

Male Sex Work: Antiquity to Online

Male sex work as an occupation is as old as its female counterpart. There is little evidence from the historical record that male sex work was not present in any society where female sex work operated. Then and now, the primary buyers and sellers of male sexual services have been men. As such, male sex work has always carried the added stigma of homosexuality, causing male sex to be socially distinct from the more widely practiced female sex work. In ancient Greek culture male prostitution went by the name *porneia*. The term distinguished male sex work both from the accepted *paederastia*, relationships that existed between old and young men, *porne* (female prostitution), and *hetaera*, female mistresses.¹ This distinction was more than linguistic. There were social restrictions on what a male sex worker could do and be even if he were no longer active in the profession, which did not apply to those in *paederastia*.² Greek law forbade those who had been involved in *porneia* from addressing the Athenian assembly. Even in a culture with relatively lax attitudes towards homosexual sex, men providing sexual services to other men commercially were not granted the full privileges of citizenship.³ Whether or not *porneia* was a crime was beside the point, the very involvement in the market as a man who sold sexual services to another man was enough to render one socially cut off from political power.

Scholars have claimed that male sex work in ancient Greece operated to exacerbate existing class inequalities. Young men of the upper classes could avail themselves to a sexual and social mentor via *paederastia*, while young men from less advantaged backgrounds participated in *porneia* and faced the lifelong consequences of those choices. The actual practices between the two differed primarily through the social expectations of the relationship. While young men in *paederastia* could expect to be mentored by their older patrons and exposed to the arts, politics, and social norms of the

upper classes, young men in *porneia* could not. The explicit commercial exchange inherent in *porneia* relegated it to an undesirable social exchange.

In the Roman Empire, men could legally engage in sexual acts with other men in exchange for money as long as their participation was voluntary and their services were not offered as servants.⁴ Male sex work could be secured by anyone – unlike other services in the Roman Empire, one need not be a citizen to be a buyer. Given the social class hierarchy, Roman citizens were discouraged from offering a sexual service to slaves, foreigners, or others of lower social standing. These social restrictions on male sex work made the practice particularly unappealing for Roman citizens. This meant that male sex workers largely came from the slave or foreigner classes. By the fourth century BCE political acts which restricted the number of slaves and foreigners reduced the supply of sex workers and led to increasing prices for male sex work. Polybius noted that male sex workers were regularly secured for a talent (more than several months of wages for the average worker) and Cato complained that sex workers were priced higher than farmland.⁵ With little in ways of counts of male sex workers, however, it is difficult to know how much of the price increases were driven by increased demand from Roman gentry as opposed to the supply restrictions.

The large-scale acknowledgment of the practice in the Roman Empire also comes from public policy. Beginning with Caligula (37 CE) and lasting approximately until 500 CE, the Roman Empire taxed the earnings of all sex workers and formal registration of the occupation was common. Historians now believe that while these policies legitimized male sex work, they also brought the profession to light and therefore discouraged many men from entry. The private practice could be tolerated, but public disclosure of the occupation was not. Archeological work has found evidence of male brothels, however, suggesting that public meeting places for male sex workers and their clients occurred with some regularity. The brothels have been identified through markings and depiction of homosexual sex in the building. The presence of male brothels in the Roman Empire has been used as evidence of the relatively open attitudes towards male homosexuality.⁶ In ancient Greece, young men would grow their hair out and wait at male establishments such as barbershops for clients.⁷

As with Greek language, different terms were applied to male sex workers in the Roman Empire. Male sex workers were referred to as *exoleti*, while younger sex workers were known as *pueri delicate* and *catamati*. Unlike its earlier Grecian form, male mentorship by elders did not include sexual interaction. The lack of sex in mentoring relationships may be

related to the professionalization of sex work. Another factor would be the growing Christianization of the Roman Empire, which led to decreasing social acceptance of male sex work and homosexuality in general.⁸ By the end of the sixth century a growing distinction related to homosexuality caused even starker social distinctions between male and female sex work. As early as 390, penalties were harsher for selling a male into prostitution, and by 533 all homosexual acts, commercial, consensual, and coerced, were punishable by death.⁹

The history of male sex work is not confined to the West, although there are fewer historical sources specifically referencing the practice. In Japan, for example, kabuki was a place for commercial sex between men. While monks and Samurai warriors engaged in pederasty in a manner similar to the practice in Greece, kabuki commercial sex was largely practiced between social classes. This practice continued until the seventeenth century, when sexual conduct between men of different social classes was outlawed by the Tokugawa government.¹⁰

The existing literature on the history of male sex work does lead to some general assumptions on the way the practice existed in historical settings. The ancient practice of male sex work was socially and legally distinct from older/younger sexual relations and from female sex work. A key distinction in historical male sex work was the class difference or similarity between buyers and sellers. Class differences were grounds to label the practice as sex work, and this meant that the historical practice of sex work was, in general, something that took place between classes. Male sex work was a service procured by those of high social status and supplied by those of low social status. Within the same social class, however, the practice was generally taboo and discouraged. From the historical scholarship, we find that the commercial aspects of the market were embedded in social ideas about who could (and should) supply and demand sexual services between men.

