



SEXUAL ATTITUDES AND EXPERIENCES OF 100 INTERNET-BASED INDEPENDENT SEXUAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

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Abstract

The Institute for the Advanced Study of Human Sexuality (IASHS) Standard Sex Profile measuring sexual background, sexual attitudes and sexual experiences was administered to 100 female independent Internet Sexual Services Providers (ISSP) who advertised their sexual services on either personal websites or by utilizing the web pages of an Internet escort mall to promote their services. Participants were solicited through a restricted discussion group dedicated to ISSP on a provider review website. Survey items included questions on participants' demographic details, attitudes toward specific sexual behaviors and participants' attitudes toward their own sexual experiences. Survey results indicated that the average Internet sexual services provider is an adult woman who has attended college, is politically and sexually liberal, and finds sex to be a very important and enjoyable factor in her life.

Sexual Attitudes and Experiences of 100 Internet-Based Independent Sexual Service Providers: Basic Research Project

Sex work conducted by females who provide erotic and sexual services in private, residential settings in the United States has received scant attention among social science researchers until this millennial decade. Beginning with the first bona fide effort by French physician Alexandre Parent-Duchâtelet in 1836 to define the activities of prostitutes (Bullough, 1994), studies have focused on street prostitution in urban areas and its public health consequences. Fictional efforts to describe the activities and the personal characteristics of

female prostitutes who depend on income from male clients in an off-street, non-brothel setting have ranged from classic novels such as "Fanny Hill" (Cleland, 1748), "Vanity Fair" (Thackeray, 1847) and Émile Zola's "Nana" (1880), to more contemporary female portrayals like "Gloria" in John O'Hara's novel "Butterfield 8" [sic] (1935) and "Blanche Dubois" in Tennessee Williams' play "Streetcar Named Desire" (1947). Psychoanalytic theorists and psychologists have also provided a variety of characterological descriptions of prostitutes. Glover (1945) postulated that prostitutes were sexually "frigid" and harbored unconscious hostility toward males; Greenwald (1948) who based his conclusions on a study of 20 call girls suggested that maternal deprivation and self-abasement were at the root of choosing prostitution as a profession. Choisy (1961) regarded the prostitute-client relationship as one of sadomasochism in which both individuals acted out their feelings of revenge against their respective parents; that same year, Caprio and Brenner maintained that prostitution in itself was a defense against covert feelings of lesbianism. In a study of 175 Caucasian prostitutes, however, Pomeroy (1965) reported that this population was not as sexually dysfunctional as had previously been described, and that the subjects were clearly able to enjoy sexual feelings in their client contacts. A more recent study of 83 off-street sex workers, referred to as "call girls" by Lever and Dolnick (2000), showed that 42% of these females provided physical affection, listening skills and emotional intimacy to their clients, in addition to performing a variety of conventional sexual services. According to the study, several of the subjects took pride in their work and found parallels between their profession and that of a psychotherapist. Using a Standard Sex Profile survey inventory created in 1984 at the Institute for the Advanced Study of Human Sexuality (IASHS), Sprinkle (2001) also found that sex workers placed a high value on sex and that most reported sexual satisfaction "very much above average." A modified version of the Standard Sex Profile survey was conducted by Fausch (2007) who concluded that among her sample of 125 female sex workers in major U.S. metropolitan areas, over 82% stated that they loved their profession and nearly 40% of the sample enjoyed sex with their clients "most of the time."

Public health studies of female prostitution focusing on the consequences of sexually transmitted diseases have dominated the discourse on prostitution in the United States during the last two decades. These studies have ignored independent, off-street prostitutes of middle- to upper-middle socioeconomic status (SES), as well as those females who have no police records or females who engage in non-sexual occupations in addition to sex work and who cannot readily be identified as prostitutes (Bullough & Bullough, 1998). Sampling difficulties with this hidden population have been noted (Bullough & Bullough, 1998; Lever and Dolnick, 2000; Lever & Kanouse, 1998), mainly due to the invisibility of females who wish to conceal potentially incriminating activities that could have consequences for someone also practicing a legitimate profession. The occupational class "Prostitute" is included in Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin and Gebhard's sample of 5,940 women who supplied the data for their study on the sexual behavior in the human female (1953), although there are no specific references in the published volume of the attitudes and experiences of prostitutes. In fact, Kinsey explicitly stated that among those belonging to groups brought together by "a common sexual interest" such as

