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Hustle: Social Order in Extralegal Exchange

Ferguson, Rachael Heath

Princeton, NJ : Princeton University

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HUSTLE: SOCIAL ORDER IN EXTRALEGAL EXCHANGE

Rachael H. Ferguson

A DISSERTATION

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This thesis looks at the sensemaking practices of actors involved in the extralegal economy, focusing on their interactions with co-workers and customers, and the sense of order that emerges from successful interactions performed under authentic and appropriate identities. The data come from multiyear multisite ethnographic research in the United States and Europe, with subjects that include drug entrepreneurs, sexworkers, and members and associates of Mafia groups. I categorize these actors' extralegal economy roles as forms of labor that, while illicit, nonetheless impose context on the individuals' immediate identity and its presentation, in much the same way as if the labor were legal. In each of the cases I analyze ways in which they balance aspects of 'work identity' and 'nonwork identity', demonstrating throughout that these variations should not be viewed as distinct from or hostile to one another. I find that the individuals in this study practice a constant backstage balancing of identity that is acutely responsive to context and to the identities being performed by other parties to any immediate interaction, all of whom are simultaneously pursuing their own social and professional approval and success.

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For Ishka and Pops: Just say night night.

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INTRODUCTION

In early 2003, I was badgering my friend Mowf about where he'd taken his gun to, out of state, the previous weekend, when I'd been recruited as dog-sitter for his pitbull mix. In his teens, Mowf had been a gang member; his gang life had mostly involved smoking weed, underage drinking, the occasional robbery or beating, fights, and a lot of running from police.[1] He had since left that behind, obtained a college degree, and by the time we met Mowf had a successful non-criminal career. He nonetheless maintained very close friendships with the guys he used to run with, all of whom had themselves mostly left the streets and turned to the legal economy. There was the occasional money making side hustle, things like breaking down a couple ounces of weed into overpriced eighths of marijuana to sell to their midtown office co-workers but, for the most part, Mowf was as clean as the rest of us.

Sick of my questions about his weekend trip to 'take care of some business', Mowf gave me his hardest and most threatening 'ice-grill', before saying: "Certain things I will never tell you. Yeah, like, just, you need to chill with that though, know what to talk about and what not to talk about. I'm always gonna have guns. I'm just glad I got through it without ever killing anyone." I had never truly thought that Mowf would have killed anyone, but I was nonetheless relieved to have had this explicitly pointed out. These sorts of conversations were not commonplace in my life at the time, I had never before heard a friend casually point out that he had never killed anyone, as if he legitimately might have; these things I usually took for granted.

As irritated as my questioning was to Mowf, his response provided exceptional advice as I embarked on this work. My decision to examine the deployment of different

identities in different contexts owes a great deal to the ways in which Mowf's remark made me think and observe in my fieldwork. But it was also helpful in resolving another problem: I had, in fact, recently had cause to wonder whether or not Mowf had ever used his gun to kill anyone.

My relief stemmed from a concern that came about following the events of one Saturday afternoon a few months earlier, when we had been hanging out in Mowf's apartment, watching a movie. Unexpectedly, Mowf turned to me and asked if I would like to hold the gun he kept under his pillow, an illegally purchased, unlicensed thirty-eight caliber, loaded with hollow point bullets. It was a pivotal moment in our relationship; I knew that if I said no I wasn't cut out for this sort of fieldwork, and Mowf would no longer trust me. So I wrapped the palm and fingers of my right hand around the grip and held the gun for a few seconds, before I asked Mowf to take it away from me. After that, occasionally I wondered if that gun had ever killed anyone, and if I'd just caused myself very serious problems by leaving such exceptional prints on the grip.

Mowf's caution that I needed to "know what to talk about and what not to talk about" was advice that stayed with me throughout my fieldwork. Of equal significance to my research was the concept that this presented – the idea of variation in immediate interactions, which went against everything I thought I knew about how we perform our 'self' for ourselves and others. Being possessed of the contextual knowledge to smoothly navigate our interactions, knowing what to talk about, how, and to whom, what not to talk about, and how to behave without sticking out, were identity signals of considerable import. This was what I would ultimately hone in on in my fieldwork: interactional moments that permit, deny, or salvage identities and interactions, most specifically in the

context of extralegal exchange; the ways in which my subjects "got through it" in their daily lives by deploying specific and general forms of interactional knowledge and practice, with the ultimate consequence – sometime direct, sometimes indirect – of establishing and maintaining a sense of order.

This thesis examines interactional moments and identity presentations of a variety of entrepreneurs in illicit businesses, whose interactional behavior, as I will show, is fundamentally no different from ways in which we all experience our daily interactions with others. That said, for criminal entrepreneurs the purposive tweaking of self-presentation and their constant adaptation to changes in context or flow of the interaction is of greater significance due to the potential consequences of errors or misunderstandings in this environment. And these enterprises are therefore a good place to observe forms of interaction work that are not unique to criminal enterprise, but of which the consequence of any given interactional moment is greater given the risks inherent to criminal life.

Hustle

This is a journey through different parts of the extralegal economy – drug gang members, independent drug dealers and traffickers, high priced prostitutes, dominatrices, sports bookies, loan sharks, enforcers, and 'protectors'. My data come from almost a decade of ethnographic fieldwork with individuals and groups involved in various fields within the illicit economy. I spent time with prostitutes and Dominatrices, drug dealers, gang members, Mafiosi and their associates. This study is about general processes of order, identity, and interaction; it is not directly about crime or criminality, but the committed involvement of these actors in the extralegal economy necessarily informs

their behavior and worldview in a multitude of ways, which I do not avoid in my analysis of the background to their interactions.

My data here are the result of several years of on-again off-again ethnographic fieldwork with people involved in different segments of the illicit economy, in which I focused on the ways in which they accomplished simple transactions in a complicated social and professional environment. From mid-2003 until mid-2011 I performed fieldwork, usually at more than one site at a time. I worked as a receptionist at a BDSM dungeon in midtown Manhattan, through which I developed relationships with independent professional dominatrices and with dominatrices employed at two other dungeons, as well as with prostitutes working at two brothels and two escort services. I hung out with three freelance drug dealers, two of whom I write about: JoJo and Angel. I worked at bars and restaurants in New York, where I met subjects and individuals who introduced me to future subjects, including the bookies here. In Sicily I was essentially a tourist and "friend", and most of the fieldwork took place in public or at private functions such as weddings, graduations, and birthday parties.

Although remarkable moments and incidents happened in the course of my fieldwork, these are usually the result of mistakes, of flawed judgment and poor decision-making. I describe some of these, but for the most part my focus is on the mundane. My fieldwork observations revealed interactional techniques and practices, on identity performances and repair work, which, although not unique to the criminal world are exacerbated in the criminal context, where every encounter involves a heightened sense of risk. The focus here is on the everyday, average daily lives lived, rather than on

irregular or remarkable moments, and on how the immediate balancing of at times competing identities gets worked out in the cases of these individuals.

What initially began as a study of order in the context of criminal transactions narrowed down to an examination of the ways my research subjects deployed forms of identity work in pursuit of a sense of order. I assume here that the effective performance of an authentic and appropriate identity in any given moment is a mechanism by which order can be established, and I found that these individuals perform and adapt identities in immediate moments similar to the ways in which we all do, but with additional motivations stemming from the actors' criminality and the varying terms of their transactions. My story here is indeed about individuals who are criminals, but more generally it is about interaction and identity work in the pursuit of order. That these individuals are criminals is nonetheless relevant, and it certainly structures their worldviews and behaviors; it also makes them perfect cases of study because the importance of effectively communicating an appropriate and authentic identity is exacerbated under conditions of risk.

In all transactions, where someone performs in the way we expect them to, and we do the same, that transaction is likely to go smoothly, and that will result in the possibility for future exchange. Much of this is not unique to criminals, but getting it right becomes considerably more important when one's life is on the line as it frequently was for some of my research subjects.

The interactional order that emerges for my subjects is the result of techniques and practices revolving around questions of identity, practices that are certainly not unique to their world nor are these uncommon to the rest of us. I show how the identity

work that they perform, and the repair work that occurs when things go wrong, helps establish calculability and the emergence of a sense of interactional order. Indeed, when inauthentic identities are even momentarily presented, they can have longer lasting effects than the immediate moment: For example, if a bookie repeatedly made errors with customers due to being bad at math most people would ultimately find another bookie, even if he was their friend. And I show how when things do go wrong, and if the interactants aren't equipped to identify and perform the appropriate repair work, this can have longer lasting implications for both the professional relationship, as well as any personal relationships that may be shared by the participants in the scene.

The success and failure of these transactions, indeed of these entrepreneurs, I claim, depends substantially on their choice and performance of appropriate and authentic identity claims, in the moment – depending on who their interactants may be, where they are for the duration of the interaction, who else might be observing or listening in, whether it is in person or on the phone, and what central identity they are trying to push; their balancing of definitions and understandings of a person, moment, or item, in order to smoothly accomplish the transaction, and is must be authentic. Authenticity is critical, for criminals and non-criminals alike, without which identity claims fail due to lack of credibility (e.g. Petriglieri & Ibarra 2010; Roberts 2005). The individuals in this study nonetheless revealed moments of inauthenticity, when they defaulted to a stereotypical or Hollywood-referencing identity. For example, I observed moments when young drug dealer trainees would put on an excessively 'tough' demeanor, what they thought was expected of a drug dealer. But in the context of their transactions with an overwhelmingly

upper middle class adult customer base, this was both unnecessary and unhelpful to the purpose.

Professional vs. Personal

I examine how these individuals experience the duality of their work and nonwork identities, their professional and personal self-presentations, and the identity work they perform in response, the ways in which they balance work and nonwork identity demands, and adapt to immediate interactional moments. Indeed, a number of scholars from a broad range of disciplines caution against researchers' persistence in trying to assert a boundary between 'work' and 'nonwork', falsely assuming the two *could* be completely uncoupled[2] (Ramarajan and Reid, 2013: 636-8), as if searching for evidence of the long debunked "myth of separate worlds" (Kanter, 1977). See also, Zelizer 2005, 2011). To ignore the caution against persisting down the separate spheres path, would unhelpfully posit the 'work'-'nonwork' intersection as a hostile configuration, which it need not be.

