

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS, SEXUAL BEHAVIORS, AND MALE SEX WORK:
A QUANTITATIVE APPROACH

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Abstract

To date, the vast majority of scholarship on male sex workers is qualitative. We therefore know little about the population size, commercial value of characteristics, and geography of male sex work, and how these may interact with one another. Since male sex workers serve multiple social groups (gay-identified men, heterosexually-identified men, as well as their own private sexual partners) they are a unique source to test theories of gender and sexuality. We assemble a rich dataset from the largest online male sex worker website to produce the first quantitative analysis of male escorts in the United States. We find that the distribution of male sex workers is more strongly correlated with the general population distribution than the gay population distribution. Further, we estimate the value of sexual behaviors and personal characteristics in this market. We find male escorts who advertise traditionally masculine behavior charge higher prices for services, while those who advertise less traditionally masculine behavior charge significantly less, a differential on the order of 17%. We also find that race and sexual behavior interactions have a strong influence on the prices charged by male sex workers. Overall, the results confirm aspects of hegemonic masculinity and intersectionality theory.

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I. Introduction

Ethnographic research on male sex workers has informed our notions and theories of sexuality, sexual behaviors, and sex work (Halkitis et al 2004, Bimbi and Parsons 2005, Parsons, Bimbi and Halkitis 2001, Wright 2008). The ethnographic research, however, cannot answer many of the inherently quantitative questions about male sex workers, which also inform our discussions of sexuality in general, and which could significantly complement the ethnographic approach. For example, we know little about the population size or general characteristics and behaviors of male sex workers as a whole. Even more, male sex workers are difficult to conceptualize in the current economic, social, and gender theories of prostitution primarily because the participants are of the same gender (Marlowe 1997, Gamson and Moon 2004, Edlund and Korn 2002, Bernstein 2007). Male sex workers remain under-analyzed in social science research. We stand to increase our understanding of the ways that commerce, sexuality, and gender norms interact by quantitatively analyzing dimensions of male sex work, to see if they conform to theoretical hypotheses about gender, masculinity, and the social construction of desire among men who have sex with men.

Similarly, while there is a relative wealth of research about male sex workers who work the street, little is known about male escorts who occupy a higher rung on the hierarchy of male prostitution (Luckenbill 1986, Parsons, Koken, and Bimbi 2007, Halkitis 2004). The work that does exist has aged poorly as the market has transformed and our notions of human sexuality have developed in the last quarter century, due to both technological progress (the internet) and the increasing social acceptance of homosexuality (Loftus 2001, Scott 2003, Friedman 2003).¹ Indeed, the recent scholarship on male escorts has found that many of the supposed reasons for

¹ These older works would include Pettitway (1996), McNamara (1994), Hoffman (1979), Ginsburg (1967), Salamon (1989) and Boyer (1989).

entry into commercial sex work and the demographic and social characteristics of male sex workers espoused in earlier research do not apply to contemporary male escorts (Calhoun and Weaver 1996, Joffe and Dockrell 1995, Halkitis 2004).

Research on sexually transmitted infections (STIs, especially HIV) has noted the unique social and epidemiological position of male sex workers. The probability of male-to-male transmission of STIs and HIV is much higher than female-to-male or male-to-female transmission (Varghese et al 2002). In addition to this, male sex workers serve numerous social groups—gay-identified men, heterosexually-identified men, as well as their own non-commercial sexual partners. This implies that male sex workers interact with groups of men that are unlikely to interact with each other, and therefore can act as a social and sexual conduit between various groups. For example, previous policy-oriented research stressed the ways in which male sex workers inform and influence their clients' sexual practices (Bimbi and Parsons 2005, Parsons et al 2004, Estcourt et al. 2000, Minichiello et al. 2000).

We break new ground in the study of male sex work by taking an explicitly quantitative approach to the subject. The relationship between escort prices, personal characteristics, and sexual behaviors provides a key window into this relatively under-researched social activity (Bimbi 2007). Our conceptual framework begins by considering how this type of empirical analysis can shed light on social theories of sexuality. While we use the principles of economic theory to motivate our empirical approach to the dynamics of the male sex market, we interpret our results in light of the *social theories* of male sexuality. Since the male escort market in the United States does not use intermediaries who could potentially control the prices and earnings of male escorts, they price their services directly to clients. As such, it gives us the opportunity

to see how male escorts price their services conditional on the information that they provide to their clients about their personal characteristics and sexual behaviors.

Our approach allows us to answer heretofore open questions about male sex workers and, in turn, social theories of male sexuality: where are male escorts located—do they gather more in low gay concentration or high gay concentration cities? How does the market for male sex services value physical characteristics (race, height, weight, age, etc.) and sexual behaviors? For example, do the clients of male sex workers value traditionally masculine behaviors and appearance more than their feminine counterparts, as the theory of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1987, Connel 1995, Connell and Messerschmidt 2005) predicts? Even more, what are the effects of interactions between physical characteristics and sexual behaviors? Are men of particular races rewarded more for downplaying or emphasizing certain sexual behaviors than others, as intersectionality theory (Collins 2000) predicts? As we stress, quantitative analysis can shed important light in these important theoretical issues by further documenting the effects of such social processes.

Using rich and unique data from male escort advertisements, we answer several of the pressing quantitative questions in the literature. We find that male sex workers are diverse in their age, race, physical characteristics, and sexual behaviors. We show that the distribution of male escorts closely mirrors the distribution of the population in the United States, and is only weakly correlated with estimates of the gay male population distribution. We also estimate the market value of sex worker physical characteristics, sexual behaviors, and safer sex practices. We find that there is a small penalty to being an older sex worker, and a sizable penalty for being overweight. In terms of sexual behaviors, we find that male sex workers who are “tops” (the penetrative partner) receive a sizeable premium to sex work, and that “bottoms” (the receptive

partner) receive a sizable penalty. The price differential between “tops” and “bottoms” is on the order of 17%, a substantial difference. Further, we interact these measures with race to investigate how sexual behavior and race jointly influence the price of male escort services. We find that both black, Hispanic and white “tops” command a significant premium in the market, while “tops” of other races do not. We also find that both black and white “bottoms” incur a significant penalty, although Hispanic and Asian “bottoms” do not. In both instances, the premiums *and* penalties for sexual behaviors are greater for blacks than for any other racial or ethnic group. The “top” / “bottom” price differential for black escorts is more than twice the differential for any other racial or ethnic group.

Our paper makes several contributions. First, our work expands the scope of the existing quantitative social science scholarship on sex work both by considering the male side of the market and by considering sex work that is neither street- nor brothel-based (Browne and Minichiello 1996, Weitzer 2005, Arunachalam and Shah 2008). In addition, we overcome a sizable number of problems of sample selection in previous studies of male sex workers by using the universe of men who advertise online using our site—the largest, most comprehensive and geographically diverse website for male escort work in the United States. Second, we are able to estimate the market value of sexual behaviors in the male escort market. Our quantitative approach is informed by and informs theoretical work on the sociology of sexuality. We conclude with a discussion of what these findings imply for our social understanding of male sex work, both clients and escorts. We note that research on male sex workers and sexuality should incorporate more fully the ways that race, personal characteristics, and sexual behaviors play out in the construction of desire among men who have sex with men.

II. The Online Market for Commercial Male Sex in the United States

The goal of this section is to provide an overview of male sex work, particularly among the men who advertise online in the United States. Three caveats should be noted. First, our description is geographically specific and focuses exclusively on the United States. The research that surveys male prostitution in general has pointed out several geographic and cultural distinctions in the practice and forms of male sex work which make it difficult to generalize the phenomena over space or over time (Kaye 2001, Weeks 1989). This is due to both differences in cultural representations of homosexuality and in different cultural norms for male sex work (Ititel 1998, West 1993, Aggleton 1999). Second, we concentrate on male escorts as opposed to street workers, although we do note the distinctions where appropriate. Third, we focus on describing the online market as it currently stands. We are concerned with how the market for male sex work functions and the implications we draw from that knowledge in forming testable empirical hypotheses, grounded in the existing social scholarship, about this market.