Male sex work has always had to contend with changing attitudes toward homosexuality. In periods and places where homosexuality was socially accepted, male prostitution was more likely to be professionalized along with its female counterpart.¹¹ When and where homosexuality became taboo, male sex work and all homosexual practices were commonly grouped together and sanctioned. Even in ancient times, the social acceptability of homosexuality had direct effects on the social acceptability of male sex work. This is not to say that male sex work disappeared, but the social recognition of male sex work appears to be related to the social recognition of homosexuality. This is in stark contrast to female sex work,

which was commonplace, and was always separated socially and legally from heterosexual social relations such as marriage.

In medieval Europe, social sanctions on male homosexuality continued the practice of the late Roman era, which grouped male sex work and homosexuality together. In many instances, both were punishable by death. Indeed, in order to be allowed entry the priesthood, a man could not be discovered to have been involved sexually with another man.¹² Despite these legal and social sanctions, male sex work continued to be practiced. Historical records now point to a renewed linguistic distinction between homosexuality in general and male prostitution in particular in the Renaissance, where the term *bardassa* came into use to describe men engaged in sex work.¹³

By the end of the seventeenth century male prostitution was institutionalized in almost every major European city. This institutionalization included public knowledge (for those desiring such information) of the places where male sex work could be purchased and a language that facilitated the commercial activity. In Victorian London, for example, the Piccadilly Circus was well known as a place where one could purchase male sex work services. Men would adopt styles that would advertise their occupation, such as playing with one's lapel or wearing distinctively colored clothing. There is also some evidence that the urban male sex work of this time had changed from passive young men seeking to sell their services to dominant older men, to one where passive older men sought the sexual services of dominant young men.¹⁴ Without comprehensive information, however, it is difficult to draw general conclusions. While still a criminal act, the prosecution of such crimes was relatively lax. When punishment was meted out, it was rarely as draconian as in earlier periods, owing to the relatively liberal attitudes toward homosexuality in European urban centers.

American male sex work predates the founding of the United States. Although the colonies prosecuted men for sodomy, and in more than ten cases executed men for the crime, some of these cases are known to have involved elements of solicitation. In May of 1677, Nicholas Sension was tried for the crime of sodomy. A deeper reading of the historical record reveals that the crime was not simply one of homosexuality, but of solicitation. In the court documents it was revealed that Sension had a long history of propositioning young men in the surrounding community for sex. Sension had been privately reprimanded for his activity at least twice over more than 20 years of known attempts to have sex with other men in return for compensation. In his sodomy trial it was revealed that he had, in at least two instances, offered payment in exchange for sexual services. Samuel Barboe testified that Sension offered him a bushel of corn if he

would disrobe for him, and Peter Buoll testified that Sension offered him gunpowder in exchange for “one bloo at my breech.” Sension was convicted of sodomy, but his sentence did not meet with any jail time.¹⁵

Historians note that this trial, and its instances of sex for payment, reflects the class distinctions in male sex work that were present in ancient times. Sension was a prosperous landowner in Connecticut and most of the men who accused him were of lower social class. Sension was first privately sanctioned to stop propositioning young men, and was only publicly tried when he attempted to sue his indentured servant for slander because that servant, Daniel Saxton, wished to be released from service due to Sension’s numerous sexual advances. Only after Sension took legal action against his servant was he investigated and brought to colonial justice. As Saxton defended himself against slander, he showed that Sension had a history of sexual advances toward young men that involved payment. Given the private investigations and warnings that had been issued in the past, it is likely that Sension’s acts would have gone uninterrupted had he not sought to silence Saxton.

In the nineteenth century, male sex work on both sides of the Atlantic was institutionalized in large industrial cities. Part of this was due to ever-increasing urban population and the greater personal freedom allowed in urban areas, but there were also legal developments in Europe. In the early nineteenth century, the Napoleonic Code ended legal sanctions against sodomy. Given the fact that the First French Empire ruled a significant portion of the continent, the decriminalization allowed the male sex trade to flourish from Paris to Berlin. Male sex also flourished in American cities. For example, in 1899 the New York City Vigilance League found that the Bowery district contained more than five places where male prostitution was well known. Reports at the time suggested that there were more than 100 male sex workers in New York City. Given the size of the city and the generally hostile attitudes toward expressions of same-sex desire, this number of male sex workers speaks to the prominence of male sex work in urban areas at the time.¹⁶

This modern form of male sex work operated under different norms than earlier variants. While it was still the case that clients were older than providers, on average, the sexual roles assumed by each took on a different routinized pattern. The class distinctions of the earlier era married to a new form of industrial masculinity, which conferred upon young working-class men an authentic masculinity that they traded for money. The higher-class clients were more likely to assume a passive sexual role and the male sex workers were prized for their masculine appearance and sexual conduct.