The enterprises in this study could all be considered as belonging to the category defined by Hughes (1952) as 'dirty work'. Work can be conceived of as 'dirty' in a variety of ways, according to Hughes (1951: 319), and could be 'physically disgusting', 'a symbol of degradation, something that wounds one's dignity', or simply seen as 'dirty', 'in that it in some way goes counter to the more heroic of our moral conceptions'.[3] In this study, the sexworkers, for example, can be seen as 'dirty workers' not *because* what they do is 'physically disgusting' and degrading, but such is the stigma attached to sexwork, stigma generated by the puritanical 'heroic' moral conceptions of which Hughes (1951) speaks. And the other enterprises also fit this definition of 'dirty

work' – every one of them offends our 'heroic moral conceptions' – drugs, sex, and gambling, the triumvirate in that regard – but only the sexworkers are stigmatized with 'physically disgusting' in addition to 'degrading' and 'immoral'; the drug dealers, gang members, and Mafiosi are stereotyped and stigmatized as both immoral *and* violent.

Violence

We might assume that the capacity for violence is a fundamental part of criminal identity, and we might also assume that a criminal who is violent in the course of his dealings is a violent person the rest of the time. My subjects who carry the 'violent' stereotype – the gang members, drug dealers, and bookies – surprised me with their general (although not total) non-violence, and as it turns out this was not as remarkable as it first seemed. While we know that, for these groups and individuals, power in many ways rests on the ability to enforce, sanction, and coerce[4] and that this is typically expressed through violence or the threat of violence, we also know that there is "nothing in the inherent logic of illegal markets [to] lead to the expectation of violence in their conduct"[5], Moreover, although the capacity for violence is a valuable resource, a "reputational asset"[6] that criminal actors cultivate in their pursuit of social and economic power and status[7]. There are similarly strong arguments to suggest that in many of the contexts in which violence occurs, violence is the reflection of insecurity and weakness[8].

Nonetheless, we know that violence is more common among criminals than it is among non-criminals. But we also know that this is not quite so simple as saying that criminals are more inclined to violence. Some criminals are more violent than other criminals, just as some non-criminals are more violent than other non-criminals. As the Palermitan Anti-Mafia Judge Giovanni Falcone famously said of the Sicilian Mafia,

'They are men like anyone else. … Like anyone, they can be nice or not so nice, … like all mankind.'[9] While my fieldwork rarely exposed me to violence, the *threat* of violence was a constant across most of the sites and, with the exception of the cases of the prostitutes and the Dominatrices, was powerfully backed up by individual and group reputations. For the most part, my subjects were aware that it's a fine line: it is logical and a known fact that drug entrepreneurs who engage in frequent, public, and newsworthy acts of violence rarely last long in their chosen profession, and that the 'cost of reputation for being the dominant gang is increased enforcement activity aimed at the gang'[10] Nonetheless, being willing to use, and having access to, physical and non-physical sanctions helps to establish a predictability and a certainty, providing a foundation for reputation effects, and conferring a sense of expediency and efficacy upon codes of personal and group conduct.[11] As I explain in more depth later on, subjects in this study who involved themselves in violence in the course of their economic pursuits understood it as a tool that can have short- and long-term effects, easing future transactions, and, where used effectively, reducing the need for future violence.

The HBO Effect

A great deal of what we think we know as being intuitive to how organized crime and the drug and sex trades operate is filtered through either a law enforcement lens or the lens of the entertainment media. Watch any travel show on Sicily, and within a few minutes the word Mafia comes up, watch rap videos and you will see ostentatious displays of fake wealth and allusions to 'thug life' or 'the streets'. Read magazines that target a hip-hop audience and you are likely to find interviews with current or former drug dealers and gang members. In their music, in videos, on social media, and in

interviews, rappers frequently stake a claim to their 'thug' persona – Jay-Z tells us that he used to sell crack in Brooklyn[12], Lil' Wayne has gang tattoos[13], and Rick Ross, despite his past as a corrections officer, claims to have 'street-boss' access to the criminal world[14].

We see similar examples of the mobster stereotype portrayed in the case of organized crime, especially the Sicilian and Italian-American mafias. A few years ago, an informant wearing a wire for the FBI recorded members of New Jersey's De Cavalcante family as they discussed the HBO series *The Sopranos*: "What's this fucking thing, *Sopranos*? Is this supposed to be us?"[15] On these wiretaps others commented on how their work was made easier since the popularity of the HBO show, pointing out that debtors in particular were led to believe that this group was more violent and supported by larger and more violent crews than they actually were.

Most recently, sex work has become the fodder for popular entertainment: Every month or so at least one fashion magazine hits the stands with a confessional story or series of how-to tips from a woman who has worked as a stripper, prostitute, escort, or dominatrix. Most recently, the book and movie *Fifty Shades of Grey* has caused much discussion of sexwork and BDSM, although most practitioners turn up their nose at Fifty Shades and its ilk. However, many professional dominatrices gladly reap the financial benefits of the Fifty Shades bubble, which has led more clients to employ their services. There are television shows that sensationalize the world of high priced prostitution and escorting[16], and in recent years we have seen a series of high profile scandals involving politicians and women employed at such services[17]. We also see the music industry

embrace the language and imagery of sex work, Rihanna's with her BDSM-inspired hit song *S & M*[18].

Criminal Enterprise

So what *do* we know about these groups and individuals in these enterprises? Well, there is a sizable literature on the norms, rules, threats, and sanction behaviors in the criminal world. This literature tells us that extralegal entrepreneurs adhere to sets of rules[19] and systems of norms[20], and that these are enforced by physical or social sanctions, or the threat thereof[21]. And we know the effects of this: Rule abidance and the existence of social norms increase trust between actors, and provide predictability, certainty, and calculability in exchange relations and in day-to-day conduct[22].

Over recent decades we have seen some very strong recent qualitative work on groups largely similar to those in this thesis. Typically in the case of Mafia groups, this literature involves biographical co-authorships with retired or imprisoned participants, or undercover law enforcement agents. The most well known contemporary journalistic exception to this would be Roberto Saviano's (2008) *Gomorrah*, a gripping page-turner of an account of the activities of the Camorra in modern-day Naples. As I do in the two chapters here on Mafia associates in New York and Sicily, Saviano looks at different enterprises in which Mafiosi are involved, positioning their enterprises in the global economy and in local power structures, "the system", as he calls it. Another piece from the journalism side of things, although nonetheless rigorous, Misha Glenny's (2008) *McMafia: A Journey Through the Global Criminal Underworld* examines global and local connections between low-level and upper-level criminals and the role of geopolitics in the development of their organizations and enterprises. Glenny shows how upper-level

organized criminals abuse lower level workers, such as the abuses of immigrant cockle-pickers in England; the connections between 'clean' and 'dirty' groups on trafficking routes, such as the complicity of Bedouin tribes in the trafficking of eastern European women into sexual slavery in Israel; and the adaptation tactics of the smugglers of drugs and other contraband in response to law enforcement efforts to disrupt their businesses.

In New York City, Phillippe Bourgois (2003) examined "inner-city street culture: a complex and conflictual web of beliefs, symbols, modes of interaction, values and ideologies that have emerged in opposition to exclusion from mainstream society." (2003: 8). And in the context of closed drug markets, Mohamed and Fritsvold's (2010) *Dorm Room Dealers: Drugs and the Privileges of Race and Class* is a long-term ethnographic study of drug dealers at a private university. These dealers operate in what we typically refer to as 'closed' markets; selling "only to customers they personally know or customers who can be vouched for by other buyers" (2010: 12). This is important because much of the work on drug markets focuses on the open-air markets populated by drug gangs such as those I observed for chapter one, and lower ranking dealers; a segment of the retail drug trade where participants are at far greater risk of arrest or assault. Mohamed and Fritsvold's (2010) college dealers are more scared of their parents finding out what they do than they are about being shot; when they graduate college they will go on to become bankers and lawyers, this is just a four year dalliance. For the independent dealers in my study, while their enterprises is in many ways similar – closed markets, choice of customers, the occasional product diversification – they are much more concerned about being shot than of getting yelled at by their parents. Lastly, in reference to recent work involving research subjects whose relationship to the criminal

justice system is in many ways similar to that experienced by my subjects, Goffman (2014) is an exceptional long-term and very in-depth ethnography. Goffman, as Bourgois did and as I do, gets very close to her research subjects in order to understand their life's experience and sensemaking. There are, however, differences: Goffman was closer to her subjects than I became, focusing as she did on one location and developing very deep trust with those in her study. I lived around my subjects but I also flitted between groups and fieldwork sites.

The ethnographic literature on sex-workers is less comprehensive than the literature on drug dealers and gang members. Most of the work on prostitutes focuses on the sex trade outside of the United States, the trafficking of women and girls into sexual slavery, and on participants who are not prostitutes by choice, none of which is the case for my sexworker subjects. One notable exception is Melissa Gira Grant's (2014) *Playing The Whore: The Work of Sex Work*. The academic literature on BDSM is even smaller, but again, with notable exception: Lindemann's (2012), *Dominatrix: Gender Eroticism and Control in the Dungeon,* is an exceptional ethnography of the BDSM scene in New York and California. Lindemann's subjects are very similar to mine, and our fieldwork was performed at the same time in many of the same locations. Lindemann also examines interaction between clients and Dominas, and the professional tensions experienced by the Dominatrices, but examines these things using a gender and power dynamics lens, which is where our analysis diverges. That said, we both find that pro-Dommes are not as 'in control' as their interactional performances would suggest, as I show in Chapter 4.

Lastly, a balanced look at the interactional signs and signals in identity creation and maintenance can be found in Gambetta (2011), in which he examines what criminals

do to replace the functions of the state, lawyers, contracts, all the things that the rest of us rely upon to get business done. Gambetta considers issues of reputation, skill, and quality assurances, and how dispute settlement works for different types of criminal groups around the world. Rather than being a study of interaction, he looks at practices such as nicknaming and identity-marking, the things that are used for conveying information to those in the know: scars, tattoos, style of dress and communication, small gestures, and so on. Gambetta's theoretical leanings are very close to my own: where he examines the signals and codes that result from the impulse to stay out of jail, as well as to establish and maintain power, wealth, and status, I examine the fundamental verbal and non-verbal interactional performances that establish the social and professional foundations for the codes and signals he describes.

Order & Identity

So, how does this all fit with identity and order, particularly in the lives of criminal subjects? Well, we all structure our social and professional worlds around relationships and practices that enable us to live with some measure of calculability in our lives, creating stability and a sense of order. Order, in this respect, can be established and maintained by various mechanisms, broadly falling under three categories of control or enforcement: external, normative, and internal/rational. External enforcement is generally provided by the State, in the form of policing, laws, the judiciary, and the criminal justice system. Normative controls come in the form of rituals and other practices that support the unspoken social contract we have with one another. Internal control allows the assumption that others will act rationally. This presumes, for example, that others will be

unlikely to break the law because we mostly assume that a rational person will not act in ways that might incur large fines or send them to prison.