Male commercial sex workers are a sizable portion of the sex worker population in the United States (Freidman 2003). Unlike their female counterparts, male sex workers usually work independently—there is nearly no pimping nor male brothels in the male sex trade (Allen 1980, Itiel 1998).² The independent-operator feature of the market allows for greater mobility up and down the hierarchy of the male sex worker labor force. In the hierarchy of male prostitution offered by Luckenbill (1986), the male escort is the most esteemed: he does not work the streets, takes clients by appointment, and is usually better paid than his street counterparts.

² In the past, male hustling also took the form of transvestite sex work, and male brothels were not uncommon (Chauncey 1994). Dorais (2005) shows that in other cultures male brothels have survived. Although the transsexual and transvestite sex market continues, Friedman (2003) shows that spatially street male sex workers and transsexual sex workers do not work in the same locations in the post war US. Our own analysis revealed that more than 85% of the male escorts we found affiliated with the few existing male escort agencies also advertised independently (charging different rates and with different contact information than the agency).

While the street sex worker is paid by the piece rate, the male escort is a contract employee with greater control over the terms of his work and the services he provides.³

Male sex work in the United States has been quick to adapt to changes in technology. Where male escorts used to congregate in “escort bars” and place ads in gay-related newspapers to solicit clients, the male escort market now takes place largely online (Steele and Kennedy 2006, Pompeo 2009).⁴ The standard operating procedure for male escort websites is straightforward—escorts pay a monthly fee to post their ads, which include pictures, a physical description, their rate for services (quoted by the hour), as well as contact information such as a telephone number and/or e-mail address. Escorts have complete control over the type and amount of information conveyed in their advertisements. With the sites, clients contact escorts directly and arrange for appointments either at the home of the escort (an “incall”) or at the residence/hotel of the client (an “outcall”). The online market for male sex work is one of the few instances where illegal behavior is openly advertised and promoted.

There are numerous sources that describe the generic male escort encounter (Itiel 1998, Hart 1998). In the most basic form of an outcall a client will search escort advertisements and choose an escort. If an appointment is immediately desired (such as the same day) the client will usually phone the escort. Appointments for future dates may be arranged by email, although some escorts prefer to make all appointments by phone. Escorts generally encourage clients to describe what they desire in their time with the escort, and also to note any circumstances the

³ The social stigma of male prostitution has been assumed to be lower than that for female prostitution (West 1992), but such claims have been subject to criticism (Chauncey 1994, Dorais 2005, Friedman 2005). The problem with the claim that male prostitutes faced less social stigma is that it implicitly conditions on sexual orientation. Loftus (2001) has shown that American attitudes towards homosexuality have liberalized, but sexual minorities continue to face significant stigma in American society.

⁴ Although most publications continue to have small sections devoted to male escorts, over time the size of these sections have decreased. At a different end of the spectrum, the growth of online escorting has largely eliminated a caste of male sex workers, the “bar boys” who would congregate in known “hustler bars” where they would meet potential clients (Luckenbill 1986, Parsons, Koken, and Bimbi 2004).

escort should be aware of (e.g., clients who may be disabled, etc.). Escort and client then discuss the time and location of the appointment. Many escorts will call before the appointment to let the client know that they are en route or have been delayed. Once the escort arrives at the location he meets the client and the two may have a brief discussion to reaffirm the earlier phone conversation. Money is almost never discussed face-to-face. While money is usually not exchanged until after the appointment ends, clients are told to place the money in plain view of the escort (such as on a dresser or desk) either before the escort arrives or at the beginning of the appointment.

III. Social Science Theories of Male Sex Work

Social scientists have developed numerous theories of human sexuality. Sociologists have been calling for and creating a discourse on social aspects of sexual theories for some time (Stein and Plummer 1994, Gamson and Moon 2004, Epstein 1994, 2003). Progress has been uneven on some points, although there is arguably more interest in and research on sexuality than ever before. Some have argued that the previous marginalization of research in this area was due to the social stigma attached to sexuality research, which may have long term effects (Epstein 2006). This has served to the detriment of the continuation and advancement of knowledge as theories of sexuality have paid particular attention to sexual minorities and marginalized sexualities as these are theoretically key for the development of both majority and minority sexualities and sexual identities (Stein 1989, Sedgwick 1990). As such, we stand to learn a great deal by studying outcomes related to sexual interactions between men of different sexual identities.

Research on commercial sex work traditionally concentrates on women. This focus has led researchers to neglect the heterogeneous social structures which give rise to the marked diversity of male sex worker institutions around the globe (West 1992, Bernstein 2005). The usual theoretical tools of power and gender are altered when considering male prostitution (Marlowe 1997), and this allows us to explore the dynamics within groups in a novel way. We learn what roles and behaviors escorts must conform to in order to realize the largest economic gains from male sex work. The value of these roles has the potential to inform our analysis of the construction of masculinity at the intersection of heterosexual and homosexual identities since men participating in the market, both clients and escorts, are diverse in terms of their sexual identities.

Similarly, research on political economy in sexual minority communities largely deals with commoditization of gay desire (Green 2008, Cantu 2002, D'Emilio 1997, Walters 2001). We stand to gain by considering such ideas as the construction and commoditization of desire in an explicit market of desire and sexual behavior such as male sex work. Indeed, the values of attributes of male sex workers can tell us the values that clients place (or the values that escorts believe clients place) on particular attributes and sexual behaviors, allowing for a richer discussion of commoditization in gay communities. As commoditization is a market force with supply, demand, quantities and prices, we stand to gain by considering how the market for male sexual services is influenced by social factors. These can, in turn, tell us about the values that these men place on themselves and other men for both commercial and non-commercial sexual desire. While there are studies that look at these different values qualitatively between genders (Almeling 2007), little quantitative work exist that look at differences *within* genders.

To be sure, male sex work is but one window into same-sex sexual interactions, but it produces unique theoretical predictions. It not only allows us to learn some basic facts about male sex workers and their characteristics, but it also allows us to ask and answer questions of theoretical importance in the social science of sexuality more generally. One feature of the market for male sex work is the explicit division of sexual orientation, sexual identity, and sexual behavior. In both the past and present, significant numbers of male escorts and clients do not identify as homosexual (Freidman 2005, Dorais 2005, Chauncey 1994, Itiel 1998). As such, the world of male sex work is one of the few where men who adopt and refuse homosexual identity are in intimate contact with one another, and as such it offers us the opportunity to ask and answer many interesting questions about sexual identity, desire, and behavior. Given the wealth of theories of sexuality, we adopt a broad view, drawing on the scholarship of social scientists in looking at issues of sexuality and in particular male sex work. In particular, we borrow from the literatures in economics and sociology, with additional insights from social psychology and public health, to derive our predictions.

Economic Approaches

Economic theories of sexuality usually begin with the standard neoclassical tools of innate preferences, incentives, and prices (explicit or implicit), that one then uses to derive propositions about human behavior as it pertains to sex and sexuality (Posner 1992, Francis 2008). While this is a standard approach to most consumer goods, sexuality can present a unique set of problems for the standard interpretation of theoretical and empirical results (Anderson 1993). As Johnson-Hanks (2007) notes in a different context, rational choice models depend on “complex chains on inference” from behavior to preferences, and in matters of sexuality these are subject to numerous forms of social control and coercion. In other words, while sexuality is

treated as a primitive in the classical economic theory of preferences, it is not true that all members of society see free expression of their sexuality as an option, so their innate preferences may not be revealed through their public behavior.⁵ There is the additional problem of how sexuality is constructed in societies, making it difficult to measure the “natural” component free of any social influence (Foucault 1979, Stein 1989). This limits our ability to properly infer sexual orientation and innate preferences from observed behavior. As sociologists of gender have documented, men may not act on their same sex desires in order to adhere to a “masculine” or “heterosexual” identity that has significant social benefits (Connell 1987, Pascoe 2007, Berg and Lien 2009).