Men in the military were particularly popular as sex workers if they acted as “trade,” presumably heterosexual men who were temporarily engaging in homosexual sex for compensation. Weeks (1989b) notes that military members were also thought to be more trustworthy and ethical in their dealings with clients.

Modern sex work was more intimately tied to increasing recognition of sexuality and masculinity. While cities openly noted that the fairy – effeminate man – was a commonly encountered urban inhabitant, male sex work in urban centers was not focused on effeminate men. There were cross-dressers and transgender sex workers, who sold either the illusion of femininity or transgender sex work to male clients, but male sex workers were primarily prized for their masculinity.¹⁷ The sexual identity of male sex workers was less important than their ability to provide an authentic masculinity to clients who desired the new industrial masculinity that was developed during this time. With the primacy on masculinity, the earlier notion of the young sex worker gave way to an older sex worker who could more reasonably convey adult masculinity. Sex work moved from being about youth to being about adult men engaged in a commercial exchange for sex.

The dawn of the twentieth century presented a modern form of sex work that bore striking similarities and differences with regard to ancient and medieval practices.¹⁸ First, sex work then and now constituted an average age difference between client and sex worker. Older men, who were more likely to be able to afford such services, made up the largest proportion of the client base. Young men, some of whom were in fragile economic circumstances, were likely to be service providers. Second, there were significant class differences between sex workers and their clients. As Friedman (2014) notes, this was different from the earlier class distinctions in male sex work, in that the new class distinction was predicated on the authentic masculinity afforded to working men in the modern era. Third, the change in the relationship to one that was transaction-specific was due to the fact that the circumstances surrounding sex work had changed. No longer was sex work part of the mentored relationship between men that also included some monetary and perhaps non-pecuniary compensation. Sex work by the end of the nineteenth century was an occupation.

By the beginning of the Gay Rights movement in the twentieth century, male sex workers had carved out a key niche in urban gay spaces. They had become an archetype in gay culture and they played a key role in public representations of gay people. Importantly, sex work became embedded into gay communities in a different way than it was for heterosexuals. Part

of this is because the history of male sex work sought clear distinctions between commercial and noncommercial relationships between men. Without the sanctions of marriage and other traditional recognitions for family forms, the sexual relationships between men have been placed in a different sphere, putting them into closer social contact with male sex work and male sex workers.¹⁹ For example, in the early and mid-twentieth century United States, many gay establishments would be frequented by male sex workers and men who desired noncommercial sexual encounters. This is not necessarily because the two groups desired to be in close contact, but because the limited number of social spaces safe for male homosexuals left little room to demarcate spaces for subcultures.

This close social relationship has allowed male sex workers a prominent position in social representations of male homosexuality. When anti-gay political commentators made note of the alleged perversity of gay men, they most commonly cited the cases of young men who entered into prostitution relationships with older men as a rhetorical technique to label gay men as pedophiles and gay relationships as inherent power imbalances between old and young men. Young men became natural embodiments of “innocents” who were “victimized” by older men who could entice them into sexual exchanges that provided money that the young men needed to survive. Ironically, these charges were coming at a time when young men as a fraction of the male sex worker population were on the decline given the changing nature of male sex work. Still, the age distinction between clients and sex workers and the ingratiation of male sex work into urban gay spaces proved to be problematic as gay men sought social acceptance for homosexuality, while at the same time maintaining close contact with an arrangement considered as vice even in its heterosexual form.

At the other end of the spectrum, gay men themselves had begun to develop an archetype of the gay male hustler, a presumably heterosexual man (but clearly an adult) who provided sexual services to other men. The development of a unique gay masculinity in urban spaces borrowed from the archetype of masculinity offered by male sex workers. Although the growing acceptance of homosexuality in urban communities led some gay-identified men to provide commercial sex services, the archetype of the male hustler (and the industrial masculinity he offered) did not fit into the anti-gay narrative, but rather molded into contemporary constructions of urban gay masculinity.²⁰ The male hustler was a man’s man – a masculine man with few (if any) observable traits that would label him a homosexual. In the scholarship on male prostitution in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, this modern male hustler archetype featured prominently.²¹ This type of male

sex worker was a “hoodlum” or “thug” who sought to use prostitution for wage income, rejecting the formal labor market. The fact that these men were presumably heterosexual added to their allure in a gay subculture that socially celebrated nontraditional representations of masculinity, but still held traditional male masculinity as a sexual ideal. In fact, the development of modern male physique and bodybuilding industries has direct links to male sex work. Men in the earliest era of bodybuilding would seek male sponsors, an arrangement that would allow them to concentrate on weight training. The early history of physique modeling is replete with men who used their masculine and muscular appearance in exchange for remuneration that freed them from the formal labor market.