Throughout, I refer to the interactional production of a 'sense of order'. By 'order' I mean the conglomeration of calculability and stability in one's world that in part a product of having formed and performed one's identity/ies in a coherent, authentic, and rewarding manner. In tying together identity and order in this way, my view fits with the conception of identity proposed by Thatcher and Zhu (2006: 1077), where they describe it as 'a continual process of habitual activities that confers a sense of structure and a sense of coherence on one's daily life.'[23]

And it is important that we understand the illicit enterprise practices and performances of these individuals as examples of broader interactions, both across the landscape of criminal entrepreneurs as well as in the context of forms of interaction that we all perform in our daily lives. While it is good that we are removing stigma and stereotype, normalizing our view of these professions, the popular media continues to frame sexworkers, gang members, drug dealers, and organized crime participants as others, as exoticized entertainment. Spending time with these drug dealers, bookies, prostitutes, gang members, dominatrices, Mafiosi, and traffickers, what struck me most was how unremarkable their daily lives are. Indeed, some wear a corset and wield a whip at the office; some sell illegal drugs on the street or door-to-door; some ship illicit commodities worldwide; some sell bets; some sell sex; some mediate and protect for a fee. But they all deal with the same problems and concerns held by the rest of us: They all want to earn more and work less, they feel that they deserve more respect than they receive, they worry about their health and the health of their loved ones, and, most are

focused on their children's futures. These are regular people who happen to work in irregular professions, as Amadeo Cottino (2009: 7) describes:

> We are dealing with a group of people whose distribution of morality, should it be statistically shown along a curve, would prove to be normal. At the two extremes, the really bad guys…and the really good guys… Near the middle of the curve, we find the majority … persons who are neither very bad nor very good.

When we refer to identities – whether to 'professional-', 'personal-', or 'third-identity', we refer to who we believe we are, who we want others to perceive us as being, and how others actually perceive us, *and* how we perform this in the 'social domains of work, home, and third places' (Ashforth et al., 2000: 474). These 'identities', the collection of personae and interactional adaptations that we perform in different contexts, are gathered under the all-encompassing notion of a reflexive self that is constructed and defined in interactions, and consequent introspection (Cooley 1902; Goffman 1967; Mead, 1934; Swann 1987). Consistent with Thatcher and Zhu (2006: 1077), a central assumption in my framework is that 'Identity interprets and organizes intra- and interpersonal actions and experiences; provides the motivation, plans, rules, and scripts for behavior; and adjusts in response to changes in the social and physical environment,'[24] and, as Weiland (2010) asserts, that identity is constructed 'through ongoing mundane interactions in addition to critical moments…' (524), 'emerging both through self-aware reflections about whom one is and through everyday practices of doing work and life' (Wieland, 2010: 505). The context of these interactions is a critical factor, as Weiland (2019: 505) and Kuhn (2006a) have shown. And Petriglieri and Stein (2012: 1220) describe 'the self' as 'dynamic and comprising numerous identities',

themselves the product of social interactions, and which 'serve as points of orientation for identity work'. Swann (1987: 1038) assumes '…people have a fundamental desire to know what to expect from their worlds'.

Identity Work

Identities are dynamic; identity is *managed* and 'identity work' is *performed*. Wieland (2010: 509-10) defines *identity work* as the socially and introspectively oriented 'process by which one constructs, repairs, and maintains an understanding of whom one is…' Alvesson and Willmott (2002: 626) define identity work as 'the continuous process of "forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a precarious sense of coherence and distinctiveness' – tying the process to a sense of stability – and thus, Wieland claims, we can see identity work as revelatory in understanding 'the ways that individuals author their self-identities.' (2010: 506)[25]. And researchers have examined how the choices we make regarding which identity to perform, and how, in any immediate moment are typically 'determined by subjective importance and situational relevance' among the identity choices available to us (Thatcher and Zhu, 2006: 1077).

As Ibarra and Petriglieri's (2010: 17), state, 'A good performance increases the likelihood that claimed identities will be granted by significant others' (see also, Weiland, 2010). I treat this granting of identities, the validation of the performance, as part of the identity performance of my subjects, and the result of a Goffmanian (1959) 'process of negotiation'. As Swann (1987: 1048) explains,

> '…the concept of identity negotiation is based on the assumption that people enter their social interactions with certain goals in mind

> and try to establish mutual identities that enable them to attain these goals. A process of negotiation ensues and, if successful, a working consensus emerges that defines the identity that each person is to assume during the interaction.

The meaning of any particular identity is another crucial aspect to how we choose our performance and that meaning is bound up with the enactment of each identity (Ramarajan and Reid, 2013; Stets and Burke, 2000: 229). As Anteby (2008: 203) suggests, identities 'require that individuals find enactment opportunities to create and sustain the identity', and it is only in this enactment – our social performance of an identity – that we are able to derive meaning from that identity. Indeed, this follows from Alvesson and Willmott's (2002: 636) claim that 'As meaning is contingent upon identity, managing meaning is integral to managing identity.' Citing White (1992: 236), Anteby (2008: 214) takes this point further, suggesting that 'identities are the only sources of intentional efforts.'

Roles

Identity is tied to the concept of role in the ways in which my subjects perceive of their self, and are perceived, and the ways in which the performance of an authentic role identity is important in the work and nonwork identities of the individuals, and the reputational and trust factors that then accrue. Any particular role comes with expectations regarding how to comport oneself in that role, one's role-appropriate presentation of self, and therefore individuals occupying the same roles will seem to be possessed of specific characteristics (Goffman, 1959). As Ashforth et al., (2000: 483-6) explain, *role identities* are socially generated 'definitions of self-in-role', with which an individual identifies when they define their self 'at least partly in terms of the role and its

identity', and emergent from *role schema* that help us to know and access 'typical or appropriate behaviors expected of a person occupying a given position (Fiske & Taylor, 1991), the 'cuing and enactment' of which 'tends to become more automatic over time'. As evidenced by my subjects' varying degrees of scripting in different interactions, and the challenges this poses and overcomes, automatic cuing and enacting can be seen as the product of 'scripting', a critical aspect of my fieldwork observations, and consistent with Shiffrin & Schneider's (1977) assertion, cited in Ashforth et al., 2000: 485), that ''The development of mindlessness conserves cognitive capacity, freeing one to attend to other matters …' As I show, the 'mindlessness' that results from scripting, also frees one to attend to critical identity-work demands, particularly useful where one's interactions are imbued with risk.

Dirty Work

I refer to these professions as 'risky', meaning that they create risk for the individuals involved, in a myriad of ways that I describe in detail. Most generally, the risk of arrest applies across the sites, but also I show identity work in response to the risk of assault or murder, job loss, status decline, stigma and stereotype. Characteristic across these enterprises is that they face the challenges faced by those categorized as 'dirty workers' (Hughes, 1952).

Ashforth and Kreiner (1999: 413) suggest that the stigma of dirty work tends to cause workers to form tighter bonds and stronger definitions of in/out group membership (1999: 419). As I will describe, in my study this bonding was most clearly observed in the cases of the drug gang and the Mafiosi. I also show instances when individuals 'recast their dirty work in more positive terms, through occupational ideologies that confer

esteem-enhancing meaning' (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999: 421). For example, the insistence of drug dealers and traffickers that they are 'businessmen', or the assertions of prostitutes that what they did was no different than sleeping with a date after he buys dinner or a few drinks. Also consistent with previous work on dirty work and dirty workers, and particularly in the case of the prostitutes, I observed my subjects' focused endeavors to hide from friends and family the exact nature of their labor.[26]

Moreover, there is a broad literature examining ways in which members of what are called 'devalued' groups make efforts to disguise or deny that membership. In addition to those who perform 'dirty work', devalued groups are stigmatized on the basis of other factors such as race, gender, social class, religious orientation, and so on. While some members of devalued groups make concerted efforts to reduce the salience of their membership or of the stigma by which it is devalued, others do not.[27] This is particularly visible in the case of the Mafiosi, bookies, and street gang members in this study, to a lesser extent the independent drug dealers and the dominatrices, and in the least intensity for the prostitutes. In the case of the enterprises I observed, these actors all performed identity work in ways that would to some degree 'overcome the physical, social, and moral taint of their occupations by reframing, recalibrating, and refocusing the stigma of outsiders.' (Kidder, 2006: 32). They similarly reframe, recalibrate, and refocus – what I refer to throughout as reframing and redefining – moments, interactions, items, and sensory experiences, according to the various components of their identity toolkit that they have dipped into in order to accomplish a particular interactional moment, or in the process of reiterating and maintaining a repeatedly constructed identity.

Moving Uptown

So how did all this happen? In 2002, I moved to the Mott Haven section of the South Bronx, where I was able to afford rent while I put myself through undergraduate study at Columbia University. In Mott Haven and the surrounding area, I met and befriended a number of individuals involved in street gangs and the local drug trade, not for the purpose of ethnography but for friendship and to establish a presence in my broader local community: I had not yet learned that ethnography even existed, nor had I ever taken a sociology class. As my understanding changed and my intellectual and street-knowledge grew, I began to establish contact with future research subjects through introductions from friends and neighbors, and by chatting with strangers – on the street, in local stores, when walking my dogs through the area, and while photographing gang-related graffiti out of personal interest. At the time there was a violent on-again off-again turf war centered on the local crack cocaine trade, and by informally occasionally using my EMT license to help, I unintentionally developed a trusted association with a number of local drug crews in the South Bronx and in East Harlem (where I lived from 2004 to 2006).

During the same period, a group of sports bookies came into my life, each of them with ties to New York area Mafia families. These men were the friends and associates of my regular customers at bars where I worked during my undergraduate years. They were aware of my fieldwork with gangs in the Bronx – we would talk about it at the bar – and about a year into our friendship, began inviting me to tag along as they went about their daily business. Some of their associates and employees had strong ties to Sicily and Calabria, and introduced me to friends and family visiting the New York area from Italy. As a result of the association and trust established through these meetings, I took my first

fieldwork trip to Sicily in summer 2006, returning to the island for fieldwork three times over the next few years. Also during this same period, starting in early 2005, I worked as a receptionist/manager at a well-established BDSM dungeon in Manhattan, and began making contact with dominatrices at other dungeons, and escorts and prostitutes with whom they were socially and professionally friendly and who I would later incorporate into this study. I continued to work there for almost two years, before transitioning to an off-site managerial role for two more years, during which time I would visit the dungeon approximately twice weekly.