prisoners or prostitutes, the individual's history was not included in the incidence or frequency calculations except when the subject belonged to a more "general" segment of the population. Unfortunately, additional research on the attitudes and the sexual experiences of prostitutes of middle- to upper-middle SES is still lacking, and there are very few contemporary studies differentiating between the characteristics of off-street sex workers who perform in institutionalized brothel settings and those who call themselves independent providers and who operate out of their own residences or secondary dwellings. These workers in question are those who advertise their services through proprietary web sites or links ISSP sites to performance review web sites. Data addressing the demographics, basic sexual attitudes and the sexual experiences of this emerging segment of the sex worker population, hereinafter named Independent Sexual Service Providers (ISSP), is needed in order to advance additional research and increased understanding of this new occupational class. In partial fulfillment of a doctoral degree at the Institute for the Advanced Study of Human sexuality, this survey seeks to present the particular demographics, attitudes and experiences of an ISSP sample of 100 females. Results will be compared with earlier studies by Sprinkle, Fausch, Kinsey et al., and with the Report of the Commission on Obscenity and Pornography (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1970).

Method

Participant criteria

The target population for this survey was 100 female commercial sex workers, i.e. Internet Sexual Services Providers (ISSP) who advertised their sexual services by posting photographic images and verbal descriptions of themselves on either personal websites with unique Universal Resource Locator (URL) addresses, or by utilizing the web pages of an Internet escort mall or similar website to promote their services. All provider websites, whether personal or mall-based, were linked to an ISSP review website, where prostitution clients, or "hobbyists" in ISSP jargon, post reviews of the providers' appearance and performance according to a point system augmented by explicit descriptions of the sexual experience. For the purpose of this survey, the inclusion criteria for survey participants were: (1) natal, non-transgendered female; (2) currently engaged in the activity of providing coital and other sexual services to male clients; (3) member of a restricted, single-sex discussion group named "Providers Only" on an ISSP review website; (4) the ability to sufficiently understand the English language in order to complete the survey; (5) the ability to operate a personal computer and to understand common software commands; and (6), the ability to provide voluntary informed consent. It was assumed that the respondents would be motivated to participate largely by curiosity and by courtesy toward the principal investigator known to the discussion board members only as "The Love Goddess," the anonymous volunteer sex therapist providing gratis psychosexual advice on the same ISSP review website. Subjects were informed of the principal investigator conducting the survey in partial fulfillment of the requirement toward a doctoral degree at IASHS. Respondents participated voluntarily and received no

compensation or other benefits. All survey participants were treated in accordance with the "Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct" (American Psychological Association, 1992).

Materials

The eight-page, 34-item Standard Sex Profile (IASHS, 1984) was reproduced from "The Standard Operating Procedures and Handbook for Faculty and Students" (IASHS, 2005) and redesigned graphically as a five-page web-based questionnaire accessed by participants through an invitational webpage linked to a commercial survey design website. The invitational webpage used the same graphical user interface (GUI) as the survey itself and contained a brief description of the survey, an explanation of its purpose, and a technical paragraph describing the Secure Socket Layer (SSL) process by which respondents were guaranteed complete anonymity. An active link forwarded potential respondents to the survey, preceded by the informed consent page which described the risks and benefits of survey participation, confidentiality, the right to refuse or withdraw, and the contact details of both the principal investigator and the IASHS Internal Review Board.

Survey design

In this 34-item semi-structured instrument, the measures of interest were survey participants' demographics, including religious background; their sexual history; their sexual attitudes and experiences from adolescence onwards; ratings of their sexual orientation on the Kinsey scale; their attitudes toward specific sexual behaviors; their experiences with said behaviors; and, their attitudes toward a list of basic sexual rights as promulgated by IASHS. Depending on the survey item, respondents were given a variety of response options such as multiple choices, ordinal and rating scales, and descriptive text responses. On the first page of the survey were twelve items assessing respondent's basic information such as age, gender, a list of states lived in, religious affiliation and respondent's attitudes on politics, religion and sex in comparison to "most people." Page two was dedicated to respondent's basic sexual background, with items focusing on sexual satisfaction, frequency of masturbation, coitus and respondents' self-rating on the Kinsey scale. The following page required respondents to assess their sexual attitudes in items enumerating a variety of sexual contacts such as penile-vaginal intercourse, anal intercourse, oral-genital contact, group sex, sadomasochism, sex with children and rape. The final page five listed the basic sexual rights as promulgated by IASHS; respondents were requested to agree or disagree on a list of items, e.g. "the right to sexual self-determination" and "the right to control conception."