The fusion of modern conceptions of masculinity, which imbued working-class and lower-class presentations of aggressive men as inherently masculine, did have effects on the ways that male sex work operated in modern urban environments. Some male sex workers who adopted gay identities found that clients demanded “trade” – men who did not identify as gay but who participated in homosexual sex. Gay identified male sex workers would be inclined to describe and present themselves as “trade” for their clients. In a market where desire and demand are closely intertwined, male sex work began to take on more performance elements than before. This also meant, however, that the range of sexual practices expanded and could not be presumed on the basis of one’s position as client or sex worker.

In the most popular depictions of male sex work in mass media, male (homosexual) sex work has been depicted as a last resort for heterosexual men. Although the films *Sunset Boulevard* (1950), *Sweet Bird of Youth* (1962), *Midnight Cowboy* (1969), *American Gigolo* (1980), and *Deuce Bigalow: Male Gigolo* (1999) as well as the television series *Hung* (2009) and *Gigolos* (2011–) are the most popular media images of male sex workers, they actually present the least-typical part of the market. Women are very rarely the clients of male sex workers. In fact, the (heterosexual) male escort agent featured on the reality television series *Gigolos* noted that the escorts he employs cannot support themselves through work with female clients. Indeed, the program, despite being billed as authentic, has had to remunerate female participants, and some have never been clients of the featured escort service. The popular image of a male sex worker as a gigolo stands in contrast to the limited evidence that women have ever made up anything more than a negligible fraction of the client base for male sex workers.

Gay films and art films of the same era depict male sex in a manner closer to the most common experience, which is to say they depict male sex work as homosexual activity. *My Hustler* (1965) contains two half-hour vignettes

of male sex workers. Both of the scenes are explicit in noting that male sex work is the buying and selling of sexual services by and for men. The documentary style of the film and its explicit homoerotic content were some of the first homosexual representations of male sex work. In *The Boys in the Band* (1972), a male sex worker is hired as a birthday gift, and the price of his services is discussed in the production. As public and academic discussion of homosexuality and prostitution moved to the mainstream, so did the concept of the homosexual male sex worker. The later representations of male sex work in film also reflected a new gay sensibility about gay life in the United States. For example, both *My Own Private Idaho* (1991) and *The Living End* (1992) feature the reality of HIV/AIDS as part of the lives of male sex workers. Later works focused on the professional lives of male sex workers and their personal selves. *Boy Culture* (2006) featured an openly gay male escort who was seeking to form a long-term, monogamous relationship despite his involvement in the commercial sex industry.

These gay films better reflect the reality of modern male sex workers. While the most popular representations suggest that gigolos are common, they have never been a substantial fraction of the male sex worker market. In historical times and at present, male sex work, in the vast majority of cases, is a homosexual activity. Sex workers and clients are male and are selling and purchasing homosexual sex. Earlier scholarship has always noted this, but has tended to concentrate on sex work as a form of deviance (not necessarily for its homosexual orientation but due to its taboo nature and illegal status), or as a means to study psychological factors related to entry into sex work. With the advent of HIV/AIDS in the 1980s, research concentrated on male sex work as a vector of transmission of sexually transmitted infections, where sex workers could spread disease.

While all of these scholarly goals are admirable, the reality of sex work as a market has been obscured. Neither in the past nor now is male sex work primarily about these factors. It is about the supply and demand for sexual services from a man by another man. That fact is reflected in the ways in which male sex work takes place – that is, how male sex workers secure clients and how clients choose between sex workers. Given that the gay male population is relatively small, sex work is better aided by technology than female sex work, as cities would have relatively small “street tracks” where male sex workers would congregate. Male sex workers needed to reach their client base (homosexually identified men), and as of the mid-twentieth century were using gay media to reach clients. Magazines and newspapers of the time regularly featured the advertisements of male sex workers in the back pages. There are examples of escort advertisements in

the pages of the *Bay Area Reporter*, the San Francisco Bay Area's local gay newspaper. The use of gay media was common in early sex work advertisements. It created the largest local market possible for male sex work services while also keeping the activity relatively discreet – clients would phone sex workers and arrange appointments. The earliest forms of communication provided coarse information for clients. Escorts typically listed a form of contact and a brief physical description, and, in many cases, the sexual services they offered to clients.²² There was one national magazine devoted to male sex worker advertisements, and it ceased publication only when male sex workers had cheaper options to secure clients.

