where I could focus more on school and make a good enough income so that I didn't have to worry about working, but it backfired because I became so successful, I became a workaholic. So I had less time for school. I had never made money like that before. So I spent a lot . . . After two years it was completely gone. I actually had to take out some student loans.

Rachel also shared multiple stories of other women she knew who left and subsequently returned to prostituting after 'blowing' all of their hard-earned money.

Perceived and experienced effects of community-based stigma

Our third and final theme affirmed that legal prostitutes' practices for managing work-life boundaries are strongly related to perceptions and experiences of stigma. Specifically, in response to (and sometimes in anticipation of) negative evaluations of their occupational affiliations from members of the communities where prostitutes live and/or work, the women adopt stigma management practices that will allow them to better compartmentalize their work and personal identities. Specifically, in this section we describe the ways in which legal prostitutes accomplish this segmentation by building separate prostitute-friendly networks in which they conduct all work-related business.

Building a sex-work friendly network

For the legal prostitutes in both urban and rural brothels, doing business within this network of sex-work-friendly businesses facilitated the process of segmenting their occupational stigma from important personal contexts. For example, Jada and Mandy explained how they avoided stigma from banks, which sometimes flagged legal prostitutes' accounts for fraud or refused to open accounts:

Jada: [One bank] works very closely with [us] . . . [but] Michael's the only [teller] you can go to.

Mandy: Yeah. But if you go to like a different [branch] . . . It can be discouraging . . . Like if Michael's on vacation, I'm just sitting at home waiting for Michael to come home . . . But you can't go to the [bank] in [a different location] and be accepted.

Both women expressed that they experienced stigma when dealing with financial institutions. The relationship fostered by the brothel helped them manage stigma so that they could open accounts, secure loans and conduct financial planning with less judgment; however, working within this network of integrated outsiders limited their options as consumers.

The problems associated with this limited network were further explained as Jada and Mandy described the brothel's relationships with car dealerships. Like banks, many sex workers experienced difficulty securing car loans on their own. Jada explained:

I tried to lease a super basic Audi . . . And they were like, 'We can't give it to you.' And I was like, 'I make 20 grand plus a month and you're telling me you can't give me a loan? A 20 grand loan . . . They want your proof of income. And it comes from here . . . And I was automatically denied. My credit score is 752 . . . and they were like, 'Well, we just we can't do it.' And I was like, 'Well, this is discrimination.' Of course you can't claim it as that . . . So I said, 'Fine, I'll take my money elsewhere.' And Mercedes was like, sure. Mercedes loves [the brothel owner] . . . And so us girls are encouraged to go to Mercedes.

In this case, the brothel owner maintained a positive relationship with the local Mercedes dealership and sent many of his acquaintances in the industry to his contacts there.

However, Jada's choices as a consumer were constrained by the limited scope of this network.

Jada and Mandy also discussed the pre-arranged network of medical professionals who helped them keep their work cards current without stigmatizing them:

- Jada:* And you know what's funny is Planned Parenthood even has some sort of stigma. Because they have a question, are you a prostitute?
- Mandy:* If you mark you get paid for sex, they automatically bring in two to three doctors. They try to psych evaluate you . . . They're like, are you abused?
- Jada:* But Jesus . . . You're in the medical profession . . . So, [the brothel owner] actually has a . . . Primary for us so we don't have to worry about the stigma.
- Jada:* We [also] have a chiropractor that comes in here and we just call him.
- Mandy:* You're like, 'God, this guy threw me off the bed today.' And he's like, 'Oh, it's okay . . .
- Jada:* But if we were to go into like another place [they would ask, were you] in a car accident? *Sure*. You know. So it's like we can't be very honest.

In a final example, Rachel explained how she avoided the stigma-based rejection of non-brothel accountants. She said:

One time I got denied working with an accountant because of my job. He said he wouldn't work with me. So I called one of the ones [the brothel owner] works with . . . He knows our expenses. He understands the business. I don't have to explain everything.

The connections established through the brothel made conducting life with a stigmatized occupation easier for the sex workers.

Discussion

As this analysis reveals, stigmatized workers have some constraints in managing their work and nonwork pursuits. Previous research has suggested that separating stigmatized occupational identities from other aspects of dirty workers' lives allows them to protect nonwork aspects of their identity from stigma transfer (e.g. Hudson and Okhuysen, 2009). The data from this study reveal that legal, occupational and community constructs limit the extent to which dirty workers can utilize means *other* than segmentation to manage work and life. Other occupations that require workers to come in contact with bodily fluids do not have similar policies – doctors, for example, are not locked into hospitals to ensure they stay clean (Albert, 2001) and lawyers are not locked into their offices for fear they provide legal advice for someone without the consent of their firm. Dirty workers, however, are steeped in stigma, which allows for real and mythical constructs to pervasively dictate their work–life management practices. As Dewey (2012) argued, prostitutes are targeted by state control more than any other population, save prison inmates (see also Hubbard and Colosi, 2013). Controls on the mobility of sex workers serve to protect clients (by ensuring 'clear' health status of all workers and by

minimizing the likelihood of encountering a sex provider in public), brothels (by protecting business interests), and even brothel workers (by minimizing risk of stigma transfer to other parts of life, protecting women from stalkers or predatory men, ensuring confidence in health status, and increasing their availability for money-making opportunities). However, when the decision not to leave the brothel is *imposed* on the women, rather than *chosen* by them, lockdown policies become institutionalized paternalism – a limitation on their available work–life management strategies, but meant to be ‘good for them,’ as decided by some authoritative figure who does not have to live the experiential consequences of such a policy.