For example, Allen (1980) describes studies of male sex workers who find that less than 10% self-identify as homosexual, and since the controversial work of Humphries (1970), sociologists have noted that men partaking in same-sex sexual behavior are unlikely to be found in empirical data unless they choose to publicly reveal their sexual behaviors and desires. As another example, there is contemporary debate about the construction of homosexuality in African American communities, which may or may not give rise to more or less covert forms of same-sex sexual behavior if homosexuality is seen as socially unacceptable or if mainstream representations of homosexuality exclude African Americans (Nagel 2000, Boykin 2006, Ford et al 2007, Robinson 2008). This could give rise to racial differences in sexual identities that are unrelated to sexual orientation itself. For these reasons, it is difficult to identify all sexual minorities in the data or test many of the basic axioms of the economic approach to sexuality (Berg and Lien 2006).

⁵ Economists have recently begun to explore the issues that arise when identity is introduced into economics analysis (Akerlof and Kranton 2000), although these studies have not yet been extended to sexuality.

While it can be difficult to identify individual sexual minorities in the data, it is now possible to identify same sex couples. There are a number of studies by economists that look at the population trends of the gay identified population, such as the location patterns of gay couples (Black, Sanders, and Taylor 2007; Black, Gates, Sanders, and Taylor 2000, 2002), rates of partnership among the gay population (Jepsen and Jepsen 2002; Carpenter and Gates 2008), and the general socioeconomic position of gay men (Hewitt 1995). This work suggests that both gay location patterns and rates of partnership are very different than those of heterosexual couples. Two factors that seem to be related to gay location patterns are city amenities and the ability to congregate and socialize with a large number of self-identified gay men, such that gay men congregate in cities with a critical mass of gay men. But this research poses interesting questions into the demography and geography of male sex work as we know very little about the geographic distribution of male sex workers in the United States.

While early studies of male sex work focused on particular cities with large gay populations (MacNamara 1965, Gandy 1971, Coombs 1974), later qualitative research revealed that a significant portion of the clientele of male escorts is heterosexually identified.⁶ Given that heterosexually identified men may have much to lose if their same-sex sexual behavior is exposed, it could be the case that male escorts are more prone to locate in places where there are fewer opportunities for men interested in sexual encounters with other men to meet one another. This would suppose that male escort location patterns would differ from those of the gay population. Conversely, researchers note that gay communities do not attach the same level of stigma to male sex work as heterosexuals (Sadownick 1996), and if gay communities are seen as safer havens for male sex workers we would expect male sex workers' geographic distribution to closely mirror that of the openly gay population.

⁶ Many escort advertisements note that escorts have specialties in "discretion" and in serving married men.

Sociological Approaches

At an even deeper level, the distinction between sexual identity, sexual behavior, and sexual orientation creates unique spheres for male sex workers that have been noted in the sociological literature for some time. Since the work of Hooker (1957), psychologists have noted that there is little to distinguish the homosexual and heterosexual other than self-identification. While men who partake in public homosexual acts are not distinguishable from the general male population (Humphries 1970), it is still the case that men who are self-identified as homosexuals in surveys appear to be different on a range of outcomes from earnings (Berg and Lien 2002, Carpenter 2007), to geographic dispersion (Black, Sanders, and Taylor 2007), to partnership status (Carpenter and Gates 2008).

Indeed, the “breastplate of righteousness” that Humphries noted heterosexually-identified men who partake in homosexual behavior adopt has recently resurfaced in the public lexicon (Frankel 2007, MacDonald 2007). In the market for male sex work such behavior is common—male escorts regularly note that a significant percentage of their clientele is heterosexually-identified, and many are married. The open question is how the presence of these men in the male escort market influences the way this market functions and the values attached to sexual behaviors. For example, self-identified heterosexual men are unlikely to frequent gay bars, coffeehouses, or community groups where they would be more likely to encounter gay men for socialization. Sexually, self-identified heterosexual men may engage in public and anonymous sex, but such behavior comes with the increased risk of arrest, the relative inability to negotiate safer sex with a partner, and limited partner choices. Since these men are hidden from the most common analysis of sexual minorities, the open question is how their presence in the market

influences market function. Much of this would depend on how men with different social and sexual identities interact with one another.

Hegemonic Masculinity

In the theory of hegemonic sexuality, the socially endorsed masculine traits should be highly valued (Connell 1987, 1995). These attributes can take a number of forms, and research has usually stressed social traits such as drive, ambition, self-reliance, and aggressiveness. This societal value of masculine traits should have a direct effect on the market for male sexual services. In an explicitly sexual arena, hegemonic masculinity would extend to physical appearance (muscularity, body size) and sexual behaviors (sexual dominance). Both the physical and sexual traits of male escorts should align to traditionally masculine norms, insofar as clients adhere to the social value of these masculine traits.

Indeed, the function of male sex work in gay communities may heighten such effects. Itiel (1998) notes that one possible reason gay communities may attach less stigma to commercial sex work is due to the relatively less restrictive social codes of acceptable sexual behavior among gay men. Indeed, Itiel notes that male commercial sex derives from men who do not want to incur the large search costs involved in finding a sexual partner by mutual match. In other words, if a man desires a man of a particular type, it could be difficult for him to find a particular type if the mating is assortative and he lacks the characteristics his ideal partners are looking for (age, socioeconomic status, etc.). This, Itiel notes, gives rise to the favoring of youth and body type in the male sex market, which is explicitly sexual in nature. Clients can therefore choose escorts who would not be like the men that they would interact with socially but desire sexually, which may act to increase the value of these masculine characteristics.⁷

⁷ The advertisements of male escorts commonly note the “rugged” or “manliness” of the escort and the “refinement” of their “generous gentlemen” clients.

Given that clients in commercial sex markets generally tend to be older men (Friedman 2003), the clients prize beauty and a developed physique above others. This preference could have additional implications about gay male body image. Gay men have shown stronger tendencies to prefer particular body types than either lesbians or heterosexuals, and this can lead to poor psychological and health outcomes for those who do not conform to the gay standards of beauty (Herzog et al 1991, Bresen et al 1996, Atkins 1998, Carpenter 2003, Drummond 2005, Green 2008). These standards of beauty include whiteness, youth, middle-class socioeconomic status, and muscular physiques (Green 2008). In addition, we would expect an explicitly sexual market to pay keen attention to the physical markers of traditional masculinity such as height, weight, muscularity, and body hair. This suggests that in the market for male sex workers clients would prize youth and muscular physiques, as those would be markers of traditional masculinity.

Clients of male sex workers are likely to prize “masculine” personas for several reasons. First, numerous scholars have asserted that gay men’s relationships with effeminate behavior is complex—while celebrated in many aspects of the culture (camp, drag shows, diva worship, etc.) it is particularly stigmatized in sexual relationships and as a personality trait (Clarkson 2006, Nardi 2000, Ward 2000). Connell (1992) notes that traditional masculinity is the object of desire among gay men, although its reinterpretation among gay men does provide more freedom than traditional gender roles. In essence, the existing scholarship has shown that contemporary gay society prizes traditional masculinity, especially in terms of sexual partners. Some have noted the ways in which the gay community has commoditized the “authentic” masculinity of self-identified heterosexual men who engage in sex with men (Ward 2008) and this has given rise to the distinction between masculine gay men and effeminate gay men in gay communities (Pascoe

2007, Connell 1992, Clarkson 2006). As such, we would expect that men who are interacting primarily for sexual purposes would likely place a premium on traditional signs of masculinity (penetrative sexual position, aggressive sexual behavior, sexual dominance, etc.), and perhaps to penalize traditional signs of femininity (receptive sexual position, sexual passivity, submissiveness, etc.).