In each location, in the United States and Europe, my fieldwork took place in different environments. Sometimes fieldwork occurred on the street and in parks, in open-air drug markets, or in places open to the public such as nightclubs, strip clubs, bars, and restaurants. Other fieldwork took place in semi-private locations open to those in the know, or who qualified for entry in some way; these included the common areas of public housing projects, brothels and dungeons, drug mills, crackhouses, members-only clubs, and on the campus of Columbia University. Other fieldwork sites included private homes and other spaces closed to outsiders. In the case of one subject, JoJo, the fieldwork mostly took place while I sat in the passenger seat of his car as he drove around Manhattan delivering marijuana to customers. When business was quiet we would occasionally park the car to visit a restaurant or sneaker store, or stop by one of his stash houses, but for the most part – for several hundred hours over the years – JoJo's car was our fieldwork site.

Where Are The Cops & The Cons?

There is precedent in ethnography for studying the components to social order and

stability in this way: Garfinkel (1967) argues that local social order is mutually constructed by participants, and instructs that if we are to examine local order, we must examine the institutions, practices, values, and norms that guide participants in their shared reality[28]. Describing Garfinkel's famous 'breaching experiments' Guido Mollering (2006) explains that Garfinkel revealed the ways in which individuals "actively 'normalize' and redefine events" external to the standard rules of interaction "in order to maintain 'the game', … the perceived normality and stability of the social context"[29]. Goffman tells us that "to study face-saving is to study the traffic rules of social interaction"[30], describing conversation as "a little social system with its own boundary-maintaining techniques; … a little patch of commitment and loyalty with its own heroes and its own villains"[31]. My analytical approach here focuses on these conversational and behavioral "boundary maintaining techniques" for what they can reveal about relationships, roles, and identities.[32]

Ethnographic studies of criminals usually focus on their relationships with the criminal justice system and the volatility and uncertainty that derive from living and working in the criminal world.[33] I saw a world that was not as volatile as those I had read about, a world far more mundane than the media and some academic work would have us believe. I decided not to enter the criminal justice system to interview prisoners, in part because my interactional focus would have been complicated under the conditions of incarceration. Being in prison is not a reflection of everyday life for an extralegal entrepreneur, and incarceration usually entails taking a forced hiatus from most of their entrepreneurial activities that existed outside of prison. The few individuals to whom that

would not apply, we can assume, would be extremely hesitant to discuss their entrepreneurship in the prison setting.

I entered the fieldwork sites with the initial hypothesis that participants in the extralegal economy manage their lives in direct response to the actions of law enforcement, and that in so doing they privileged their deviance and criminality above all other factors. Therefore, I decided, I would need to understand both sides, requiring that I spend time with law enforcement as well as law-breakers. I spoke to a number of police officers in New York City, and I attended some law enforcement workshops. At one restaurant where I bartended, I was able to casually talk with customers who worked at two local precincts, and who were very generous with their time – some of them seemed legitimately intellectually interested in my work.

I decided to end the exploratory fieldwork involving law enforcement officers for two main reasons: First, other subjects mentioned that they held back or could not trust me, because they were aware of my involvement with 'the other side'. This was usually communicated in a joking manner, teasing me for being a 'double agent' or joking, as Mowf occasionally did, that when I knocked on their door they were never sure if there would be a police officer with me. There is a kernel of truth in teasing, and I wasn't comfortable with the impression I was giving by straddling the fence. Second, one or two potential subjects on both sides asked me to manipulate my relationships with the others for their benefit: police officers asked me to tell them about gang subjects, and gang members asked me to tell them about police officer subjects.

Criminal ethnography is not a risk-free endeavor for researchers. At times we witness crimes being committed, placing us at risk of arrest as 'participants', but

ethnography also allows for a depth of data and analysis that could not otherwise be achieved.[34] The risks I assumed during the fieldwork were miniscule: I already lived in the South Bronx, and although my fieldwork associations maybe placed me at greater risk of arrest, there wasn't particularly any increased likelihood of physical harm. The benefits, however, were huge: these sites and these subjects enabled my collecting of data and my analysis of interactional order in closed-off and hard-to-access worlds, in ways that would not otherwise have been possible.

"Nerd Alert"

Subjects at all of my fieldwork sites in the United States, at one time or another, referred to me possessively as their "nerd", as if I were some sort of pet or mascot. It didn't bother me to be given a nickname, I in fact encouraged it because of the intimacy and trust that it brought to our relationship: Almost everyone else had a nickname; it made me more like one of them. At one stash house I visited, the gang's runners joked that they should figure out a call for me, akin to the whistle they used to indicate that there were police on the block: It was suggested that they could call this the "nerd alert". In these and in many other ways, as I discuss later on, my subjects pulled me deeper into their world than the role of researcher would generally allow, and in so doing somewhat implicated me in my own study. These practices, and the sense of intimacy that they produced, sustained our relationships and permitted my ongoing access. I nonetheless remained ever conscious of issues of trust and the ethical, legal, intellectual, and interactional boundaries that were being pushed.

To be explicitly clear on the extent to which I was involved: I did not falsely present myself as a sexworker or drug dealer; I did not participate in sessions in the

dungeons or brothels; I did not produce, procure, package, or sell drugs for the dealers or traffickers, nor did I assist in the drug economy in any way; I never encouraged or participated in any violence, nor did I make myself available in any way to aid my subjects in the commission of crimes. I did, however, bend some rules, both legal and methodological: I worked in a receptionist role at a BDSM dungeon, and so to that extent I was a participant in the BDSM and sexwork Scene. When I worked at bars frequented by bookies I occasionally held envelopes for them under the register, envelopes containing cash and tickets to sporting events. This wasn't anything that they couldn't expect of other bartenders across New York City. Lastly, as I describe in the opening to the first chapter, I became known to one gang in the South Bronx after attending to the victim of a shooting, using the skills I had learned in obtaining my EMT license at Columbia University. This individual did not become a subject, and this was not the only time I used these skills to help a stranger – whether in the context of fieldwork or otherwise.

While my EMT license inadvertently helped me earn trust with the gang members, I often had to remind them that I had very little training and that I was not a doctor or a medical student. Across the enterprises, subjects seemed to think that the ability to fix a basic dressing on a gunshot wound meant I could also diagnose and treat STDs, perform the role of therapist, and provide legal advice. At no point did I claim or attempt to do any of these things, but I was frequently asked for this sort of help and sometimes it took a lot of explaining to make it clear that my refusal to do what was asked was not because I was unwilling, but rather it was because I was completely

unqualified, and to act otherwise would have been personally and professionally unethical, of no real help, and potentially harmful.

Some of my subjects relished educating me in their worlds and ways, and I was an enthusiastic student. At times they were short with me due to my lack of knowledge of their worlds, but I persisted in asking the most basic questions, as I had been trained to do. In each group the issue arose that I had never done the work they did, and presumably never would. This sometimes created a barrier to interaction, but at other times these subjects went into greater detail because they assumed I didn't have their knowledge and they were eager to teach me. When I asked them to clarify things that they thought were obvious, and which would have been for the purposes of a general conversation, but not for ethnographic research, the awareness that theirs was not my world often helped to smooth my questioning, and encouraged detailed and simple definitions and explanations from my subjects.

In Sicily, being a friend of my subjects' American relatives and counterparts was critical for establishing me as a 'friend' of sorts, rather than busybody tourist, journalist, or anti-mafia campaigner. The language barrier was more of a challenge: I had a translator for many interviews and initial meetings – himself a subject – but I ultimately spent the most time with individuals in Sicily who were sufficiently fluent in English that we could communicate in a reliable manner. In the United States there was also a linguistic component to some of the fieldwork sites: At the start of the fieldwork I was not particularly au fait with gang and drug dealer slang and terminology; initially I relied on the assistance of a close friend, Booshawn, who had grown up surrounded by gang culture, and an early research subject, Mowf, both of whom corrected my behavior and

language when it was inappropriate for my fieldwork with the gang members and drug dealers.

With my male subjects, being female and foreign lowered their suspicions that I may be a threat or a snitch. My age and gender in combination with my EMT license presented me as a nurturer. By stereotyping me in this way, my research subjects were able to frame some understanding of my non-combative role in their worlds. At times it seemed that my middle class British background, boarding school and Ivy League education cast me as a novelty; for some subjects I was the exotic 'other' who they found to be harmless but entertaining. I gladly accepted that categorization. My work at a dungeon eased my relationship with the sexworkers in this study, who were able to reconcile my presence as someone "sort of in the Scene": friendly and sympathetic, but who was not interested in stealing anyone's clients or denigrating their profession. And a lifelong love of horseracing and other sports established a common ground with the bookies. All of these things helped my subjects open up to me and, I believe, protected me from interactional failure when I made missteps by saying the wrong thing, using the wrong tone, or asking 'stupid' questions.

There were occasions when my subjects were not completely honest with me, usually relating to their involvement in a group, an enterprise, or an incident. Sometimes they appeared to exaggerate their role, other times they sought to diminish their apparent involvement. For the most part however, and largely as a result of my lack of interest in the details of specific crimes, they seem to have been basically honest with me. Because I was studying interactional moments, any inaccurate self-reports of involvement in specific instances of criminal activity were not an overwhelming concern.

Terminology

I use the terms interchangeably throughout, but I prefer 'extralegal' over 'criminal', 'illicit', or 'illegal', for two reasons. First, it is more accurate when discussing the individuals and groups here as not all of them are always breaking the law in their line of work. I explain this more fully in my chapter on dominatrices and dungeons, where it is particularly relevant.[35] My second reason for preferring 'extralegal' over 'criminal' or any of its synonyms is that 'extralegal' more accurately reflects the tenor of my fieldwork and of this book. By steering away from 'criminal' I by no means intend to diminish the criminality of some of my subjects, or to suggest that we should *not* treat them as criminals: Where they are, we should. But I'm not reporting on my subjects' crimes, as mentioned at the beginning, my purpose here is to analyze observed forms of interaction, which, I argue, are really no different than the forms of interaction we all experience daily. This being the case, to repeatedly label these individuals as criminals would categorically differentiate between 'them' and 'us' in such a way as to create unnecessary and unhelpful categorization. Such differentiation would stymie the analysis and thrust of this work.