Keeping legal prostitutes on lockdown, out of sight and out of town, helps brothels *stay below the sagebrush*, a phrase we heard repeatedly in our interviews to describe, in part, the need to keep prostitutes hidden. Unlike most work–life regulations, which protect workers from exploitation and the community from accidents related to overwork, lockdown regulations primarily benefit the brothels. Brothel owners can prevent women working in their brothels from having sex outside of the brothel, which protects their business interests. Brothels also benefit from keeping prostitutes out of the limelight because they are able to continue their business without visibly going against the moral expectations of the surrounding communities. In some cases, this can prevent individual prostitutes from striking the work–life management practices they desired.

The occupational ideology, *work now, life later* carries an expensive price tag. Although legal prostitutes can make excellent money, there are many barriers to upward mobility (Weitzer, 2012). Thus, although many individuals ‘paid the price’ of engaging in stigmatized occupations with the assumption they could eventually buy their way to a better life, it is unlikely that the ‘life later’ will ever materialize. Like Tracy and Trethewey’s (2005) *perpetually deferred self*, prostitutes may be unable to adequately manage their work–home lives, instead merely imagining a time in the future when life will be better. The potential self believes that engagement in undesirable working conditions is a price tag for an ever-farther future (Deetz, 1998; Tracy and Trethewey, 2005).

A few implications arise from these themes. First, it is important to study work–life laws and regulations, particularly as they pertain to stigmatized industries or occupations. The relevance of morality on laws and regulations might create oppressive conditions for workers with stigmatized occupations. For example, the ‘othering’ of gynecological nurses (Bolton, 2005), the exploitation of domestic workers (Anderson, 2000) or poor working conditions of soldiers, miners or sweatshop workers (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999) would all benefit from an analysis of laws and regulations that dictate work–life boundaries or conditions. Studying the historical development of work–life laws is an important step in unraveling how laws come to protect some workers while constraining others. Second, this research suggests that the brothel industry itself should review work–life regulations and laws that are outdated and unfair, trapped in assumptions about sexual immorality.

To conclude, legal brothel workers are forced to contend with occupation-based stigma and work–life laws and regulations that both protect and constrain brothels and prostitutes. Through their process of coping with these constructs, a complicated work–life arrangement emerges. The analysis suggests that individual prostitutes take on the occupational stigma and unfair work–life laws and regulations while brothel and

community interests are privileged. Hochschild (1983) described the ‘status shield’ that protects male flight attendants from upset travelers; a benefit female flight attendants did not experience. In a similar turn, brothel owners experience a status shield that prostitutes do not; the stigma impedes on their ability to manage work–life arrangements in a way that brothel owners need not contemplate.⁹ Implications stemming from this argument include a call for lockdown regulation revision, more research on work–life laws, and particular attention to the ways in which work–life laws and regulations constrain stigmatized organizations and *dirty workers*.

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Notes

- 1 Prostitution has always been a viable means for some women to facilitate work–life responsibilities, particularly when it was one of the only occupations available (Butler, 1987; Goldman, 1981). Throughout the history of industrialized society, many women, especially low-income or single mothers, have had few viable options that allowed them to earn decent wages while also tending to their familial responsibilities (Buzzanell et al., 2005; Goldman, 1981; hooks, 2000). In the 1800s, single women had few options for employment, and single mothers were forced to work while also caring for children. Working as prostitutes out of their homes, many single mothers could do both – earn decent or excellent wages while also caring for their families (Williams, 1984).
- 2 Many of the women we interviewed preferred the term ‘sex worker’ to ‘prostitute’ because it emphasizes the work associated with this position and reduces stigma (Dunn, 2012). However, for the purpose of this article, we use the term ‘prostitute’ because it is more precise than ‘sex worker,’ which can encompass exotic dancers, strippers, pornographers and telephone sex operators (Brewis and Linstead, 2002). By using the term ‘prostitute,’ we do not intend to take away agency from the women, but to clarify that we are talking about people who are paid for face-to-face sexual relations. We are sensitive to the stigmatizing power of language and realize that ‘prostitute’ carries a strong negative connotation in the USA because the term is often used to conflate legal and illegal practices; however, we have attempted to consistently clarify legal prostitution such that the reader does not conflate legal brothel work with illegal prostitution or trafficking.
- 3 We do not wish to imply that work is not a part of life. We take the approach that work and life are blurred, that boundaries are messy, and that work is part of life and vice versa.
- 4 In his research on illegal sex work, Hubbard (2012) described the ways cities enable and constrain sexuality, serving as a ‘location where sexual orders have been worked and reworked, and where ideas of the ‘normal’ and ‘perverse’ have been both instituted and contested’ (p. xiv). He argued that cities are not merely backdrops for sexualities, but are infused by power as sites of governance.
- 5 Brothel prostitution is not uniformly legal in all of Nevada. According to state law (NRS 244.345), brothel prostitution is only *illegal* in counties whose population is 700,000 or more (which only applies to Clark County). However, brothels can be illegal by city ordinance, or illegal by county code. Some brothels are located in unincorporated areas, and thus must adhere to county codes, while those located in cities that permit brothels are subject to city codes. Most brothel regulations, therefore, occur at the city, county and state levels depending

on geographic location within Nevada. These determinations create a confusing array of laws, policies, codes and ordinances that determine how prostitutes and brothels can engage in their work.

- 6 The lobbyist agreed to be identified by occupation in this article, despite the singular nature of his position.
- 7 All personal names used are pseudonyms – not the participants' stage or legal names.
- 8 'Clear' refers to when sex workers' medical examinations and background checks come back without incident.
- 9 Some brothel owners even enjoy celebrity status; owners in small towns have relative power in town and are accepted as benefactors in public (Wolfe and Blithe, 2015).

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