Intersectionality

This complex relationship with masculinity in both its physical and sexual manifestations has interesting theoretical interactions with other types of characteristics. As the theory of intersectionality suggest, these masculine norms may interact with racial, gender, and class norms of behavior, creating unique and unexpected relationships (Collins 2000). Robinson (2008), McBride (2005), Reid-Pharr (2001) and others have noted how racial stereotypes interact with gay sexuality and notions of masculinity to produce a desire for hyper-masculine black men, particularly among white gay men. In this theory, the general level of interaction between black and white gay men is relatively rare, and occurs chiefly over sex. The stereotype of the sexually dominant black men, rather than being an agent of fear as is common in heterosexual communities, is celebrated for his hyper-sexual behavior, appearance, and conduct. Black men who demonstrate hyper-masculine and sexually aggressive behavior are offered limited entry into white gay spaces, but this entry is limited to sexual liaisons. McBride (2005), for example, notes the limited range in which black gay men interact with whites in gay pornography, where the majority of black performers are “tops.” Robinson (2008) finds that black men who do not conform to the stereotype of the hypermasculine black male are largely ignored and devalued by white gay men.

The reverse is true for Asians, whose passivity and docility are celebrated. Robinson (2007, 2008) and Phua and Kaufman (2003) describe the persistent stereotype that Asian men should be passive, docile “bottoms,” wherein the larger gay community seeks to limit the sexual expressions of Asian men. Hispanics are celebrated as passionate, virile lovers, who are usually sexually dominant. Markets for sex may exacerbate the underlying sexual stereotypes, which gender theorists have long noted for female sex work. If the market for male sex work mirrors these theories of the gay community at large, then we would expect black and Hispanic men who advertise themselves to be “tops” to be in high demand in the market, and for Asian men who advertise themselves as “bottoms” to be in high demand.

This review of the social theories relevant to male escort work has identified several empirical questions in the areas of demography, geography, gender theory, public health, and the sociology of sexuality. First, we note that the presence of heterosexually-identified men in the market may have an influence on a number of features of the market, but it is unclear in which direction they lie. Second, the geographic distribution of male sex workers relative to the gay population is unknown. Third, the relationship between physical characteristics and male escort prices is likely to mirror, and perhaps amplify, the beauty standards of the gay community, which favor the young and muscular. Fourth, sexual behaviors valued in the market are likely to be those that correspond to a “masculine” persona, in particular men who proclaim themselves to be “tops.” Fifth, there is likely to be a premium for black and Hispanic men who advertise themselves to be “tops” and Asians who advertise as “bottoms” insofar as it corresponds to hypermasculine stereotypes of black and Hispanic sexuality and passive stereotypes of Asian sexuality.

IV. **Data from the Gay Male Sex Market**

We assemble a unique data set on approximately 2,000 men from the largest and most comprehensive website for male sex workers in the United States. Unlike in many illegal markets, male escorts commonly post the rates for their services and their contact information online. This unique feature of the market allows us to analyze market prices directly as opposed to inferring prices for escort services (Moffatt and Peters 2004).⁸ Relative to other data sources, our online source has several advantages. First, this data allows us to collect information on escorts attributes, prices, and information without regard to the selection problems that we would encounter in a fielded survey of escorts. We include every unique advertisement on the website in our data. Second, escorts have one account, and they may list themselves in multiple cities that they serve. For example, an escort in Philadelphia who also serves the New York City area can list New York City as another location that he serves, and clients searching for escorts in New York will be able to view that escort's advertisement. Other online outlets for male sex work have unique advertisements in each city, and therefore it is impossible to know the number of escorts that work from a particular location with certainty. Third, the escort characteristics that we use are gathered systematically and entered by escorts from dropdown menus—this is particularly advantageous for features one would like to control for in pricing models (such as body type or hair color) where free-form responses may be difficult to evaluate consistently or may be missing altogether. Fourth, the website is free for viewing by all online, there is no charge or account required to view any advertisements, photos, or reviews of escorts. This ensures that the information provided is for the client base in general, and not manipulated to please paying members of the website (the escorts themselves).

⁸ See Logan and Shah (2009) who confirm that advertised prices are highly correlated with prices actually paid ($r = 0.89$).

Beyond its geographic coverage, our source also includes a rich set of information which escorts display to potential clients. Figure 1 shows a diagram of an escort advertisement. Escorts list their age, height, weight, race, hair color, eye color, body type, and body-hair type. They give clients contact information and also their preferred mode of contact (phone or e-mail), their availability to travel nationally and internationally, and their prices and availability for incalls and outcalls. In what follows we take the outcall price as the price of escort services, although our results are not changed when using the incall price. Escorts also provide clients with the range of services they provide in addition to escort work such as nude modeling, erotic massages, and stripping. In addition, escorts have a simple table where they can let clients know their availability in a weekly matrix. There is also the actual text of the advertisement itself which, though somewhat limited, allows escorts to write about their services and quality.⁹ The advertisement also includes pictures, which are uploaded by the escort. These pictures may be of any feature of the escort that he chooses, and may be clothed or nude.¹⁰ We collect information on an escort's attributes as listed in his advertisement. One advantage of the data is that claims the escort makes about characteristics can be confirmed with the pictures posted in the advertisement.¹¹

Table 1 shows the summary statistics for the escorts in our data. On average, escorts charge more than \$200 an hour for an outcall. This is consistent with other estimates of escort services, which are close to the \$200 an hour range (Steele and Kennedy 2006, Pompeo 2009). As we would expect, escorts are reasonably fit, relatively young, and on average they are 28 years old, 5'10" tall and weigh around 165 pounds. According to the National Center for Health

⁹ We manually inspected each and every advertisement so that we could classify behaviors from the text.

¹⁰ While full frontal nudity is allowed, escorts may not post pictures that show sex acts and may not display pictures which include persons other than the escort. Uploaded pictures are placed in an online holding tank until cleared by the website's management.

¹¹ See Logan and Shah (2009) for more on the role of pictures in the male escort market.

Statistics, the average man aged 20-74 in the US is 5'9.5" tall and weighs 190 pounds. Escorts are racially diverse—while more than half of all escorts are white, more than a fifth are black and nearly 15% are Hispanic, 8% are multiracial, and 1% are Asian.

In terms of physical traits, escorts are much more likely to have black (36%) or brown (46%) hair, less than 15% are blond. More than half of all escorts have brown eyes (55%), although significant fractions have blue (18%) and hazel (14%) eyes. Nearly half of all escorts are smooth (49%), and another 17% shave their body hair, but more than a third are hairy or moderately hairy (34%). Very few escorts are overweight (1%), and relatively few are thin (8%); the majority of escorts claim to have athletic (48%), average (13%) or muscular builds (30%). For sexual behaviors, 16% of escorts are “tops” (the penetrative partner) and 6% are “bottoms” (the receptive partner), while 21% of escorts list themselves as “versatile.”¹² In addition, 19% of escorts advertise that they exclusively practice safer sex.

V. Empirical Strategy

Our empirical strategy takes advantage of the unique features of the male escort market, allowing us to use empirical techniques from economics to estimate the value of particular characteristics. We use hedonic regression, a technique developed by Court (1939) and Griliches (1961), and widely popularized in economics by Rosen (1974). The basic technique is to regress the price of a particular good or service on its characteristics. For example, if one was performing a hedonic regression of computers one would assemble data on the computers in the market and their characteristics such as processor speed, hard drive size, memory, graphics card,

¹² The sexual behaviors of the remaining escorts is not recorded in the text of their advertisements. “Versatile” escorts many times denote themselves as “versatile tops” or “versatile bottoms,” terms which denote a preference for one activity, but a willingness to participate in the other. We code both “versatile tops” and “versatile bottoms” as “versatile.” See the data appendix for further details.

and monitor size. A regression of computer prices on characteristics would then give coefficients for each of the characteristics, which would tell us how much computer prices increase or decrease, on average, for an increase or decrease in hard drive size or monitor quality.