Procedure

Respondents were solicited during a 40-day period through convenience sampling in the form of invitational postings placed by the principal investigator as "The Love Goddess" every 5 days on the "Providers Only" discussion board. Solicitation postings contained relevant information as to the purpose of the study, a link to the consent page and a further link to the survey itself which was posted on a commercial survey

design website. By pointing their browser to a button termed "I agree" located at the bottom of the consent page, respondents were directed to the survey situated on the commercial survey design website. During the completion of the inventory, participants would read the questions displayed on their computer screens and then place their cursor on buttons corresponding to their chosen answers. Some questions also required typing responses into single or multiple textboxes. As soon as each survey was completed, the responses were immediately registered and statistically tabulated through the commercial survey website. The survey was configured to shut down automatically after 100 completed response summaries had been collected. The results were tabulated by downloading the collected data to a spreadsheet and performing a descriptive statistical analysis of the sample responses. After 100 response summaries were tabulated initially by the commercial survey website, the principal investigator posted a link on the "Providers Only" board to the initial survey results which were available in a simple format showing response averages (M) on the survey website. Respondents were then able to view the total results and also the individual responses to all items in the survey.

Results

Basic sample characteristics

The convenience sample ($N=100$) was drawn from a national population of approximately 1,280 registered ISSP on the restricted discussion group "Providers Only" located on an ISSP review website. Out of the 100 females who provided complete responses to the survey, 87% were Caucasian/White, 7% were African American/Black, 2% were Hispanic, and 4% chose the option "Other." There were no Asian/Pacific Islander subjects. Respondents ranged in age from 19 to 60 years, with an average age of 35.9 ($SD=8.9$). The majority of subjects reported having been domiciled since the age of 14 in the 10 most populous U.S. states, i.e. California, Texas, New York, Florida, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Georgia and North Carolina. No respondents had ever resided in the 10 least populated states, i.e. Rhode Island, Montana, Delaware, South Dakota, Alaska, Vermont and Wyoming (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). In addition, no respondents listed Alabama, Arkansas, Idaho, Iowa, South Carolina and Utah as places of residence. Almost two-thirds (64%) of the respondents reported living alone, and 24% reported living with a spouse; 41% of the respondents also reported living with children. Nearly half (45%) of the respondents did have some college education, 22% were college graduates, and 14% had attended graduate school. Over half (56%) of the respondents listed their profession by using terms such as "escort" or "provider," while 44% of the respondents listed their primary and secondary occupations such as engineer, university instructor, real estate appraiser, fundraising professional, accountant, and attorney. Various spousal occupations were reported by respondents as biotechnology executive, professor, banker, research analyst, hedge fund manager, legal advisor, police dog handler, and sanitation worker. Almost one-third (31%) of the respondents reported

having a Catholic background; 19% were Protestant, 2% Jewish and 30% listed "Other." Eighteen percent of the respondents claimed no religious background at all and 62% of the sample reported no attendance at religious services. When asked to compare their attitudes to "most people" in terms of politics, religion and sex, 64% of the respondents reported their political attitudes as "more liberal;" 77% believed they were more liberal on religious issues, and 93% of the respondents claimed to be more liberal than most people in sexual matters.

Basic sexual background

The average age at which respondents knew about sexual intercourse was 10.6 ($SD=3.1$). Average age at which respondents knew about orgasm was 13.5 ($SD=5.0$), and average age at which respondents first knew about masturbation was 10.9 ($SD= 3.5$) (see Table 1.) Average age at which respondents first masturbated to orgasm was 14.08 ($SD=6.3$). Average frequency of masturbation to orgasm during the past year among respondents was 3.92 times per week, 19.79 times per month, and 290.04 times per year. The response for average age of first sexual intercourse with a male was 15.79 ($SD=3.3$). Total amount of lifetime male sex partners averaged 862.93 among respondents. During the past year, respondents had sexual intercourse with an average of 147.61 different males; the average frequency of intercourse with different males was 17.97 times per week, 44.22 times per month and 401.63 times per year. Total lifetime amount of same-sex partners averaged 87.83 among respondents. During the past year, respondents averaged same-sex contacts with 9.19 different partners. When rating their sexual orientation on the Kinsey scale, 44% of respondents selected 2, "both homosexual and heterosexual, but more heterosexual;" 30% reported 1, "only incidental homosexuality," and 12% stated 0, "exclusively heterosexual." When given a choice between three major sexual orientations, over half (55%) of the respondents described themselves as bisexual and 45% as heterosexual. When asked "how important is sex to you," 64% of respondents stated "very important" and 28% reported "somewhat important. Almost half (49%) of the respondents reported that their sexual satisfaction had been "very much above average," 28% reported sexual satisfaction "somewhat above average, and 17% stated it had been "about average."