Each fieldwork site came with it's own lexicon, and it's own distinct definitions of everyday words. I mostly explain these as they arise, but there are a few that deserve direct attention here. The word *nigga* appears several times in my chapters on gangs and independent drug dealers: I do not use this word lightly, nor do I use it in my own voice, but my subjects make liberal use of the word and I ask that the reader understands that where I quote my subjects, I endeavor to remain true to the voices. In the chapters on dominatrices and sex workers I refer to their places of work (brothels and dungeons) as

the house, and to the women involved as *girls*, consistent with how they refer to one another. The world of BDSM refers to itself as *the Scene* (capitalized) and to the scriptedness or intended environment of a session or interaction with a client as *the scene* (not capitalized). And in the lexicon of the BDSM world, a *slave* is a submissive who offers him or herself up to a dominant (Master or Mistress) in return for free sessions or monetary payment.

Identity & Confidentiality

I guaranteed complete confidentiality to my subjects and although it was rare for me to know their real names, their working or street names could be sufficient to be used against them. I therefore protect the identities of the subjects by referring to them with pseudonyms, and by concealing certain locations and other small details that are theoretically unimportant to the purpose of this work. Having consulted others who have done similar fieldwork, I decided that in order to guarantee this identity protection I would obtain oral rather than signed consent. Moreover, extralegal business objectives are accomplished with informal contractual obligations that do not require a signature; asking my subjects to sign a consent form would not only suggest a willingness to expose them to risk but would also be culturally offensive and likely to create a barrier that would stand in the way of our interaction and communication.

Always The Quiet Ones

People often ask how safe I felt doing this fieldwork, the assumption being that I must often have felt unsafe, given the presumed nature of the groups and their environments. Across all of my fieldwork sites, I never felt unsafe with or feel physically threatened by my subjects. However, in the interest of full disclosure, on one occasion I

was physically assaulted: Of all the late night fieldwork sites, deserted streets, and warehouses, of all of the opportunities for physical confrontation with subjects possessed of the reputation for violence, I was assaulted only once, by a submissive client at a midtown Manhattan dungeon as I was trying to kick him out for being cheap. He wanted a cut-price golden shower from a Mistress, and when his haggling over the price didn't work, he asked for "half a session, ten minutes", for a fraction of the cost of a regular length session. When that failed, he asked if he could "at least see who's here". Clients at dungeons and brothels would do this every so often; when each girl came in to meet them, they would offer the girl a tip to perform acts on them, if the girl refused the client would go on to ask the same of the next girl, and so on until one agreed. These clients would then leave without formally taking a session, thereby cutting the house out of the transaction and putting the girl at risk of losing her job. As always, I told this particular client, no, I could not allow him to meet the girls, that these things were strictly against house rules. He pleaded: " I only want a quick golden, how about you just go on me, quickly, it'll only take a few minutes. Here, I'll even give you $20." At that point I insisted that he immediately leave, and walked him to the door. As I stood in the entrance to the dungeon to make sure he left the premises, he turned around, grabbed me painfully and slammed me against the wall. When I screamed he let go and I pushed the door shut on him. Dominatrices ran down the hallway to see what the problem was, and told me the client should be banned. When I mentioned it to the owner the next day he agreed, saying that I "should have locked the scumbag in a room" and called the police. This was the only unpleasant incident I experienced, in several years of fieldwork on the streets and behind closed doors, with many individuals and groups who had at times in their lives

been very violent indeed. The assault had nothing to do with the Scene, the dungeon, me, or the extralegal economy; it had everything to do with that particular individual.[36]

"Is It True You Have Bodyguards On Campus?"

In 2008, when I was a graduate student at Princeton University, an undergraduate told me that she had heard I had bodyguards who protected me on campus. The entirely false rumor was based on an assumption that because of the nature of my research my life must surely be in danger. As amusing as it was (I have never been at risk nor have I ever had a bodyguard!), it speaks to a side of this type of ethnographic work that can be frustrating for the researcher. In the case of female researchers in particular, silly rumors can become more than a frustrating annoyance, producing unpleasant gossip and strange interactional moments.

One of these challenges lies in the reaction and understanding of our friends, coworkers, advisers and mentors, and family. Others have written about this, notably Lindemann (2012), with whom I shared similar experiences to those mentioned in her introduction to *Dominatrix.* At times my fieldwork has been dismissed as 'fun', suggesting that the nature of this method and the value of these research subjects is such that it renders our research less like real work and more like play, just 'hanging out', devoid of intellectual purpose. Academics have asked questions such as "Are you a gang member?" "Do you like to hurt people?" "Were you a sexworker?" Where these questions referenced my fieldwork with sexworkers, I got the impression that those asking were hinting at a more personal interest in the scenes I fieldworked, possibly seeing me as likeminded or a point of access. These comments are mostly irrelevant, but

at times they were insulting and discomfiting and I do not believe that a male ethnographer would have been asked these questions or comparable ones.

Some of my non-academic friends have had great difficulty understanding my work, even the fact that it is actually work. Once I explain ethnography they mostly get it, but in social settings I have also endured questions, assessments, and remarks that have relied on the most negative and offensive stereotypes about my subjects. A few years ago, after I spent the day with some gang members I had known for close to a decade, my boyfriend at the time asked that I immediately get tested for sexually transmitted diseases. He claimed that this was not because he thought I was promiscuous, but because "that's what they're all like." He did not last. But despite the few negative moments and people, I have been fortunate that a great many other academics, mentors, friends, students, and strangers have been extraordinarily supportive, interested, and encouraging.

A question I am frequently asked when I tell people about my fieldwork is: "What's the scariest / wildest / craziest thing that happened to you?" Undergraduates ask this in class, and people I meet at parties always want an anecdote about violent drug dealers and gang members, or the weird peccadilloes of sexual 'deviants'. Unfortunately for them all, my subjects are people to whom I feel a responsibility; they are very real human beings who have entrusted me with their everyday lives, to use as data, not to be used as cheap anecdotes to create titillation or a sense of otherness and superiority. Besides, my fieldwork wasn't scary, wild, or threatening, it was all quite mundane. Indeed, prostitutes have sex, sometimes it's unconventional, some of them have a lot of it, some make great money doing so, some are unable to sustain romantic relationships for the duration of their tenure in the sex trade. Dominatrices deploy great skill to enable

and respond to fetishes, sometimes in ways that are remarkable even within the Scene, but usually not. Drug gang members and independent drug dealers sell drugs, sometimes they are violent, sometimes they get scared, and some of them suffer from depression and anxiety. Bookies handle bets, and do what they have to do to get the money that is owed them, sometimes they are paranoid, sometimes they're "too good" to others, often against their better judgment. And Mafiosi and traffickers are never able to escape the knowledge that they are constantly under surveillance by the State, by rivals, and by partners.

As Diego Gambetta (2011) explains, the question is not "whether there is honor among thieves… [but] what thieves do when they know, as they often do, that there is none." (2011: xii) Where Gambetta (2011) examines the signals and codes that result from the impulse to stay out of jail, as well as to establish and maintain power, wealth, and status, I examine the fundamental verbal and non-verbal interactional performances that establish the social and professional foundations for the codes and signals he describes. Distinctions between available selves and choice of appropriate self are central to the pursuit of what I describe as order, which can be seem in terms of Weber's (1978) 'calculability' or the 'stable worlds' that Neil Fligstein (2001) has argued are required for markets to exist.

I examine the way my research subjects navigate the spaces where their work and non-work interactions, identities, and relationships intersect. For example, the negative intersection that occurs from engaging in risky professional transactions with friends who expect special treatment or pricing, on the basis that they are closer than regular customers. On the flip side, there are positive intersections such as in the situation when

'work' and 'nonwork' overlap in ways that lubricate transactions or that permit expeditious repair in moments of failed interactions.

Weber (1978: 351) wrote about calculability as necessary for the existence of markets. This calculability in everyday life is one of the motivating factors to the identity work that we enter into when performing a specific identity for an audience. The identity work observed here is particularly salient in the case of those employed in non-traditional careers where there's no nine-to-five keeping things in order, where overlap between incompatible areas of life is more likely to occur – for example, when a boss emails late at night and our smartphone alert wakes us up or disrupts family time. Alternatively, it may be expedient to combine aspects of work and nonwork identity for the purposes of authenticity or to demarcate the difference between work and nonwork time. For example, when co-workers get together for happy hour drinks, or play in their office softball league, they develop nonwork bonds that can only occur by blending their work and nonwork identity in some ways, forming a quasi-work quasi-nonwork go-to identity that may need to be called upon in the future. This is exemplified in the observations of Beunza and Stark (2002) who found that the trading desk they observed relied on intimate knowledge of their deceased or missing co-workers, in order to access their files following the 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center.

This thesis proceeds as follows: The drug gang members in Chapter 2 were mostly involved in the crack cocaine business, on the street retail level. They faced challenges from rivals, and from people in their neighborhood who wanted to get rid of gangs and the violence that tends to surround them. These young gang members feared losing status, and performed their status at all times. This created tension at times when

crew workers were sanctioned by crew bosses, or otherwise failed, presenting a challenge to their status-pushing identity performance. I show how they manage the gang's identity and their own individual identities as worker, boss, and group member, in the environment of a drawn out and occasionally violent turf war with a rival neighborhood gang. For Chapter 3 I performed fieldwork with two retail level freelance drug dealers, JoJo and Angel, who clamed to not be affiliated with any street gang. They both faced the same challenges in their daily interactions with customers, and in their negotiations with what constitutes an authentic 'drug dealer' identity, and how that is to be performed. I reveal the ways in which their refusal to provide drugs to customers on credit permits their avoidance of physical violence, and their non-violent identity that was consistent with the interactional needs of their generally discreet middle class customer base. I show how these dealers manage and adapt to relationships with, and the identity-work of, customers who are friends, some very close friends, as well as regulars, strangers, and the occasional assistant.

The Dominatrices in Chapter 4 and the prostitutes in Chapter 5 face many of the same challenges and concerns that inspire particular forms of identity work. They experience similar challenges when interacting with clients, co-workers, managers, and nonwork friends and family. Protecting the personal and professional identities from one another was critical for these women and to that end they reframed their definition of specific interactions, people, acts, and item. And yet, in many other ways, they had to resist the urge to completely separate their work and nonwork identities, at least if they hoped to form the bonds that would, as I show, grant them a critical edge with access to knowledge pools, mentoring, and support that would make the work easier.