The Internet changed the dynamics of male sex work entirely, in a manner similar to the transformation of gay society in general. While not fully supplanting the advertisements in local gay newspapers, the Internet allowed for easier entry and exit from the market, and the “feedback” features of the Internet allowed sex workers to establish reputations. The Internet has become the primary medium through which male sex workers secure clients. As the Internet has flourished, escorts have been able to distinguish themselves by creating online personas that were not possible in earlier modes of communication.²³

The medium provided by the Internet allows the analysis of male sex work, for the first time, to fully embrace its economic underpinnings. Male sex work is not charity – it is a service provided by a seller to a buyer. For most of its history, however, we had little information about what was actually being provided and at what price the services were being sold. This is in contrast to female prostitution, where prices from a variety of sources have been known for some time.²⁴ For historical periods, we have few sources for pricing of male sex work. Even in contemporary settings, the best estimates of the market price come from individual responses in work devoted to the experiences of a small number of sex workers.

For economic analysis this poses several problems. First, price variation in a market like male sex work could come from a variety of sources. Smaller samples of sex workers are usually confined to small geographic areas. Differences between sex workers, local market prices, and the substitutability of sex workers in markets can all play a role in the prices observed. Economic analysis of a market requires extensive information about the market. For nearly all economic analysis, this implies quantitative data. Measures of prices, quantities, product quality, firm size, and consumer characteristics are standard. Throughout this work, quantitative data will be emphasized, and the sources of that data are described below.

Second, sex workers themselves may be more or less willing to divulge their prices to surveyors. That is, the price information we have from surveys may be driven by selection, where only certain sex workers provide their prices. If this is related to other attributes (say, only sex workers who are successful and popular are willing to divulge their prices), we will be unable to describe the market in any detail. In other words, we would like the same price information that a consumer of male sex services would see. This would ensure that the analysis of the market is working from the same base of information that clients use.

This book exploits two primary sources of data to empirically analyze male sex work and its social and economic underpinnings. The first source of data is advertisement data for male sex workers. This is drawn from the largest and most comprehensive data on male sex workers in the United States. The advertisement data has been the key source for analysis of the market to-date. Since escorts post their prices publicly, the advertisement data gives a direct measure of prices, which differs from the usual approach of surveying or inferring prices.²⁵ Inferring prices runs the risk of spurious correlation – prices may or may not be related to the factors that are assumed to be sources of price variation. The data used here comes from the universe of male sex workers advertising on the chosen website in the United States at the time of data collection. As such, these data represent the entire population.

Relative to other data sources, online advertisement data has several advantages. First, this data allows one to collect information on escorts' attributes, prices, and information without regard to some of the selection problems that one would encounter in a survey of escorts. For example, escorts who charge very high (or very low) prices may not respond with accurate prices in a survey. Another concern would be that escorts in general would not report their typical price but, instead, the highest price they had ever charged. This would result in an average price that would be far above the prices actually charged. Second, escorts have one account on the website and may list themselves in multiple cities that they serve. Third, the escort characteristics are 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, whereas free-form responses may be difficult to evaluate consistently or may be missing altogether. There are other sources that allow for free-form escort responses; these sources are not as comprehensive as the one used here. Fourth, the website is free for viewing by all: there is no charge or account required to view any advertisements, photos, or reviews of escorts.