Attitudes toward sexual behaviors

The total sample (100%) reported having read about, or having seen images or films of penile-vaginal intercourse, and 99% reported having seen self-masturbation and male-female oral-genital within the same context (see Table 2.) Over two-thirds (77%) of the respondents reported being aroused by images or films of penile-vaginal intercourse, and 75.8% of the respondents reported being aroused by images or films of male-female oral-genital contacts (see Table 3).

Sexual experiences

In terms of active engagement, 99% of respondents had participated in penile-vaginal intercourse, 99%

had participated in male-female oral-genital contact, and 91.4% had participated in male-female anal intercourse (see Table 4.) The activity enjoyed “very much” by 94.9% of respondents was penile-vaginal intercourse, followed by male-female oral-genital contact enjoyed “very much” by 90.6% of the respondents (see Table 5.) About two-thirds (74%) of respondents had used a vibrator as a sexual enhancement device and an equal number (74%) found any of these devices to be “very helpful.”

Attitudes toward sexuality

When asked if “the average person has a morbid or shameful interest in sex, nudity or excretion,” 42% of the respondents agreed and 58% disagreed. When respondents gauged their own attitudes toward the same question, 92% answered “no” and 8% answered “yes.” When presented with the IASHS list of basic sexual rights, 100% of the sample agreed to “the right to seek out and engage in consensual sexual activity;” 99% agreed to “the right to sexual self-determination,” and 98% agreed to “the right to engage in sexual acts or activities of any kind whatsoever, providing they do not involve non-consensual acts, violence, constraint, coercion or fraud” (see Table 6.)

Discussion

In examining the findings of this survey, several factors emerge that support a shift in perception when applied to sexual service providers. While “sex worker” and “prostitute” are generic terms for those who provide sexual goods and services in exchange for money, scholars have often failed to distinguish between the various subgroups on which their research is based despite the differing social status hierarchy, working conditions, attitudes and preferences that exist among sex workers (Weitzer, 2000). Thus, there have been difficulties and methodological issues in understanding basic demographic and operational differences between street prostitutes and off-street workers in residential settings. Comparisons of the demographic results of this survey with those of Sprinkle and Fausch show significant similarities along several dimensions. Although Fausch has omitted any references to the occupational settings of the subjects ($N=125$), results obtained matched this survey on several items. The mean age of respondents in that study was 35, compared to 35.91 for this survey. Another important factor is race and ethnicity; while street prostitution generally draws individuals from a more diverse racial background, the results of Fausch (85.5% of respondents were Caucasian/white) and Sprinkle (86% of the respondents were Caucasian/white) mirror this survey with 87% of the respondents being Caucasian/white. This indicates a significant homogeneity in terms of race from these subgroups of sex workers. Race and SES may also be influencing the results reflecting provider educational levels; both Sprinkle and Fausch obtained identical results, with 32% of the respondents being college graduates in each of the respective surveys. In addition, 20% of Fausch’s sample had attended graduate school. Of the 5,940 exclusively white females in Kinsey’s sample, 56% had “some college background” and

19% had pursued graduate studies. The current survey showed that 45% had “some college” education, 22% were college graduates and 14% had attended graduate school. Another parallel between this survey and that of Kinsey’s were the states from which respondent data was drawn. Both the survey at hand and that of Kinsey included samples from the 10 most populous states; underrepresented or missing states from where additional data in both surveys may have been desirable were, among others, Montana, Utah and Wyoming which continue to have some of the lowest population density per capita in the U.S.