The bookies I hung out with for Chapter 6 were the least likely of the enterprises to rely on nicknames or aliases, and therefore did not need to separate one identity from another, at least not for fear of exposure. They did need to balance their relationships with customers who were also friends, and to prevent these customers from using the intimate bonds to get an edge on the house when it came to their wagers and debts. One of the main challenges was presented by the fact that bookies let customers make bets on credit, they also needed to be debt collectors and sometimes they needed to collect debts from friends, As 'businessmen' they took good customers out for dinners and drinks, and enforced non-smoking laws at work. As bookies, they negotiated their way through unpaid debts and other problematic interactions with customers. Authenticity was central, for the bookies their work and nonwork identities needed to both be authentic for a bookie. That is to say, they always needed to be 'on', and at times this entailed enacting a their 'bookie' identity more strongly than the context might suggest – such as when collecting debts from recalcitrant customer friends, or arguing with them over the line on a wager.

In the fieldwork with the Mafiosi and their associates for Chapter 7, I observed a status system based in large part on the identities each individual played. In this chapter I show how they control their interactions such that they were able to retain any local power and status, maintaining their position and the authenticity of their identity as a respected local authority figure. By performing regular extortion, mediation and adjudication, and by limiting others' access to detailed knowledge about them, they were able to perform control and to maintain their desired status quo. For the participants whose professional role was more skill-based, the overarching fear was that they would

lose their edge or status if they did not keep on top of developments in their field, leading to the impressively early adoption of sophisticated technologies and methods of transporting contraband, particularly those that permit covertness.

My analysis assumes that a self is presented in any given interaction and, whether it is the correct or incorrect choice, this self is negotiated within the context in which it is performed. For example, in Chapter 3, when the freelance marijuana dealer, JoJo, refuses to provide credit to a customer, consistent with his everyday practices, she attempts to reframe the interaction as more friendly and intimate than he would like – calling him 'boo', and flirting with him – in so doing the customer performs her preferred identity, one that permits her to ask for credit, while JoJo continues to perform his preferred identity, one that is steadfast in the denial of credit lines to customers. By taking such an inappropriate line in the interaction, as I show in the chapter, Nico profanes JoJo's immediate self-presentation, and their interaction only recovers because they both perform the correct repair work to adapt the identity they are presenting in the moment.

I found little difference in the way that drug dealers, gang members, and organized crime associates oriented their transaction-focused relationships to the ways in which Wall Street bankers do[37]. However, in contrast to Wall Street or other competitive commission-based enterprises, here we have sets of economic relations largely absent external regulation, and where a local order emerges from interactional decision making processes in the context of economic transactions, but not entirely explained by standard theories of rational choice, shared norms, or kinship ties.

The work-labor of the individuals here should be viewed as just that, as labor. Yes, what these individuals do in return for money is typically illegal, and yes we may

find aspects of their work to be distasteful, immoral, or disgusting, but it is nonetheless labor, work performed in return for compensation as is done in any other professional sphere. The drug dealers face the same problems as other sales-forces. For example, the prostitutes face the same challenges as others in the business of providing intimate physical services, such as masseuses or acupuncturists; local Mafiosi face challenges to their authority; more globally minded Mafiosi face the same challenges as the directors of other multinationals with political clout. Yes, these are all criminals. Yes, their illicit activities shape their relationship with the rest of the world and how they interact. But if we focus on their crimes we miss out on the realities of everyday life and its practices.

My research subjects are fundamentally the same as most other people I have met, but studying their worlds and the ways in which they navigate through them can shed light on the ways in which the rest of us navigate our own worlds and lives. As we all do, sometimes in these groups people talk when they shouldn't, sometimes to people they shouldn't, and sometimes in terms they shouldn't. When I saw or heard of research subjects encountering difficulties or serious problems it was invariably because of something someone said that they shouldn't have, to someone they shouldn't have, or in a way that they shouldn't have. With that in mind, the scariest part of my fieldwork? Without hesitation, my only fear from the start was that I may say the wrong thing in the wrong way at the wrong time to the wrong person. As Mowf instructed me back in the summer of 2003: "… know what to talk about and what not to talk about." It was the best advice anyone could have given me.

At each fieldwork site, factors other than the immediate transaction influenced the intensity and context of interactions. For example, my subjects felt very strong

reputation effects, meaning that almost every transaction was iterated, at least indirectly within their small network of potential transaction partners. There interactional responses were thematically similar but varied in their details – the result of variation in immediate contexts – as will become clear through this work. Because my analytical model repeats across the different fieldwork sites, I have structured this thesis according to the enterprises in which these subjects are involved, with each chapter discussing one fieldwork site. In the concluding chapter I tie all of these together and extend the analysis out with some more general observations and I present a few suggestions about the influence of digital marketplaces on criminal interaction and identity, and a few possible directions for further inquiry.

I contend that my subjects' mutual pursuit of success in their illicit transactions is such that where these fail to be successfully completed, it is in large part because of failed interaction and the subsequent failure to perform the necessary repair work to reestablish the appropriate identity performance in the context of the immediate moment, rather than simply being the consequence of the illicit or criminal nature of the transaction or relationship. These actors deploy interactional tools that are available to – and used by – all of us on a daily basis, to reduce risk and uncertainty and to frame their identity, for themselves and their interactants, establishing calculability and thereby creating the stability necessary for accomplishing everyday life, particularly where that occurs in an otherwise unregulated social and professional environment.

CHAPTER TWO: THE BALANCE

Crouching on the living room floor of a small apartment in a large public housing complex in the South Bronx, I avoided eye contact with the middle-aged African American woman who stared at me with a look of distrust and tired resignation. Her left hand gripped the back of a plastic-covered and upholstered armchair, behind her a large window overlooked a busy thoroughfare, and to her right a doorway led into the kitchen. Behind me was a plastic-covered sofa; over my left shoulder the front door was wide open to the deserted hallway. The apartment was cooled by a noisy window air conditioner unit, but midsummer humidity and the stench of stale crack, cigarette, and marijuana smoke, wafted in through the open door. A mid-century modern sideboard occupied the space between the front door and the kitchen, laden with tchotchkes on crocheted doilies: framed photographs, crystal ornaments, porcelain figurines, and a lead crystal jar containing hard candies. The apartment was spotlessly clean, everything was protected from dust or damage, immaculate, with one exception: between the woman and me lay a young man in his mid-twenties, going into shock as he bled all over the floor.

Ten minutes earlier I had been sitting at a bar down the block, with a close friend, Booshawn – we lived in the area and this bar was one of our local hangouts. The bar's clientele was a mix of long time residents and recent arrivals from Brooklyn and Harlem, early participants in the wave of gentrification starting to sweep the South Bronx – 'SoBro' as developers would soon call the area, much to the distress of many residents. It was a hot and humid midsummer Saturday evening, and as Booshawn and I caught up on each other's news and gossip and chatted with other regulars, we were interrupted by the sound of gunfire, very loud and very near.

Shootings were par for the course in the neighborhood that summer, and bar customers rushed to pull down the metal shutters and lock the doors as people ran in from the street. Drinks were refilled, the jukebox unplugged so we could hear what was going on outside, someone propped open the bathroom door so we could see the window and anyone attempting to climb in through it. There were a few mumbled reactions: “Every day now” someone said, directing their comment to the floorboards; “No wonder when it’s so hot out” someone mumbled to the pool table; “Them again”, was directed at the jukebox.

The dominant gang in a nearby public housing project was engaged in a decade-long turf war with their local rivals, over a lucrative crack trade. Both groups were possessed of considerable local power, and their violent rivalry seemed to be coming to a head that summer. Although almost everyone in the neighborhood had something to say about it privately, few were willing to publicly criticize the gangs who ran large swathes of the local drug trade, and seemingly with impunity.

Seconds later the gunfire ended. Within minutes the bodegas, fast food restaurants, and barbershops lining the street unlocked their doors, and everyone went on with their business. That summer I observed those streets react to gunfire the way that Tribeca or SoHo streets react to a brief summer squall: a few people make the effort to appear staunchly unaffected but most seek shelter under the nearest overhang or in the closest store, waiting a minute or two before reemerging, visually scanning the block for confirmation that they aren’t alone.

Jimmy was our bartender that evening, a white Irish man in his mid-thirties who bartended part time to subsidize his income as a paramedic. Putting a regular customer in

charge, he pulled a pair of latex gloves from a box behind the bar, and then grabbed a first aid kit as he pushed the box of gloves towards me, knowing as he did that I was a licensed EMT. I grabbed a pair and ran out after him, down the street and into the sprawling projects to find the victim. At the closest entrance, young men and women pointed us to the building we needed. Others sitting on steps at the building door and leaning against stairwell walls told us which floor to go to.

When we got out of the elevator we headed to the only open door, identifiable from the light it cast into the dark hallway. Within seconds we were crouching in front of the plastic-covered sofa, tending to the bullet wounds of a young man who had been hit several times. There was a through-and-through[38] in his right shoulder, dangerously close to a lung; another bullet was buried in his thigh. A third bullet had smashed through his left ankle, the singed entry and gaping exit wound framing the smashed and splintered bone, the blackened, torn, mutilated flesh of a close range bullet-wound. I carefully dressed his right shoulder. If there was indeed lung trauma, we needed a special dressing in place to prevent air from entering and causing the lung to collapse, what is known as a 'flutter dressing'. While I secured this, and before he blacked out, I tried to coax out of our patient the information that the emergency room doctors would need: medications, allergies, recent alcohol and drug consumption, and any other details of his medical history.

The police had not yet arrived and Jimmy and I were unsure of the situation we had entered, a situation in which we were now involved. We did not know this victim, nor did we know if he was considered friend or foe of those who effectively controlled the building. His mother kept repeating, "He's a good boy." But we knew for sure was

that this was one of New York City's more notorious and gang-controlled public housing developments, in a neighborhood experiencing a violent rivalry over control of local drug markets, and that this young man had been shot several times, moments earlier, and at very close range. We knew that midsummer is the dog days of 'silly season', a time when gangs are more violent than they are the rest of the year, and we were aware that Emergency Room records attest to the fact that midsummer Saturday evenings are the most violent of all.[39] After a few minutes, what seemed like hours, we heard the crackle of police radios in the hallway. Once we answered a few questions and provided our EMT license details, we were free to return to the bar.