The estimated coefficients from hedonic regressions are commonly interpreted as the implicit prices for those characteristics.¹³ In other words, they reflect the change in price that one could expect for a change in that particular characteristic. This type of regression is widely used in studies of housing, labor, public, and environmental economics, and are particularly useful for goods that do not have explicit prices for specific components or for goods that are inherently unique (for example, no two houses are alike because they will not be placed in the exact same location—the question hedonic regression can answer, then, is what is the price a consumer is willing to pay for an additional bedroom, conditional on all other features being the same). The key advantage of this approach is that it allows us to quantitatively analyze the commoditization of desire in male sex work, allowing us to estimate the value of particular characteristics and behaviors in this market.

Our approach is to regress the price of escort services on the escort's characteristics. From this regression we can estimate the value of each specific characteristic in the male escort

¹³ Economists have noted problems with some of the assumptions underlying the hedonic empirical approach. For example, Rosen (1974) assumed that the market for the good or service in question was perfectly competitive and that the range of products be approximately continuous. Many markets are not perfectly competitive, and even fewer have a continuum of goods (which requires a large variety of products of the same type in the market). Rosen also assumed that all product attributes would be observed by market participants, and this is also not true for some goods, particularly services such as escort services. For these reasons, some have objected to the hedonic approach and its interpretation (Brown and Rosen 1982, Epple 1987, Bartik 1987). Fortunately, recent advances in applied econometrics have shown that the hedonic approach we use is able to uncover the implicit prices of characteristics in markets that are not perfectly competitive, where there is not a continuum of goods, and where all product characteristics are not observed (Bajari and Benkard 2005). In short, we can estimate the implicit prices in this market without making the rigid market assumptions that have been problematic in the literature.

market. In particular, our specification is a hedonic regression of the escort’s price (P) on his personal characteristics (Z), his sexual behaviors (S), and identifiers for his location (X).

$$\ln(P_i) = \alpha + \sum_j^{J-1} \beta_j Z_{ij} + \sum_k^{K-1} \gamma_k S_{ik} + \delta X + \varepsilon_i \quad (1)$$

The equation above notes that we obtain estimates of the implicit prices for each characteristic (each β), and for each sexual behavior (each γ). We note that while the prices that male escorts set are undoubtedly conditioned on social dimensions such as standards of beauty and the value of particular sexual behaviors to clients, they are not influenced by the profit motives of intermediaries such as pimps or madams who may further augment the pricing mechanism and lead to biased estimates of the value of behaviors and characteristics. We also control for the escort’s location not only because price may vary with geography, but specific locations may have more or fewer competitors, which can exert an independent effect on prices in a particular market. Also, some markets may be priced differentially due to overall price differences, such as New York City having higher prices than Mobile, Alabama. As we take the log of price in this specification, our estimates are percent price changes for each characteristic—positive values imply an increase in price, negative values a decrease. It is common to refer to positive values, where men of a given behavior or characteristic charge higher prices than others, as a premium and negative values, where men of a given behavior or characteristic charge lower prices than others as a penalty.

VI. Empirical Results

The Geographic Distribution of Male Sex Workers

Table 2 shows the geographic distribution of male escorts who advertise online. To our knowledge, this is the first empirical evidence on the geographic location of male escorts in the

United States. We randomly select a large number of cities for Table 2 so that the patterns in the data are clear. For comparison, we also include the rank and size of the populations of each Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) included. We also include the Gay Concentration Index (GCI) developed by Black, Sanders, and Taylor (2007) to compare the location of escorts with gay location patterns in the US, which may differ from those of the general population. The GCI counts the proportion of male same sex households in a given MSA and divides it by the national average. Therefore, cities with GCI values greater than 1 have larger shares of male same sex households in their MSA than the national average. Given that the partnership rates of gay men are lower than for heterosexuals (Carpenter and Gates 2008), it is likely that the index understates the concentration of gay men in specific urban areas, unless one would argue that single gay men locate in substantially different MSAs than partnered gay men. We view this as unlikely since MSAs encompass the entire metro area surrounding the urban center.

Table 2 shows the size of the escort population varies considerably over cities. There are more than 500 escorts in only two cities, New York and Los Angeles, which have long been known to have the largest male escort markets (Pompeo 2009). San Francisco and Miami each have roughly 300 escorts, and most cities have considerably less—fewer than 50.

In terms of location patterns, there is a striking trend—the number of gay escorts closely follows the size of an MSA as opposed to gay location patterns. For example, Detroit is the eleventh largest MSA in the US, and its gay concentration is 42nd, but there are more than double the number of escorts in Detroit than in Seattle, a city with the fifth highest GCI. A similar finding pertains to other cities such as Chicago and St. Louis. On the other hand, Denver is the 21st largest MSA, 12th in terms of the GCI, and yet has fewer escorts than Tampa, which ranks 24th in GCI. Indeed, the correlation of the number of escorts with MSA population is quite

strong ($r=0.92$), but much weaker with the GCI ($r=0.44$). Also, the correlation of per capita escorts with the GCI ($r=0.73$) is weaker than the correlation of escorts with MSA.

This result is consistent with the evidence that the market for male sex work is national in scope, and that it is not driven exclusively by gay-identified participants. If escort services were primarily demanded by self-identified gay men, we would expect the geographic distribution of male escorts to mirror the geographic distribution of self-identified gay men—male escorts would locate in places that have a higher concentration of potential customers. The results of Table 2 point in the opposite direction, male escorts tend to concentrate in cities with substantial populations, as opposed to cities with substantial gay populations. This result holds even when considering mid-sized and smaller cities—it is not driven by cities that have large populations and large gay populations, such as Los Angeles. This is consistent with the hypothesis that male escorts, in general, serve a market that includes a substantial number of heterosexually identified men.

Physical Characteristics and Male Escort Prices

The theory of hegemonic masculinity predicts that traditionally masculine traits, both physical and sexual, would be prized in the market. Table 3 shows the estimates of the value of physical characteristics on the pricing of male escort services from a hedonic regression of escort prices on these physical characteristics. The table shows a number of interesting features of the male escort market. First, there is a penalty for age, with each additional year costing an escort 1% of his price. Similarly, there is a penalty for weight, with additional pounds costing an escort in terms of prices, each additional ten pounds results in more than a 1.5% price decrease.¹⁴

¹⁴ These results are robust to the inclusion of age-squared and for substituting height and weight with body mass index (BMI).

Another characteristic that appears to be important is body build. Men with average body type face a price penalty that exceeds 15%, while men who have excess weight face a price penalty of more than 30%.¹⁵ This is consistent with the work that finds that the gay penalty (in terms of partnership) for additional weight is large (Carpenter 2003), and for theoretical work that describes the codes of body image in gay communities (Bresen et al 1996). Also, men who are thin also face a price penalty, although it is not as large as the penalty for those who are average or overweight, being on the order of 5%. Men who have a muscular build do enjoy a price premium of around 4%. Indeed, only men who have muscular builds enjoy a price premium relative to “athletic/swimmer’s build,” the omitted category in the regression. As muscularity is a traditionally masculine trait, and is commonly considered a proxy for strength and virility, the premium attached to muscularity in this market is consistent with hegemonic masculinity.