The question of occupational self-definition among the subjects showed that almost half (44%) of the sample listed secondary occupations that were professional, managerial and distinctly “white collar” (Mills, 1951), such as accountant, real estate appraiser or attorney. Fausch also found that 56.2% of the respondents had secondary professions with examples ranging from dental hygienist, real estate broker, and writer, to financial consultant, registered nurse, and college educator. Sprinkle found that 21% of the sample had secondary occupations, among them an insurance salesperson, a financial consultant and a physician. These occupational classes compare with Kinsey’s female sample, where 39% belonged to “lower white collar” groups, and 59% to upper white collar and professional groups. Extrapolating from this data, it becomes clear that research results inferred from studies of street prostitutes cannot and should not be applied to this subgroup of sex worker, as ISSP do not necessarily live on the margins of existence from lack of legitimized professions. Instead, the income from sex work may be used to augment a middle-class income; in addition, this survey shows that the listed spousal occupations were mainly of white collar origin. Although 64% of the respondents were living in single-person households, the respondents’ race and educational background together with their professional status and that of their spouses may contribute to a picture of middle-class stability, which in turn may confound the putative understanding of sex work when seen through an undifferentiated lens mostly influenced by research on street prostitution.

Although 93% of the respondents in this survey and 93.7% of respondents in Fausch’s sample believed themselves to be more liberal in attitudes of sex than “most people,” their sexual background along the dimensions of masturbation does not differ significantly from the females born 1900-1929 in Kinsey’s research. The mean age recalled for first knowing about masturbation among respondents in this survey was 10.9 ($SD=3.5$); Fausch reported a response average of 11 years of age, while Sprinkle’s female sample first knew about masturbation at 11.55 years of age. Kinsey reported that 77% of his total active female sample had been between 1-10 years of age at first experience of masturbation, with 57% of the sample first engaging in the practice through self-discovery. In terms of first experience of masturbating to orgasm, the response average in this survey was 14.1 ($SD=6.3$) years of age; the mean of Fausch’s sample was 15 years of age, and 15.67 years for Sprinkle. Weekly response average among females who masturbated to orgasm in this survey was 3.82; for Kinsey’s sample, the weekly masturbatory frequency for single females averaged 0.3 to 0.4 times per week. The significance of this discrepancy is unknown; however, it is clear that ISSP spend a

significant amount of time in a profession that is sexualized and conducive to maintaining an adequate level of sexual satisfaction. In order to provide others with sexual services, it is perhaps of benefit that the provider remains satisfied sexually and free from internal tension and conflict. The results for sexual satisfaction among all three samples bear this out and are strikingly similar. In this survey, 49% percent found their sexual satisfaction to be "very much above average;" Fausch reported 52.4%, and Sprinkle 54% for this item. "Somewhat above average" was noted by 28% in this survey; Fausch noted 32.5% and Sprinkle noted 30%. Sixty-four percent of respondents in this survey also found sex to be "very important," while Fausch's sample found 71.2% responding identically to this question. Drawing on this data, the inference can be made that ISSP are not coerced or unwilling in engaging sexually with a variety of unfamiliar sex partners. Contrary to stereotypical interpretations and depictions of prostitutes as uninterested in sex and incapable of deriving any enjoyment from their work, it appears that these respondents have a need to engage sexually both in dyadic situations and also through self-stimulation. Another dimension of interest is the apparent fluidity in sexual orientation evidenced in this sample. When rating themselves on the Kinsey scale, 44% of the respondents in this survey and 39.2% of Fausch's respondents chose the number 2, "both homosexual and heterosexual, but more heterosexual." Thirty percent in both this survey and that of Fausch chose 1, "only incidental homosexuality." Only 12% in this survey and 16% in Fausch's sample chose 1, "exclusively heterosexual." When given a choice of three major sexual orientations, there were more self-reported bisexuals (55%) than heterosexuals (45%), and no homosexuals, i.e. lesbians noted in this survey. Among Kinsey's female sample, 11-20% reported "at least some homosexual" orientation, and 6-14% reported "more than incidental homosexual." Kinsey (1953) postulated that in comparison to males, there were "[f]ewer females who fear their own capacities to respond homosexually" (p. 486). In accordance with this statement it is possible that the respondents, in their capacity and desire to derive the maximum enjoyment from their sexual experiences, feel less constrained by labels of orientation and therefore openly indicated their sexual attraction to both males and females.