Standing at the bus stop a few weeks later, waiting for the BxM4 bus to take me into Manhattan, a car pulled up and a window rolled down a few inches, as a male passenger shouted out: "Yo Doc! Ma! You're the doc!' When I finally realized that he was talking to me, he smiles and tells me that 'Skinny P', the shooting victim, had survived his injuries. While he was not affiliated with the gang, as far as I ever became aware, word had nonetheless spread through the neighborhood that I had helped and therefore was seen as the sort of 'civilian' who they could be 'cool' with. And so it was that I began to develop a friendship that ultimately earned me admission into their private world, hanging out with the gang in the neighborhood and on the Columbia University campus.

SoBro

My gang member subjects did not grow up dreaming of selling crack on the street, dodging bullets and fights; they never intended a life spent moving between

project-and-prison, or of running from the police; like most of us they had dreams of 'making it', but the odds were never in their favor. And so here they were. In order to protect the identities of my subjects, I limit the identifying information here, but their neighborhood fell into the boundaries of what is now Congressional District 15, but which was Congressional District 16 for the 2003-2013 period covering my fieldwork. The 2010 census reports that CD-16 at that time had the highest poverty rate of any Congressional District in the nation, a rate of almost 50% for young people (Sisk, 2010).

This is one of the poorest areas of the Bronx, of New York, of the nation[40]. In the neighborhood where I lived, Mott Haven, the household poverty rate in 2005 was 48%; median income was just over $15,000. Mott Haven had the city's highest population lacking a high school diploma, the second highest felony crime rate at 44.8 out of every thousand residents, and one of the highest measures of youth disconnection in the United States – over one third of 16-24 year olds were not in school or work either part or full time. It could be a tough place to live, a constant battle for resources, opportunity, safety, and agency, and I was acutely aware that my experience as a local resident differed vastly from the experiences of my neighbors: I, after all, could leave, I had the privilege of a safety net and education that my neighbors did not.

I mentioned these figures to Mowf, a long-term close friend, who himself had been a gang member in his teens, many years previously. He explained that in his experience, he suffered for both a lack of opportunity and for the dearth of positive role models willing to take on a motivational and mentoring role, there was no one really showing him another option:

> You're fucked. Bottom line. You gotta find a trade or something, somewhere to go between the hours of nine and five Monday to Friday, or you're fucked. And you better do it soon, before you start getting old. Got to. Last like fallback case scenario, you know what I mean, you need some contingency plan.

Lacking other options, for many individuals in these neighborhoods, that contingency plan often defaults to the extralegal economy, and the easiest way to get involved is to join a gang involved in the drug business. For many people I met, their gang involvement was primarily to make money, but for others it was a form of self-protection until they could get out of the neighborhood. Others had been born into it[41], and some simply mimicked what they saw around them every day – the apparently successful, cash-rich drug dealers and gang members who "got all the girls" and swaggered around the neighborhood performing their power, these were the role models and motivators. As Mowf recalled:

> When I used to hang out … we used to fight in the um, yo, that was crazy, we used to fight in the laundry rooms. It had a gate on it for some fucking reason, the laundry room in the projects. I was somewhere between 10 and 13. … It [the gang thing] was always put in front of your face, so you did it. It was a very impressionable age… some people they get influenced and do everything.
>
> *Mowf*

Status & Order

The gang members I hung out with performed identity as a declaration of status, and their day-to-day concerns centered on maintaining status for the avoidance of what would happen in their social and professional lives if they were perceived to have lost some or all of the status that they had built. The respect that status demands protects gang members against arrest and physical assault, and those who lack (or who are seen to lose)

status often find themselves suddenly susceptible to possible victimization by rivals and even associates. A loss of status – temporary or permanent – can result in being set up for arrest, either by being sacrificed to the police by a more senior gang member, or being snitched on by those with a grievance – often past rivals, disgraced or threatened ex-members, or ex-girlfriends. Gang members who fail to maintain their status are also more likely to be robbed – often for the items that they had once displayed as indicators of status and income, further reducing social and professional value. These individuals are also more likely to become the victim of physical assault – not always in the course of a robbery, but also as a sanction that resulted in the loss of status, or as the target of initiation-related violence at the hands of younger initiates desperate to prove their strength and loyalty.

Status, here, is strongly tied to the possession of an authentic *gangmember* identity, and maintaining this is accomplished in a number of interactional ways. Status was on show in, for example, a reputation for violence, or of having a large and loyal crew as backup, having the ability to generate money from drug sales, avoiding arrest and legal complications (or at least handling them without disrespecting or implicating the gang or other associates) and being possessed of the interpersonal power that enables the control of those around you such that no one speaks or acts against you either within the gang or to civilians, rivals, or law enforcement. All of these factors go into the broadcasting and maintenance of identity and, therefore, the creation and maintenance of social and professional calculability and a sense of order.

Not long after I was stopped while waiting for the bus, I began spending a lot of time with a local gang member, who I call Pits, whose group was allied with New York

City Bloods gangs. In 2003, and for a few years that followed, rising tensions between local crack selling gangs and crews raised the issue of how much loss Pits might incur if rival crews did an armed raid or arson attack on their main stash house, which was located in the center of the contested neighborhood territory, and where they also split up and packaged the drugs into small retail size quantities. The more that Pits thought about the risks involved in the location, the more they all came down in favor of getting a stash house elsewhere.

Pits understood that the local rivals were not limited to street attacks on rival crews, and he believed it to be a matter of time before the rivalry "moved off the street". As the rivalry intensified throughout 2003 and into 2004, so too did Pits' concerns over potential losses. By spring 2004 he strongly suspected that their rivals might attack his public housing stronghold before the summer was over. Pits compulsively read articles about drug crews and busts, in lifestyle magazines such as *Don Diva* and *F.E.D.S.* From these tales, Pits concluded that any attack on his crew's stronghold would attract more attention from the police and media, and could cause residents, anti-gang and anti-drug activists, and the media to lean on the city to "fix the 'hood". He had read many stories of crews who had gone from "flossing … to a bid, like, overnight, because they didn't switch it up." In an environment of unchecked and violent neighborhood drug rivalries, it seemed that without finding some way to adapt their practices they were destined for prison or the morgue.

With all that in mind, in mid-2004, a new property was rented about 20 blocks from the old stash house. This corner of the borough was more industrial, with pockets of commercial zoning, where gentrification had not yet pushed police to clean it up or

developers to refurbish properties and increase rents; it was a cheap and more secure location for a stash house. And so, at this new location, crewmembers and peewees began to process, prepare, and package cocaine and crack for retail sale, and Pits took the opportunity to formalize some of the workflow practices, instituting new rules to streamline and regulate the production side of the enterprise.

The Spot

Exiting the subway, I tracked the expressway, walking south and west before I crossed to the south side. I passed tenement buildings, scrap and auto yards, abandoned lots, burned out and semi-collapsed properties. Almost every building wore signage alerting the passer-by that the premises were protected by man-eating dogs, or armed guards. The only security guards I saw were sleeping, drinking beer and playing cards or dice with friends, or watching television. The scrap yards and auto body yards, all had chain-rattling, snarling, growling dogs pushing their muzzles against the bottom of the corrugated iron sliding gates, aggressively huffing and snarling into the tiny space between the gate and the ground, challenging passers by to step any closer. Abandoned lots contained burned out cars and upturned oil drums, the ground littered with everyday household trash – children's toys, clothes, shoes, and small items of furniture, stuff that no one had seen fit to salvage. Sidewalks were littered with the small Ziploc baggies of the retail drug trade: cooked metal bottle caps and aluminum foil, used syringes, and the occasional broken crack pipe.

Turning east, I walked past a local bar, where smashed out windows had been replaced with plywood and acrylic sheeting behind metal bars. I crossed the street and dipped down an alley between two properties, taking a shortcut to a mixed-use residential

and industrial street. At the end of the alley, I turned left and called Pits to ask him to meet me outside. The Spot was only a few doors down and although I knew the guys who would be hanging out on the stoop – similar in rank to the 'foot soldiers' described in Venkatesh and Levitt (2000). I always preferred it when Pits walked me in.

The Spot was a four-floor brick walk up multifamily property (including the basement) with a small fenced-off front yard area, concrete steps, worn siding, and peeling paint trims. No one knew who owned the building, Pits believed it may be the man to whom he paid the rent – a Sikh taxi driver who came to collect the rent in his taxicab, stopping outside without getting out of the car or killing the engine. 'The Sikh' only accepted cash, asked no questions, and never made demands or caused problems. Pits always had the money ready when he arrived.

Packaging, storage, and production occupied the upper floors. The top floor was sparsely furnished and occasionally Pits would use it to entertain women and crewmembers. Mostly this was his 'office', where he kept an eye on everything going on below. Pits had installed extensive video surveillance, covering the block, the back and front yards, the sidewalk directly in front of the building, the front door and vestibule area, stairwell and basement, and every room in the different units. He often sat up in the office, smoking weed while obsessively watching the street and the rooms below on his monitors.

The crew didn't sell directly from The Spot. Pitchmen and runners picked up powder and crack cocaine from the second floor, which was usually buzzing with a clubhouse environment, where crewmembers gossiped and bragged about the latest sneakers, phones, jewelry, and other toys that their drug moneys had bought them. This

was similar to other stash houses I visited, with one exception: crewmembers here were all more heavily armed than the average crewmember I had seen at other locations. Two main factors were involved in this: first, they were in the midst of a violent rivalry, a drug war as the media called it; second, this was a larger operation than others, and there was therefore more product and money stored her, necessitating greater attention to security measures.

Workers had to drop their coats and bags on the second floor when they clocked in for work, and there was a strict dress code. Cooks, who were mostly males, were allowed to wear loose fitting jeans, sweatpants, cargo pants, baseball caps, sneakers, and hoodies, there was less opportunity for them to steal product and they were more trusted employees. Those employed in cutting and bagging were usually peewees and women, expected to wear minimal and form fitting clothing and to leave their shoes at the entrance to the packaging suite. This was to prevent product-theft by making it much more difficult to surreptitiously stash drugs in a sneaker or pocket. At other operations, employees worked shirtless or in their underwear or bikinis, for the same reason. Cutters and baggers also wore latex gloves and facemasks, in order to protect against them accidentally getting high from the cocaine dust hanging in the air.