Race, however, does not seem to play a role in escort prices by itself. There is no race that commands higher prices in the market than any other. While some escorts of color have noted that they are paid less than their white counterparts (Pompeo 2009), we do not see this in the data. One potential explanation lies in the social stratification among gay men. If the clients in the male escort market are primarily from the dominant social group (middle class and upper class white males) and use the market for sexual experiences with men that they would not encounter socially, then men may be less likely to select men from the dominant race. The same holds for hair color, eye color, and body hair type. In general, these results go against theories which stipulate that there is a “gay ideal” in terms of beauty as there is no race, hair color, eye color, body hair type combination that would be more valuable than others. These results are

¹⁵ Since the specification is semi logarithmic, the percentage change of a dichotomous indicator is approximated by $\exp(\gamma)-1$, where γ is the coefficient in the regression (Halvorsen and Palmquist 1980).

also consistent with Itiel's (1998) claim that one advantage of the male escort market is that clients can choose particular types of men precisely for their characteristics—if clients have heterogeneous preferences over characteristics than no particular characteristic will enjoy a premium. It appears, then, that racial characteristics, and in general most personal characteristics other than weight and body build, are by themselves are not very important to the male escort market.

Sexual Behaviors and Male Escort Prices

An additional implication of hegemonic masculinity is the idea that dominant sexual behaviors would be rewarded in the male escort market. In Table 4 we show the estimates of the value of advertised sexual behaviors on male escort prices. The premium to being a “top” is large, more than 9%, and the penalty for being a “bottom” is substantial—in some specifications (column V) it is nearly as large as the premium to being a “top,” on the order of 9%. The price differential for men who are “tops” versus men who are bottoms is substantial—varying from 14.1 % (column I) to 17.6% (column V).¹⁶ “Versatility” does not seem to be related to prices.

The substantial premium to “tops” and the penalty to “bottoms” is interesting for a number of reasons. The premiums for these sexual behaviors are inconsistent with the economic concept of compensating differentials, where riskier occupations are compensated for with higher wages. According to research in public health, the relative risk of contracting HIV for receptive versus penetrative anal sex is 7.69 (Varghese et al 2002), which implies that the correlations we observe are in spite of the fact that receptive sexual activity carries much more risk than the penetrative sex act. These results can be interpreted sociologically, however, as the premium attached to masculine behavior in gay communities. The premium for “tops” is consistent with the literature which notes that gay men prize traditionally masculine behaviors

¹⁶ The price differential is calculated as $\exp(Top) - \exp(Bottom)$.

and sexual roles, and the penetrative partner in sexual acts is canonically considered more “masculine.” In this way, the results are consistent with hegemonic masculinity. The fact that men who act in the “dominant” sexual position charge higher prices for their services is consistent with the social acceptance of masculine and quasi-heteronormativity within groups of men who have sex with men. As described earlier, gay communities prize behavior that can be described as traditionally masculine, and this would extend to sexual acts themselves (Clarkson 2006).

Our empirical estimates also find a positive correlation between advertised safety and escort prices, which is greater than 5%. Once again, this result is not causal and is inconsistent with the notion of a compensating differential for the riskier behavior of condomless sex. As further evidence against an idea of compensating differentials for male sex work, we find no premiums to particular types of safe sex—men who advertise as safe “tops” or safe “bottoms” do not enjoy a separate premium, although the transmission probabilities would suggest that they should. Unfortunately, we do not have direct evidence on the type of sexual encounters and whether condoms were used, so we can only conjecture that advertisements are truthful about the activities being offered. We note, however, that our correlation is consistent with the sociological hypothesis that heterosexually-identified men use the male sex market in part to better avail themselves to safer sexual practices, which has been noted in the public health literature (Parsons et al 2004). Additionally, the premium is for safety, which is consistent with the notion that a segment of the market (namely, heterosexually identified clients) may use the male escort market to engage in safer sex than their other options such as public sex or anonymous sex in adult bookstores.¹⁷

¹⁷ We note some caveats to our interpretation of the correlation of safe sex with higher prices in the male escort market. It could well be that clients look for safety as a search characteristic and desire unsafe sex with escorts they

The Interaction of Race and Sexual Behaviors

As we described earlier, the interaction of personal characteristics such as race with sexual behaviors could shed quantitative light on many of the concepts at the intersection of race and sexuality. Previous sociological theories have noted that the sexual roles of black, Hispanic, and Asian men have been more constrained than those of white men. In particular, black men are expected to be dominant sexually, Hispanics to be “passionate” (which usually means dominant), and Asians passive. We investigate these intersections by looking at the interaction of race and sexual behaviors. Table 5 shows estimates of the value of advertised sexual behaviors for men by race, where each entry shows the implicit prices of the interaction of that race and sexual behavior (e.g., the premium or penalty to being an Asian “top” or “versatile” white).

The results are striking. Black, Hispanic, and White men each receive a statistically significant premium for being “tops,” but the largest premium is for black men (nearly 12%). The premium for Hispanics is greater than 9%, while for whites the premium is less than 7%. There is no “top” premium for Asian escorts. The penalty for being a “bottom” also varies considerably by race—while there is no penalty for Asians or Hispanics, white “bottoms” face a penalty of nearly 7%, while black “bottoms” face a penalty that is nearly 30%. The “top”/“bottom” price differential varies by race as well. While the differential for whites and Hispanic is close to the overall differential (13.2% and 12.3%, respectively), the differential for blacks is more than twice the differential for any other group (36.5%).¹⁸

These results are largely consistent with the intersection theory outlined earlier, where black men who conform to stereotypes of hypermasculinity and sexual dominance are highly

believe practice safer sex with their other clients. Put another way, clients who desire unsafe sex may desire unsafe sex with escorts who are less likely to participate in unsafe sex generally and may reward them for that.

¹⁸ See note 16.

sought after, and those who do not conform are severely penalized (and in this market, less desirable). Indeed, Phuo and Kaufman (2003) note that in dating markets that “preferences for minorities often are tinted with stereotypical images: Asians as exotic, docile, loyal partners; Hispanics as passionate, fiery lovers; and Blacks as “well-endowed,” forbidden partners.” (p. 992). These types of stereotypes appear to carry over to the male escort market, and they influence the premiums and penalties for sexual behaviors.

Interestingly, the positive correlation of safer sex and escort prices observed in Table 4 does not apply evenly to male escorts of all races, which provides another area in which race interacts with other features of sexual behavior. Table 5 shows that only black and white men enjoy see an increase for advertising safer sex, which is once again larger for black men (9%) than for white men (5.5%). The additional premium to black escorts’ advertised safer sex practices could derive from the fact that black men who participate in same sex sexual activity are more likely to be HIV positive than men of other races. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), African American males are a disproportionately large share of the HIV population, and nearly twice as likely to contract HIV as their white counterparts, despite similar rates of safer sex activity. Some estimates have suggested that as much as 46% of the black gay population is infected with HIV, more than twice the rate for gay white men (21%) or gay Hispanics (17%) (Sifikas et al 2005). In further interactions, we found no additional positive correlation for black or white “tops” who advertise safer sex.

VII. Conclusion

This paper sheds important quantitative light on questions pertaining to male sex work, and in doing so we learn a great deal about sexuality in general. We drew on the literature in

social science research to highlight the important questions about male sex work that could be answered through quantitative methods. These questions related to basic facts about male escorts and the relationship between escort characteristics, sexual behavior, and prices. Using a unique data source of male sex workers we uncovered a number of facts that should stimulate further research into male sex work and the related areas of gender, sexuality, race, and crime.

We found that escorts are present in cities with both low and high gay concentrations, and we argue that this result supports work that suggests a non-trivial portion of the male escort clientele is not gay-identified. This is consistent with the theory that participants in the market are both heterosexually and homosexually identified. We found that personal characteristics were largely not related to the prices of male escorts, except for those pertaining to body build. We found that muscular men enjoy a premium in the market, which is consistent with hegemonic masculinity. We found that the premium to being a “top” was substantial, as was the penalty for being a “bottom.” This is consistent with the theory of hegemonic masculinity which notes the high premium placed on traditionally masculine behavior in gay communities. When interacting these behaviors with race, we found that black men were at the extremes—their premiums for “top” and “bottom” behavior were the largest. This is consistent with the theory that gay communities prize black men who conform to racialized stereotypes of sexual behavior, and penalize those black men who do not. It also suggests that the intersection of race and sexuality actually rewards black men who conform to racialized, stereotypical norms about black behavior. While the sexually dominant black male is feared in heterosexual communities, he is rewarded, handsomely, in gay communities.