In this survey, all respondents ($N=100$) reported having seen penile-vaginal intercourse and 99% reported having seen male-female oral-genital contact. In 1970, Abelson, Cohen, Heaton and Suder carried out a survey for the United States Government Report of the Commission on Obscenity and Pornography regarding the nature of experiences that adults in the United States had with reading and viewing sexually explicit materials. Probability sampling yielded 2,486 adults aged 21 and older. The items of interest were close-ups of male and female genitals, male-female intercourse, male-female oral-genital contact, homosexual contact, and sadomasochism. Results showed that 69% of the women had seen at least one of those depictions. However, in Berger, Gagnon and Simon's (1970) national sample of 769 high school adolescents aged 15-20, 88% of the females had seen at least one of said depictions. According to several other studies reported by the Commission that same year, depictions of genitals and heterosexual intercourse were the most

common, homosexual and oral activities were “in-between” [*sic*] and sadomasochistic materials were the least common. In addition to the generational cohort factor and the 38 years that have passed since the Commission reported its findings, the sample at hand appears significantly more exposed to sexually explicit materials. Whether this is a function of their professional status or simply evidence of increased dissemination of sexualized media is not known at the present time. Abelson et al. (1970) also indicated that persons exposed “most recently” to sexually explicit materials were more likely to have begun heterosexual intercourse at an earlier age than individuals with less or no recent experience. In this survey, the mean age for first experience of heterosexual intercourse was 15.8 ($SD=3.3$). Fausch’s results indicated mean age for first heterosexual intercourse of 15.5 while the modal age was 17 for the first heterosexual intercourse among females born between 1953 and 1972 (Laumann, Gagnon, Michael & Michaels, 1994). The females in this survey and that of Fausch are reporting a somewhat earlier heterosexual debut which may be related to a variety of factors, e.g. a sexually less restrictive environment than in the average American home during childhood or a biologic desire to begin sexual activities at an earlier age; or, perhaps an element of coercion or abuse may have been present in these respondents’ coital debut. On the other hand, 94.9% of the sample enjoyed penile-vaginal intercourse “very much;” male-female oral-genital contact was equally enjoyed by 90.6%, and, in view of respondents’ rates of bisexuality, female-female oral-genital contact was enjoyed “very much” by 63.6% of the respondents. This shows a sample of respondents that appears to enjoy the active expression of sexuality in a very physical context; whether these expressions were engendered by paid fees or occurred in the respondents’ private, non-professional sphere was not known.

The respondents in this survey indicated that they were most aroused by seeing or reading about penile-vaginal intercourse (77%), followed by depictions of male-female oral-genital contact (75.8%). Kinsey et al. found arousal differences across various media; females reported more arousal from general literature (60%) than from commercial film (48%), visual depictions of sexual action (32%) or erotic stories (14%). Despite the separation of various media outlets, there is still a large discrepancy in comparisons between Kinsey’s sample obtained over 50 years ago and the current one at hand. One possible explanation may be found in the study of Giese and Schmidt (1968) who reported that individuals who hold sexually liberal attitudes are more likely to judge erotic portrayals as arousing. In addition, several studies have found that a permissive or informal setting may result in freer expression of sexual thoughts and fantasy, as assessed by projective testing (Amoroso, Brown, Preusse, Ware & Pilkey, 1970). The sexually permissive environment which an ISSP is obliged to maintain professionally in order to remain successful in her field, often furnished with sexually explicit magazines, films and sexual enhancement devices, may contribute to a comfort level with not only sexual expression but also an interest in a fantasy life providing additional outlets for orgasmic experiences. As is evidenced in this survey, 92% of the respondents felt that their interest in sex, nudity or excretion was not morbid or shameful and 89% felt that “the freedom of any sexual thought, fantasy or desire was a basic sexual right that should be extended to all people.” Additionally, the entire sample agreed with “the right to

seek out and engage in consensual sexual activity.” By virtue of their profession, such an answer would almost be expected; however, 2% disagreed with “the right to engage in sexual acts or activities of any kind whatsoever, providing they do not involve non-consensual acts, violence, constraint, coercion or fraud.” It is not evident from this survey if the dissenting respondents were considering sexual acts with children or animals, but in view of the 93.6% respondents who found reading about or seeing adult sexual contacts with children “disgusting,” the two dissenting respondents may have been included in that number.