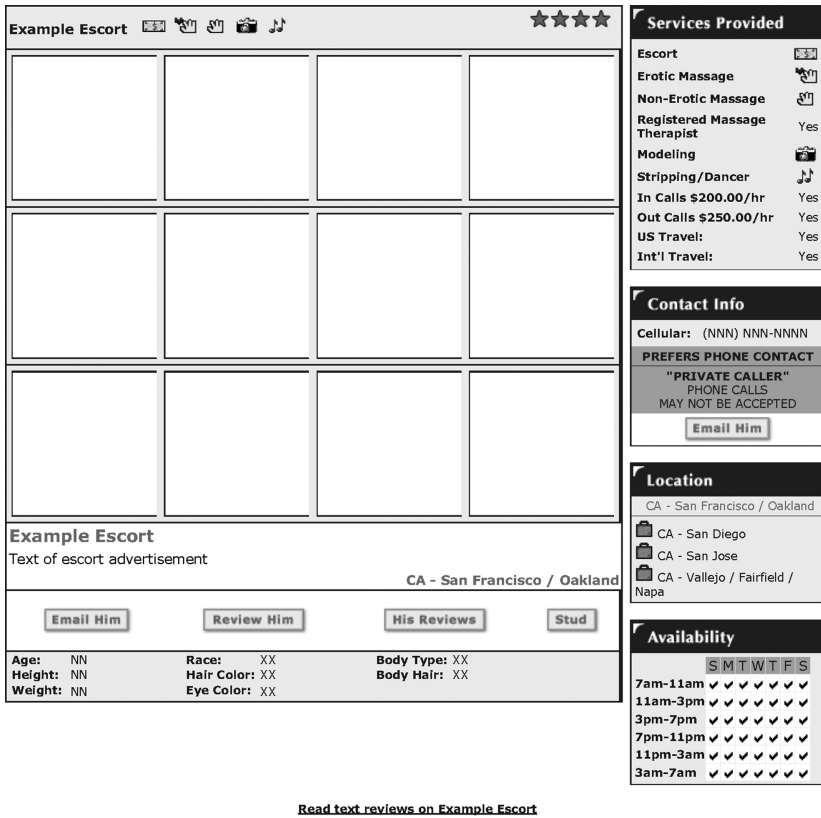


Figure 1.1 Diagram of online escort advertisement

In particular, the advertisement data is a set of nearly 2,000 men from the largest and most comprehensive website for male sex workers in the United States. Beyond its geographic coverage, there is a rich amount of information that can be exploited to uncover more about male sex workers than before. Figure 1.1 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, and their prices and availability for in-calls and out-calls. In-calls occur when a client travels to the escort; out-calls when an escort travels to the client. Escorts also provide clients with the range of services they offer in addition to escort work such as modeling, erotic massage, and stripping. Escorts have a simple table they can use to let clients know their weekly availability.

There is also the actual text of the advertisement itself, which allows escorts to write about their services and quality. The largest piece of the advertisement is made up of the escort's 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.²⁶

One unique feature of the advertisement data source is that it provides two types of reputation measures that come from clients. These are proxies for escort quality, which is an important component in any service such as male sex work. These are survey reviews (similar to feedback on eBay.com) and detailed reviews of escorts. The survey reviews ask the reviewer five questions about the escort (four of which are "Yes/No") and a rating on a four-star scale.²⁷ The detailed reviews, "text reviews," are the detailed, free-form client reviews described earlier. In addition to providing a review of escort services, clients also give the date of their encounter with the escort, the type of appointment made (in-call, out-call, or an extended appointment such as an evening or weekend), and the price paid, which I term the "spot price," as it reflects the price paid in a specific transaction.²⁸ As noted earlier, a key advantage of these reputation measures is that escorts have no control over their reviews – all reviews of both types are retained if the escort allows reviews, not a selected sample that is posted or chosen by the escort. However, a key disadvantage to note is that anyone can post a review, including an escort, though this sort of thing is likely to make up only a small percentage of the reviews.

Table 1.1 shows the summary statistics for the escorts in the advertisement data. First, the data contains nearly 2,000 male sex workers who advertise online. This is a large number of sex workers, and at a minimum, it establishes that the number of participants in the market is substantial. Second, male sex work is well compensated. On average, escorts charge more than \$200 an hour. This is consistent with other estimates of escort services, which are close to the \$200-an-hour range.²⁹ Escorts are reasonably fit – on average a male sex worker is 5 feet 10 inches tall and weigh around 165 pounds. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, the average man aged 20–74 in the United States is 5 feet 9.5 inches tall and weighs 190 pounds, which implies that escorts are slightly taller and thinner than the average adult male in the United States.

The average male sex worker is 28 years old. While 28 is certainly young, it is a far departure from the young men described in historical accounts of male sex work. The median age of male sex workers in the data is 26.³⁰ Escorts are also racially diverse: while more than half of all escorts are White, more than a fifth are Black and more than a tenth are Hispanic.

Table 1.1 Summary statistics for the escort advertisement data sample

Variable	Observations	Mean	Std. dev.	Physical trait	Observations	Mean	Std. dev.	Behavior	Observations	Mean	Std. dev.
				<u>Hair color</u>							
Price	1,476	216.88	64.46	Black	1,932	0.37	0.48	Top	1,932	0.16	0.37
Log of price	1,476	5.34	0.29	Blonde	1,932	0.13	0.34	Bottom	1,932	0.06	0.24
Weight	1,932	167.11	24.54	Brown	1,932	0.46	0.50	Versatile	1,932	0.21	0.40
Height	1,932	70.43	2.69	Gray	1,932	0.02	0.13	Safer	1,932	0.19	0.39
BMI	1,932	23.64	2.89	Auburn/red	1,932	0.01	0.11				
Age	1,932	28.20	6.93	Other	1,932	0.01	0.10				
Asian	1,932	0.01	0.12	<u>Eye color</u>							
Black	1,932	0.22	0.41	Black	1,932	0.02	0.14				
Hispanic	1,932	0.14	0.35	Blue	1,932	0.18	0.39				
Multiracial	1,932	0.08	0.28	Brown	1,932	0.55	0.50				
Other	1,932	0.01	0.10	Green	1,932	0.11	0.31				
White	1,932	0.54	0.50	Hazel	1,932	0.14	0.35				
				<u>Body hair</u>							
				Hairy	1,932	0.04	0.20				
				Moderately hairy	1,932	0.30	0.46				
				Shaved	1,932	0.17	0.38				
				Smooth	1,932	0.49	0.50				
				<u>Body build</u>							
				Athletic/ swimmer's build	1,932	0.48	0.50				
				Average	1,932	0.13	0.34				
				A few extra pounds	1,932	0.01	0.08				
				Muscular	1,932	0.30	0.46				
				Thin/lean	1,932	0.08	0.27				

(continued)

Price is the out-call price posted by an escort in his advertisement.
See the data appendix for variable definitions.