In general, these results also highlight the fact that male sex work is markedly different from its female counterpart, and also shows how some of the concepts of ethnographic and

theoretical work in social science, particularly gender studies, can be subjected to quantitative empirical approaches, including formal tests of hypotheses. Indeed, the empirical results conform to existing theories of gender and sexuality, particularly hegemonic masculinity and intersectionality. These results are also consistent with a much older strand of sociological literature which notes the ways in which men of various sexual identities connect with one another. For example, the positive correlation we find between advertised safer sex and escort prices can be explained by the fact that there are participants in this market (namely heterosexually-identified clients), who have limited means of engaging in safer sex with other men due to their identity, which has long been noted in the literature but which has not been quantitatively assessed.

We believe that this analysis should be the beginning of an active, mutually beneficial, and interdisciplinary research agenda on male sex work that spans the social sciences generally and includes a variety of theoretical, qualitative, and quantitative approaches. Given these quantitative results, further work on the creation of masculinity in gay communities, and the social penalties attached to femininity should be explored both theoretically and quantitatively. Similarly, the ways in which desire interacts with racial and class stereotypes must be given focused and significant attention. The implications for the men involved in this market, socially and sexually, must be explored to greater depth. In particular, the seeming divide between the sexual and non-sexual desires for masculine behavior should be incorporated into existing theories.

Our work also calls for new research on the interaction of race, sexuality, and commerce, which can address issues unexplored here. For instance, due to data limitations we cannot discuss the class dimensions inherent in male sex work. Neither can we obtain causal estimates

of male escort behavior on prices, which would be key for policy discussions. As such, we also hope that quantitative and qualitative research in this area will continue at an accelerated pace, and hopefully form closer links to one another. These developments would enhance and extend our understanding of sexuality and gender in general, and male sex work in particular, shedding light on important issues in social research and public policy.

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Appendix A. Data Appendix

Our data is the universe of men advertising on the site in the United States at the time of data collection (September 2007 to May 2008). Since our data is the entire population, we collected the data by searching through every geographic listing in the US during the period of data collection. Each escort has a page specific to him that we used to gather the information. The website generates its income from escorts only, clients do not pay to access any ads and no portion of the site is restricted from the public. All information we collected was publicly and freely available on the website at the time of collection. There are other websites available for clients of male sex workers. See Logan and Shah (2009) for a comparison of the websites, which establishes that our data source is the most comprehensive website in terms of coverage of the male escort market.

We are able to identify each escort uniquely using the following information (See Figure 1 for an example of an escort advertisement):

User ID: Each escort account on the site has a unique user ID. This allowed us to check against the possibility of double counting escorts who may change location over the data collection period.

User Name: Each escort has a username that is displayed next to the ID number at the top of the ad.

The measures we use in the paper are described below:

Services Provided: Under this heading each escort has the option of noting the following services, which we recorded

Incall: Escort responds “yes” or “no”

Outcall: Escort responds “yes” or “no”

Incall Price: The price (by the hour) that incall services are provided at if incalls provided

Outcall Price: The price (by the hour) that outcall services are provided at if outcalls provided

Contact Information: Under this heading each escort has the option of noting the following

Phone: Phone number with area code (we record if a number is listed y/n)

Cellular: Cellular number with area code (we record if a number is listed y/n)

Pager: Pager number with area code (we record if a number is listed y/n)

Prefers Phone Contact: Listed if escort prefers for clients to contact him by phone (y/n)

Prefers E-mail Contact: Listed if escort prefers for clients to contact him by phone (y/n)

Location: The location listed under the heading is the primary location, the locations with suitcase avatars next to them are cities the escort is willing to travel to. In some instances, exact dates are listed under specific travel cities, and this means that an escort is traveling to that city on those dates and will serve clients in those cities on those dates. We record all of these locations.

Age: Age is recorded in years

Height: Height is reported in feet and inches, we record height in inches

Weight: Weight is listed in 20 pound intervals beginning at 130 pounds and ending at 200 pounds (e.g. 150-170 pounds). We took the midpoint of the range given by an escort. If the escort’s text ad listed a weight we recorded that exact weight in place of the midpoint range.

Race: White, Black/African-American, Asian, Hispanic, Multiracial, or Other

Hair Color: Black, Blonde, Brown, Grey, and Red

Eye Color: Black, Blue, Brown, Green, Hazel

Body Type: Athletic/Swimmer’s Build, Average, A few extra pounds, muscular/buff, thin/lean

Body Hair: Hairy, Moderately hairy, Shaved, Smooth

For the text of escort ads we record the mention of the following (Note: since the ads were read as opposed to scripts we do not record the instance of the word but its meaning, which can be implied from the context)

Top: The escort stated that they are a top (the penetrative partner in anal sex)

Bottom: The escort stated that they are a bottom (the receptive partner in anal sex)

Versatile: The escort indicated that they are versatile (both top and bottom)

No Attitude: The escort noted that they have “no attitude”/are willing to see clients without regard to race, body type, physical appearance, disability, etc.

Safe: The escort noted that he is disease drug free/ only participates in safer sex

Note: In American gay society, men may not only be tops, bottoms, or versatile, but also “versatile tops” and “versatile bottoms.” The meaning of such terms is the distinction between one man who would rarely/never partake in an activity (a “top” would never perform as a “bottom” and vice versa), and a man who occasionally partakes in an activity (a “versatile top” would occasionally bottom and vice versa). These terms are well established in gay society (Sadowick 1996).

Example Escort

★★★★

Example Escort

Text of escort advertisement

CA - San Francisco / Oakland

Email Him
Review Him
His Reviews
Stud

Age: NN	Race: XX	Body Type: XX
Height: NN	Hair Color: XX	Body Hair: XX
Weight: NN	Eye Color: XX	

Services Provided

- Escort
- Erotic Massage
- Non-Erotic Massage
- Registered Massage Therapist Yes
- Modeling
- Stripping/Dancer
- In Calls \$200.00/hr Yes
- Out Calls \$250.00/hr Yes
- US Travel: Yes
- Int'l Travel: Yes

Contact Info

Cellular: (NNN) NNN-NNNN

PREFERS PHONE CONTACT

"PRIVATE CALLER"
PHONE CALLS
MAY NOT BE ACCEPTED

Email Him

Location

- CA - San Francisco / Oakland
- CA - San Diego
- CA - San Jose
- CA - Vallejo / Fairfield / Napa

Availability

	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
7am-11am	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
11am-3pm	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3pm-7pm	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7pm-11pm	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
11pm-3am	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3am-7am	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

[Read text reviews on Example Escort](#)

Figure 1
Diagram of Online Escort Advertisement

Table 1
Summary Statistics for the Escort Sample

Variables	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Physical Traits	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Behaviors	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.
				<u>Hair Color</u>							
Price	1476	216.88	64.46	Black	1932	0.37	0.48	Top	1932	0.16	0.37
Log of Price	1476	5.34	0.29	Blonde	1932	0.13	0.34	Bottom	1932	0.06	0.24
Weight	1932	167.11	24.54	Brown	1932	0.46	0.50	Versatile	1932	0.21	0.40
Height	1932	70.43	2.69	Gray	1932	0.02	0.13	Safe	1932	0.19	0.39
BMI	1932	23.64	2.89	Auburn/Red	1932	0.01	0.11				
Age	1932	28.20	6.93	Other	1932	0.01	0.10				
Asian	1932	0.01	0.12	<u>Eye Color</u>							
Black	1932	0.22	0.41	Black	1932	0.02	0.14				
Hispanic	1932	0.14	0.35	Blue	1932	0.18	0.39				
Multiracial	1932	0.08	0.28	Brown	1932	0.55	0.50				
Other	1932	0.01	0.10	Green	1932	0.11	0.31				
White	1932	0.54	0.50	Hazel	1932	0.14	0.35				
				<u>Body Hair</u>							
				Hairy	1932	0.04	0.20				
				Moderately Hairy	1932	0.30	0.46				
				Shaved	1932	0.17	0.38				
				Smooth	1932	0.49	0.50				
				<u>Body Build</u>							
				Athletic/Swimmer's Build	1932	0.48	0.50				
				Average	1932	0.13	0.34				
				A Few Extra Pounds	1932	0.01	0.08				
				Muscular	1932	0.30	0.46				
				Thin/Lean	1932	0.08	0.27				

Price is the outcall price posted by an escort in his advertisement.