Limitations

Social science research has often incorporated qualitative methods in studying populations that are hidden or not easily available to researchers. Kinsey et al. advocated for the qualitative interview as superior to any other form of data collection, particularly when dealing with topics of an intimate nature where personal contact and the interaction between subject and interviewer may elicit valuable information. Since this was not possible for methodological reasons, this survey may have suffered in terms of reliability. Respondents may have chosen less than optimal responses or even avoided responding, based on a lack of “fit” between attitudes held and the semantic restrictions placed on respondents’ ability to verbalize or personalize answers to survey items. The data collected for this study was derived from self-reporting and the recall of items that may have been impossible to measure, e.g. the exact year of knowing about orgasms and homosexuality. And, while confidentiality was guaranteed, there may have been a degree of misrepresentation or simply a desire to influence the survey by providing answers that may not necessarily have reflected the respondents’ actual attitudes toward the various items. It is also possible that survey items did not correctly measure what they intended to. In addition, some items on the survey were redundant and required answers that were self-contradictory or confusing, e.g. when providing the response options “college graduate” and “graduate school,” as opposed to “graduate degree earned” for more accuracy. The item requesting “states in which you have lived for one year or more since the age of 14” was also ambiguous, since it is not clear from the survey if the states should be named in order of occupancy, or just by names in no particular order. Another limitation of the study was the use of a convenience sample. Participants were solicited from one discussion group where membership must be sought and approved by the webmaster. As the sample of 100 subjects may have been non-representative in terms of age, SES and level of education, even among ISSP, the results should be viewed with caution. This issue weakens the generalizability of the results; in addition, the lack of diversity in the sample may have contributed to some data range restriction and the external validity of the study may have been compromised.

Conclusion

Taken together, the findings of the current survey suggest that the average member of the ISSP occupational class is a Caucasian/white adult female, 36 years of age, and whose income is derived either from providing solely sexual services or from a combination of a white collar profession and sex work. While a majority of ISSP live in a single-person household, many also reside with working spouses and children. ISSP have more than likely attended college, graduated or completed graduate school. Politically, religiously and sexually, ISSP consider themselves liberal, something which is reflected in their overwhelming agreements to various sexual rights. Aside from the finding that the average female among these ISSP has attained a level of education beyond high school, one of the more important points of this survey may be that ISSP enjoy a sexual satisfaction that is perceived as "somewhat above" or "very much above average." In addition, a majority of ISSP consider sex to be a very important factor in their lives. They appear to enjoy and fantasize about sexual situations which do not appear to deviate from the most conventional sexual imagery available, i.e. heterosexual coitus and oral-genital contacts in either male-female or same-sex configurations. The majority is repulsed by adult sexual contacts with children and by rape. Rather than conforming to the stereotype of a prostitute as a marginalized and deprived individual, the average member of this new occupational subgroup of white collar sex workers may in effect be *the gal next door*.

Despite its limitations, this survey of the sexual background, attitudes and experiences of 100 independent Internet Sexual Services Providers has yielded some fruitful avenues for further research. Any of the demographic results in this survey may be of future interest to social scientists funded by grants where STD issues and violent crime prevention appear to guide research involving commercial sex workers. While access to off-street sex workers may previously have been difficult, technological advances and the widespread use of the Internet for commercial and investigational purposes have facilitated contacts in an unprecedented manner. To improve the generalizability of this and other survey responses drawn from the ISSP population, questionnaires can repeatedly be administered to many more providers on other discussion boards and who list their contact information on the Internet. In addition, future surveys may focus on issues specific to sex workers, such as working conditions, earnings, attitudes toward clients and the differences between paid and non-paid sexual activity.

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	Response Average	SD
Pregnancy:	9.59	4.0
Menstruation:	10.23	2.2
Sexual intercourse:	10.65	3.1
Masturbation:	10.87	3.5
Orgasm:	13.46	5.0
Homosexuality:	12.73	3.5
Clitoris:	13.57	4.5

Self-masturbation	99.0%
Intercourse (penis-in-vagina)	100.0%
Oral-genital contact, male-female	99.0%
Anal intercourse, male-female	99.0%
Mutual masturbation or other sexual activity, male-male	86.0%
Oral-genital contact, male-male	83.0%
Anal intercourse, male-male	79.0%
Mutual masturbation or other sexual activity, female-female	95.0%
Oral-genital contact, female-female	99.0%
Group sex	96.0%
Sadomasochism	76.0%
Adult sexual contact with children	33.0%
Rape	53.0%