Escorts in the data are racially diverse – 54 percent are White, 22 percent are Black, 14 percent are Hispanic, 8 percent are multiracial, and 1 percent are Asian.

For physical traits, escorts are likely to have black (36 percent) or brown (46 percent) hair (fewer than 15 percent are blond). More than half of all escorts have brown eyes (55 percent), although significant fractions have blue (18 percent) and hazel (14 percent) eyes. Nearly half of all escorts are smooth (49 percent), and 17 percent shave their body hair, but more than a third are hairy or moderately hairy (34 percent). Very few escorts are overweight (1 percent), and relatively few are thin (8 percent); the majority of escorts claim to have athletic (48 percent) or muscular (30 percent) builds. For sexual behaviors, 16 percent of escorts offer penetration to clients (this is known as being a “top”), while 6 percent offer to be penetrated (and are known as “bottoms”), and 21 percent of escorts list themselves as “versatile.”³¹ In addition, 19 percent of escorts advertise that they exclusively practice safer sex. Overall, the summary statistics for the men in the data are similar to the descriptive statistics noted by Cameron et al. (1999) for male escorts in British newspapers in the 1990s and Pruitt’s (2005) more recent sample of male escorts who advertise on the Internet.

Overall, this diversity points to there really being no “typical” male sex worker. They come in a variety of ages, races, physical appearances, and sexual behaviors. At one level, this is what we would expect from sex work. Clients could have demand for a variety of men, and this demand should lead a variety of men to supply sex work. At another level, this diversity reflects the fact that earlier descriptions of male sex work that make appeals to a monolithic experience are somewhat outdated to the extent that this diversity in male sex worker supply requires a more careful description of the men involved in sex work. Lastly, the compensation offered to male sex workers shows it to be a lucrative profession. At \$200 per hour, a male sex worker who sees one client per day Monday to Friday would earn more than \$50,000 per year. This is more than the median household income in the United States, and matches the median earnings of male college graduates in the United States.

The second data source comes from transaction-specific data from client reviews of escort services. The data come from the online reviews hosted by *Daddy’s Reviews* (www.daddysreviews.com), the oldest and most popular client-based forum for reviews and discussions of male sex workers. This website has been in existence since 1998 and provides a rich structure for clients to review male sex worker services. The website contains both a forum (message board) for clients to discuss male sex workers and

a review feature where clients provide detailed reviews of their specific encounters with male sex workers. The individual reviews of male sex workers are the data used here. A key for this data is that all reviews of male sex workers are held in a holding tank and individually verified by the website administrator before they are posted. Male sex workers cannot remove reviews, and reviews are flagged if they are suspicious (for example, entered by a competing male sex worker or by the sex worker himself). As described by Logan (2016), Logan and Shah (2013) and discussed earlier, this website acts to police male sex workers, allowing clients to inform each other about the quality of male sex workers – and this function minimizes the opportunity for male sex workers to exploit clients. Logan and Shah (2013) also note that it is extremely difficult for a male sex worker to create new identities for himself, as clients track them over time using this source. When a male sex worker changes his location, over time all of his previous reviews are retained and linked to him, and the same is true if the male sex worker changes his professional name. Male sex workers who have retired are not removed from the website, but are listed as “retired.” Male sex workers do have the ability to post comments on reviews. Male sex worker reviews can be searched by individual male sex worker name or geographically.

For each male sex worker’s review page, the male sex worker’s contact information is listed as well as all reviews, which are listed in reverse chronological order (newest to oldest). Figure 1.2 shows an example of a client review on the website. (Because client free-form reviews are sexually explicit, that field is obscured in Figure 1.2.) Reviews were collected using a script that pulled the information from the website into a database organized by the fields in the advertisement. As the figure shows, reviews detail the date and location of the transaction, the length of the appointment, the price paid, the client’s perception of features of the escort (height, weight, age, etc.), and the sexual behaviors that took place in the given transaction.

The reviews also allow for clients to enter free-form text that describes their encounter in more detail. This field is read manually and coded for sexual behaviors not categorized in the reviews. In addition, clients rate the experience. At the end of the review, clients identify themselves with a unique “handle” username. The total sample contains 6,269 transactions for 1,418 male sex workers in the United States over a 6-year period. Table 1.2 shows the summary statistics for the data. The majority of transactions (60 percent) are hourly appointments, and another 25 percent are less than 3 hours. Slightly more than a tenth of the appointments are of long duration (more than 4 hours).