See the data appendix for variable definitions.

Table 2
Geographic Distribution of Escorts -- Selected Cities

City	MSA:		Gay Concentration:		Number of Escorts:
	Rank	Population	Rank	Index	
New York City, NY	1	18,815,988	13	1.49	645
Los Angeles, CA	2	12,875,587	6	2.11	535
Chicago, IL	3	9,524,673	18	1.31	241
Miami, FL	7	5,413,212	14	1.46	321
Washington, DC	8	5,306,565	2	2.68	275
Atlanta, GA	9	5,278,904	7	1.96	290
Boston, MA	10	4,482,857	9	1.67	110
Detroit, MI	11	4,467,592	42	0.6	73
San Francisco, CA	12	4,203,898	1	4.95	316
Seattle, WA	15	3,309,347	5	2.21	33
Minneapolis, MN	16	3,208,212	10	1.61	33
St. Louis, MO	18	2,808,611	37	0.69	18
Tampa, FL	19	2,723,949	24	1.05	47
Denver, CO	21	2,464,866	12	1.53	41
Portland, OR	23	2,175,113	15	1.45	15
Sacramento, CA	26	2,091,120	8	1.71	17
Kansas City, MO	29	1,985,429	25	1.04	9
Columbus, OH	32	1,754,337	27	0.99	30
Indianapolis, IN	33	1,695,037	19	1.12	19
Charlotte, NC	35	1,651,568	45	0.49	19
Austin, TX	37	1,598,161	3	2.44	26
Nashville, TN	39	1,521,437	32	0.85	14
Oklahoma City, OK	44	1,192,989	34	0.83	3
Buffalo, NY	46	1,128,183	49	0.35	5
Rochester, NY	50	1,030,495	29	0.89	4
Albany, NY	57	853,358	31	0.85	5

Correlation of Number of Escorts with Gay Concentration Index: 0.44
 Correlation of Per Capita Escorts with Gay Concentration Index: 0.73
 Correlation of Number of Escorts with MSA Population: 0.92

Accessed on 1/25/09. Counts of number of unique escort advertisements.
 Gay concentration is the fraction of the MSA identified as same-sex male partners in the 1990 Census divided by the national average. See Black, Sanders, and Taylor (2007) for further details. MSA population counts from the Census Bureau as of 7/01/2007.
 Cities with MSA rank >12 were selected at random from the fifty cities listed in Black, Sanders, and Taylor (2007). The correlations in the lower panel are for all fifty cities listed in Black, Sanders

Table 3
Physical Characteristics and Male Escort Prices

	I Age and Body Type	II Race	III Hair Color
Age	-0.00975*** [0.00119]	Black	0.0433 [0.0658]
Height	-0.00224 [0.00331]	Hispanic	0.045 [0.0668]
Weight	-0.00114*** [0.000394]	Multiracial	0.0882 [0.0687]
		Other	-0.0337 [0.101]
		White	0.0277 [0.0646]
Observations	1476	1476	1476
R-squared	0.044	0.004	0.004

	IV Eye Color	V Body Build	VI Body Hair
Blue Eyes	-0.072 [0.0556]	Average Build	-0.147*** [0.0230]
Brown Eyes	-0.0682 [0.0535]	A Few Extra Pounds	-0.300*** [0.0869]
Green Eyes	-0.05 [0.0573]	Muscular Build	0.0319* [0.0173]
Hazel Eyes	-0.0679 [0.0561]	Thin/Lean Build	-0.0479* [0.0288]
Observations	1476	1476	1476
R-squared	0.002	0.045	0.019

Robust standard errors are listed under coefficients in brackets [*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1].

Each category is a separate regression in which the log of escort prices is the dependent variable.

Each regression includes controls for city location and an intercept.

For II: The omitted race category is Asian. For III: The omitted hair color is black.

For IV: The omitted eye color is black. For V: The omitted body build is athletic/swimmer's build.

For VI: The omitted body hair is hairy.

All tests of statistical significance are two tailed.

See the data appendix for variable definitions.

Table 4
Sexual Behaviors and Male Escort Prices

	I	II	III	IV	V
Top	0.0803*** [0.0202]	0.0968*** [0.0224]	0.0938*** [0.0224]	0.0936*** [0.0224]	0.0890*** [0.0247]
Bottom	-0.0596** [0.0302]	-0.0773** [0.0355]	-0.0788** [0.0355]	-0.0798** [0.0355]	-0.0865** [0.0385]
Versatile	0.00536 [0.0186]	0.0142 [0.0214]	0.0089 [0.0215]	0.0074 [0.0216]	0.00806 [0.0216]
Versatile Top		-0.0881* [0.0515]	-0.0833 [0.0515]	-0.0816 [0.0515]	-0.0824 [0.0516]
Versatile Bottom		0.0589 [0.0673]	0.0654 [0.0672]	0.0675 [0.0673]	0.0674 [0.0673]
Safer Sex			0.0510*** [0.0192]	0.0488** [0.0195]	0.0420* [0.0227]
No Attitude				0.0147 [0.0224]	0.015 [0.0224]
Safe Top					0.0221 [0.0490]
Safe Bottom					0.0352 [0.0771]
Observations	1476	1476	1476	1476	1476
R-squared	0.015	0.017	0.022	0.022	0.023

Robust standard errors in brackets [*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1].

Dependent variable is the log of the escort's price in all regressions.

Each regression includes controls for age, city location, and an intercept.

All tests of statistical significance are two tailed.

See data appendix for variable definitions.

Table 5
Race, Sexual Behavior and Male Escort Prices

Race:	I	II	III	IV
	Top	Bottom	Versatile	Safe
Black	0.110*** [0.0321]	-0.286*** [0.110]	0.036 [0.0476]	0.0865** [0.0425]
White	0.0655** [0.0297]	-0.0667* [0.0348]	-0.01 [0.0234]	0.0539** [0.0249]
Asian	0.311 [0.291]	-0.0729 [0.206]	0.00786 [0.131]	-0.134 [0.110]
Hispanic	0.0930* [0.0537]	-0.0258 [0.0882]	0.0251 [0.0400]	0.0433 [0.0438]
Multirace	0.0645 [0.0556]	0.112 [0.131]	-0.00291 [0.0591]	0.0917 [0.0589]
Other Race	0.0662 [0.206]	-0.332 [0.206]	-0.25 [0.207]	-0.24 [0.206]
Observations	1476	1476	1476	1476
R-squared	0.013	0.009	0.002	0.009
Standard errors in brackets		[*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1]		

Each column is a separate regression where the log of the price is the dependent variable.

Each entry is the coefficient on the interaction of the row and column.

For example, the "Black Safe" coefficient is the coefficient of the black*safe interaction term in the regression. All regressions

include controls for race, city, sexual behaviors, other personal

characteristics, and an intercept. See the data appendix for variable

All tests of statistical significance are two tailed.

See data appendix for variable definitions.