	Aroused	Interested	Disinterested	Uncomfortable	Disgusted	Response Count
Self-masturbation	59.2%	31.6%	7.1%	1.0%	1.0%	98
Intercourse (Penis-in-vagina)	77.0%	18.0%	6.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100
Oral-genital						

contact, male-female	75.8%	16.2%	8.1%	0.0%	1.0%	99
Anal intercourse, male-female	50.5%	20.2%	19.2%	7.1%	3.0%	99
Mutual masturbation or other sexual activity, male-male	32.7%	31.6%	25.5%	1.0%	9.2%	98
Oral-genital contact, male-male	28.6%	34.7%	23.5%	4.1%	10.2%	98
Anal intercourse, male-male	26.5%	25.5%	28.6%	7.1%	12.2%	98
Masturbation or other sexual activity, female-female	58.6%	25.3%	14.1%	1.0%	2.0%	99
Oral-genital contact, female-female	61.6%	20.2%	15.2%	0.0%	3.0%	99
Group sex	56.6%	26.3%	13.1%	4.0%	2.0%	99
Sadomasochism	16.5%	24.7%	29.9%	15.5%	16.5%	97
Adult sexual contact with children	0.0%	1.1%	1.1%	9.6%	93.6%	94
Rape	8.4%	11.6%	3.2%	17.9%	64.2%	95

	Have fantasized it	Have participated in it	Response Count
Intercourse (penis-vagina)	4.0%	99.0%	100
Oral-genital contact, male-female	5.1%	99.0%	99
Anal intercourse, male-female	10.8%	91.4%	93
Mutual masturbation or other sexual activity, male-male	55.8%	46.2%	52
Oral-genital contact, male-male	73.5%	26.5%	49
Anal intercourse,	86.7%	13.3%	45

male-male			
Mutual masturbation or other sexual activity, female-female	9.2%	93.1%	87
Oral-genital contact, female-female	9.9%	91.2%	91
Group sex	20.2%	82.0%	89
Sadomasochism	31.7%	71.7%	60
Adult sexual contact with children	66.7%	33.3%	12
Rape	79.4%	20.6%	34

Table 5					
If you have participated in it, did you enjoy it?					
	1 Very much	2 Somewhat	3 Not too much	4 Not at all	Response Count
Intercourse (penis-vagina)	94.9%	5.1%	0.0%	0.0%	98
Oral-genital contact, male-female	90.6%	7.3%	2.1%	0.0%	96
Anal intercourse, male-female	48.8%	20.9%	16.3%	14.0%	86
Mutual masturbation or other sexual activity, male-male	42.4%	18.2%	3.0%	36.4%	33
Oral-genital contact, male-male	34.6%	15.4%	7.7%	42.3%	26
Anal intercourse, male-male	34.8%	8.7%	4.3%	52.2%	23
Mutual masturbation or other sexual activity, female-female	63.1%	22.6%	10.7%	3.6%	84
Oral-genital contact, female-female	63.6%	21.6%	11.4%	3.4%	88
Group sex	58.8%	18.8%	15.0%	7.5%	80
Sadomasochism	33.9%	26.8%	17.9%	21.4%	56
Adult sexual					

contact with children	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	21
Rape	7.7%	3.8%	3.8%	84.6%	26

Table 6			
The following is a list of basic sexual rights. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree that each right should be extended to ALL people:			
	1 Agree	2 Disagree	Response Count
The freedom of any sexual thought, fantasy or desire	89.0% (89)	11.0% (11)	100
The right to sexual entertainment, freely available in the marketplace, including sexually explicit materials dealing with the full range of sexual behavior	84.0% (84)	16.0% (16)	100
The right not to be exposed to sexual material or behavior	95.0% (95)	5.0% (5)	100
The right to sexual self-determination	99.0% (99)	1.0% (1)	100
The right to seek out and engage in consensual sexual activity	100.0% (100)	0.0% (0)	100
The right to engage in sexual acts or activities of any kind whatsoever, providing they do not involve	98.0% (98)	2.0% (2)	100

<p>non-consensual acts, violence, constraint, coercion or fraud</p>			
<p>The right to be free of persecution or societal intervention in private sexual behavior</p>	<p>97.0% (97)</p>	<p>3.0% (3)</p>	<p>100</p>
<p>The recognition by society that every person, partnered or unpartnered, has the right to the pursuit of a satisfying consensual, socio-sexual life, free from political, legal or religious interference, and that there need to be mechanisms in society where the opportunities of socio-sexual activities are available to disabled persons; chronically ill persons; those incarcerated in prisons; hospitals or institutions; those disadvantaged because of age, lack of physical attractiveness or social skills; the poor, and the lonely</p>	<p>91.0% (91)</p>	<p>9.0% (9)</p>	<p>100</p>
<p>The basic right</p>			

of all persons who are sexually dysfunctional to have available non-judgmental sexual health care	95.0% (95)	5.0% (5)	100
The right to control conception	96.0% (96)	4.0% (4)	100