Review #NN, MM/DD/YYYY			
Name:			
Location:			
Email:			
Phone:			
Website:			
Ethnicity:	Age:		
Height:	Weight:	Build:	
Eyes:	Hair:		
Cock:			
Smoking:	Drinking:	Tattoos:	
Orientation:	Calls:		
Roles:			
Masturbation:	Anal:	Oral:	Kink:
Rates for time only (US\$):			
Date: MM/YYYY	Type:	Where:	Rate:
Rating:	Hire Again?		
Where Found?	Which:		
Reviewed Before?	Match Description?	Lived up?	
Experience:			
Handle:			
Submissions:			
You:			

Figure 1.2 Example of escort review

For the transactions, I find that the average price of an hourly session is \$227, consistent with other estimates of male sex worker services from escort advertisements and the advertisement data. As a check against the advertisement data, the basic features are quite comparable. In terms of escort characteristics, the largest proportion of male sex workers in the transaction data are White (49 percent), while a significant share are another race

Table 1.2 *Summary statistics for the client reviewed transactions data sample*

Variable	Observations	Mean	Std. dev.
<i>Transaction measures</i>			
Hourly rate*	5,452	227.07	299.23
1-hour appt.	6,269	0.59	0.48
90-min. appt.	6,269	0.06	0.23
2-hour appt.	6,269	0.15	0.36
3-hour appt.	6,269	0.04	0.19
4-hour appt.	6,269	0.02	0.15
> 4-hour appt.	6,269	0.13	0.34
Variable	Observations	Mean	Std. dev.
<i>Escort characteristics</i>			
Asian	1,418	0.01	0.09
Black	1,418	0.12	0.15
White	1,418	0.49	0.50
Other race	1,418	0.30	0.49
Latino	1,418	0.09	0.28
Endowment (in.)	1,418	8.00	1.04
Circumcised	1,418	0.76	0.43
Age 20s	1,418	0.38	0.49
Age 30s	1,418	0.26	0.44
Age 40s	1,418	0.05	0.22
Age 50s	1,418	0.31	0.46
BMI	1,418	24.79	2.71
(BMI) ²	1,418	621.87	140.82
Height (cm)	1,418	179.81	6.58
Weight (kg)	1,418	80.35	10.74
Variable	Observations	Mean	Std. dev.
<i>Sexual behaviors</i>			
Versatile	6,269	0.40	0.46
Top	6,269	0.37	0.44
Bottom	6,269	0.17	0.25
No anal sex	6,269	0.03	0.17
Kissing	6,269	0.62	0.49
Masturbation, mutual	6,269	0.49	0.50
Masturbation, receives	6,269	0.03	0.18
Masturbation, provides	6,269	0.02	0.15
No masturbation	6,269	0.43	0.07
No condom	6,269	0.20	0.29

Note: Sexual behaviors are defined from the perspective of the escort.

*Hourly rate is defined for appointments lasting less than 4 hours.

"No condom" requires that the client noted penetration in the transaction.

(30 percent). For age, nearly 40 percent of escorts are noted by clients to be in their twenties, and more than a quarter in their thirties (26 percent).

The transaction data establishes that male sex work does involve sex. In terms of sexual behaviors, 37 percent of transactions involved male sex workers penetrating clients, 17 percent involved clients penetrating sex workers, and 40 percent involved both client and male sex worker penetration. Only a small fraction of transactions, fewer than 5 percent, involved no penetration.

Other sexual details show that male sex work involves more than just sexual services, but extends to other intimate behavior. More than half (62 percent) of transactions involved kissing and more than half (54 percent) involved masturbation. In addition, 80 percent of transactions involved sex with condoms, which suggests that male sex work is nearly as likely to involve condoms as noncommercial gay sex.³² Overall, the summary statistics for the male subjects (age, race, height, weight, etc.) are similar to the descriptive statistics noted by Cameron et al. (1999), Pruitt (2005), Logan (2010), and Logan (2016) in analysis of male sex worker advertisements. The behaviors described in the transactions are also consistent with the patterns seen in small-sample surveys of clients, such as those in Grov et al. (2013).

These two data sources give us information on both the supply and demand for male sex work services. The advertisements give us a rich set of information akin to that used in most market studies. From all comparisons, the data appears to be consistent with data from smaller samples, but is more diverse than the smaller samples in that it is national in scope and contains a more diverse range of men – racially, physically, and sexually. In addition, the availability of price information is particularly important as these two data sources are the largest available sources of information on the prices of male sex work in the United States. Since both data sources also contain additional personal and geographic measures, there are a number of additional items in advertisements and transactions that allow us to test whether there are significant price differentials that are driven by economic or social phenomena. Obtaining prices and detailed information for such a large illegal market is rare, and the recent criminal prosecution of male sex worker websites decreases the likelihood that this sort of analysis can be consistently performed into the future. Nevertheless, the remaining chapters of this book will investigate the present (and, perhaps, future) status of male sex work in the United States.