Pits tried not to employ users, and on the rare occasion that someone was discovered to be using they would be immediately removed from their position and Pits might reallocate them to tasks that didn't involve drug production and sales. The women in cutting and bagging roles at The Spot were low on the drug market hierarchy and most considered their role there to be a 'side hustle' or temporary employment. For those who were also in school, this claim wasn't necessarily untrue, as long as they didn't remain

involved for too long or build a police record. Some women had believed that putting in time on the cutting and bagging floor would create mobility for them in the organization, but soon realized that the gender barriers were considerable: “I want to run shit too. Why not? I can fight. What they got that I don’t, what makes them so much better? Half the niggas up in there don’t even know how to count.” Two women later took prominent dealing roles with the crew, but they were nonetheless regarded as something of a novelty and didn't’ move up in the organization.

The Spot had a large basement, as I mentioned earlier. This was used as the location for what they called “getting answers.” Crewmembers who committed serious infractions, such as stealing or snitching, might be held in the basement and questioned. A few rival gang members, and the occasional addict or prostitute had been taken there and beaten for information. “Getting answers” amounted to what we would consider torture. The methods used ranged from beatings (sometimes with weapons), being cut, branded, shocked with electricity, or imprisoned for long periods without basic necessities. There were dog cages with padlocks, where individuals had allegedly been held, sometimes with an unfriendly canine fighter to keep them company. Others, I was told, had allegedly been used as human bait for defense-training bull terrier fighters, without the benefit of protective suiting that professionals use to prevent injury when training defensive or fight dogs.

The basement was rarely used. But when it was, the action was serious and violent. The typical sanction, however, did not entail this level of violence and so basement-sanction events were not the most common employed by Pits’ crew. The most common ways of sanctioning crewmembers involved fines, humiliation, or the

withdrawal of social support. These sanctions were most successful when they exerted control over the individual's social power and status – money and respect – in some combination, undermining their identity and sense of calculability in the ways that they experienced their social and professional lives. Absence from meetings and work incurred fines, and street lookouts, pitchmen, and dealers were fined for wandering off from their posts or failing to show up for their shifts on time. Fines could range from a day's sales to an undetermined amount that one crew chief, Rev, described to me as "paid when it's paid."

Reputation, Power, And Status

The crews I spent time with coveted two things in particular: respect and money, specifically, the accumulation and display of both. Social and professional lives were structured around the pursuit of money and respect, with every interaction involving a jockeying for recognition of status. Status came from being possessed of local power, the ability to control ones own life by controlling the lives of others, and was broadcast to a larger audience by displaying possessions intended to indicate affluence. If they could 'put some money together' they felt as if they were 'somebody', respected, powerful. Wealth, savings, long-term security and financial stability were less important than creating the impression of prosperity and success.

This impression was communicated by wearing ostentatious costume jewelry and 'designer' labels, by having expensive custom work done on automobiles (rims, window tints, stereo systems), by getting expensive hair and nails, and dressing children in head-to-toe 'designer' logos, all to give an impression even if the cost meant that the gas or cable bill went unpaid; people on the street did not know about an individual's cable or

gas situation, all they could see is ‘how fresh you look’ on the corner, and what that indicates.

This was ‘flossing’, but it wasn’t the hollow performance it may seem at first glance: impressions mattered here; showing off in this was an important means of broadcasting one’s identity, status, and power. There was a strong connection between how hard someone flossed and the local power that they had. The individuals who flossed the hardest, who were the flashiest, were often seen as better or higher status than others. Not only did impression matter, local power was a non-trivial factor in these performances: those without it who were ostentatious in the ways I mentioned risked being jumped and robbed. An individual could only safely floss if people knew that the person wasn’t to be messed with and, for the most part, in gang neighborhoods, gang members and trusted affiliates are the only individuals with that security. There was, therefore, a strong connection between how hard someone flossed, their possession of local power, and the degree to which they were able to secure local control. Anyone who wanted to show off their ‘wealth’ without having this cause problems needed to be sure that they had a reputation for being “someone no one else is gonna fuck with”, as one of Pits’ crewmembers remarked.

The most direct way of developing this reputation was to have a strong crew surrounding them and to become known as fearless in the doling out of physical violence. Everyone had a different take on violence, some saw it as the only way of commanding respect, and others went out of their way to avoid it. Explaining to me where he drew the line, Mowf said:

> I stuck to my guns, I got, like I wouldn't um, I'm not robbing any kids and if anyone says anything about it … then fuck you. I could justify it. You're a punk if you fuck around with a kid or old people. Everything else I mean, luckily it never got to the point of fucking catching a body where it just like 'yo I need you to murder this person'. We got out like before gunplay was heavily involved. … Like the older dudes were killing each other. That didn't really start happening, maybe right after that I guess, that's when all the young kids started getting guns. … I fucking punched this one dude in his face who was in my gang coz he said he punched his grandmother in the mouth. So I just fucking wigged out on him, it was like, what are you going to do, whatever.

Distinguishing oneself as a member of a loyalty and honor-bound group, immersing oneself in that group, adhering to its code of conduct, adopting it's norms and rituals, adopting its language and dress codes, creates powerful in-group effects. Members preached about how civilians weren't this loyal, couldn't understand the deep obligations of the codes of honor, and so even if civilians in 'better' neighborhoods had more money, more toys, better jobs, or simply easier lives, crew members had, as one peewee told me, 'Honor. There's loyalty here. No civilian, no cop, no fucking DA taking that. It's inside me.' As Mowf put it, being in a gang had made him expect more from his friends, saying:

> 'I expect more out of people than what you get coz it's just like there's certain things that you know you get with a gang. Loyalty. So it's just like you expecting things out of regular civilians and they don't get it. They wig out. But these are all things that under a gang you just, like, it's the normal, it's expected. So you tend to hold onto some of those values… The way I relate to people is that either you're in my gang or you're not. Once I have decided in my head that someone's in my gang I expect certain things out of them, you know what I'm saying. So it's like I totally come across situations all the time where there's no loyalty there's disrespect and it's cool coz you're not in my gang so don't expect that from me. It's just like, that way it's a way of life forever.

Mowf gave examples of times when he refused or otherwise got himself out of robbing or assaulting someone that his crew expected him to attack in order to beef up their group reputation or status. These were instances when he was expected to 'put in work' for his crew, by robbing or beating a specific target, not usually another gang member. In order to uphold his personal refusal to attack someone smaller or weaker than himself he would do things to ensure that he failed to fulfill the beating or robbery with which he had been tasked. His usual tactic was to tip off the intended victim in order that they could make a safe escape, and without him losing face.

> I remember one time I ran up to this kid – coz they wanted to rob him and they told me to do it so I turned the corner and I told him to fucking run, I was like "Yo! Run!" And he's like "What?" And I'm like "Yo, just run, there's a bunch of dudes behind me who all want what you have" and he just started running. And I was like [*snaps fingers*] "missed him." And you always going to have motherfuckers like "you're a fucking liar" know what I mean; you just talk your way out of it. It was fucking all for a fight.

The threat of violence is constant where we find individuals and groups competing for limited resources (customers, sales, turf), and particularly where they have easy access to guns, and are more acclimated to their use. Some people are more violent than others, regardless of their involvement in the extralegal economy, and I observed with gang members the same thing that Cottino (2009) said of his observations of criminal actors in the Mafia.[42] Even when the actual performance of violence is uncommon, the threat hovers, supported by individual and group reputations, and is loaded with notions of honor, loyalty, and respect:

> If you disrespected me. … If you disrespect me then I'm going to have to fight you. … If any one of my friends or close gang

> members got killed that means I'm gonna have to kill someone, you know what I mean. So in those terms thank god none of us close died. That had happened, that's what's going to happen next, … retaliation. It's just like, oh God, please don't let it go to that. Luckily it never went to that.
>
> *Mowf*

Pits, on the other hand, ran a large drug operation which he could not have done without being known to have access to guns, and a willingness to use them, and consequently he never went anywhere without one. I once joked with him that he probably took a gun with him when he got up to go to the bathroom in the middle of the night. He looked at me like it was a stupidly obvious remark to have made.

A gang's reputation for violence can be enhanced by broadcasting the details of recent acts of violence, using mostly informal channels such as neighborhood gossip networks. One very important aspect of gang violence is the extent to which it becomes broadcast for the purpose of making the group appear to be more powerful or fearsome. Criminal and non-criminal reputation can be enhanced by selectively broadcasting achievements and successes, such as when the Guggenheim Foundation prints a list of fellowship award winners in the New York Times; the personal *and* professional reputations of the awardees are enhanced for having been deemed eligible for such an award. When families send around lengthy lists of their children's accomplishments in Christmas cards, they selectively choose the life events that enhance their standing, rarely do such letters include announcements about divorce, mental breakdowns, addiction, arrests, dropping out of college, losing a job or home, or filing for bankruptcy. Similarly, gangs try to broadcast the things that lend authenticity to their preferred identity, one of toughness, power, and local status.

Often, gang members will deploy neighborhood gossip and social media to broadcast these claims. In my fieldwork, they broadcast sanctions that had been enforced and made general and specific threats, all in order to buff up the reputation of a carefully curated identity. They post photos and videos of beatings and shootings, fights and gatherings, of crewmembers waving guns around, counting stacks of cash, and weighing out large quantities of drugs for sale. This all enhanced group and individual reputations, publicized their power moves, and warned rivals and 'non-affiliates', all of which contributed substantially to the constructed group and individual identity.

Sanctions made public by ensuring that "the whole 'hood knows" can be a powerful preventative against behavior that deviates from a group's expected standards and norms. As well as serving as an effective method of in-group message delivery, with strong reputational effects, broadcasting can also bolster the status and power of the individual or group to another audience. GQ, a gang member in his early twenties from Harlem, who had served time in prison for violent assault, insisted on showing me video footage of a recent street fight he had been involved in that had sent the victim to hospital with serious injuries. He had uploaded the video to the Internet, and when I expressed surprise that they would put something online that was so very evidentiary, he didn't care. Instead, GQ felt that the reputation and status effects that would accrue by broadcasting this fight in this way easily outweighed any potential negative repercussions. I asked him what would happen if the NYPD saw the video, but he said, laughing, "And what they gon' do? Nah, we all masked up, can't get us for nothin' there. Ain't nobody gon' snitch we do the same to them. [The] minute this went online niggas like, YEAH!"

Broadcasting of this nature can create rapid status elevation, but comes with increased risks of getting caught. Furthermore, inappropriate or unnecessarily excessive violence can have a negative reputational effect[43] and can cause rifts in groups such as these. Ty, a member of GQ's crew, didn't take too kindly to GQ filming and uploading footage to the internet, especially since he then went around the neighborhood telling everyone that it had been posted and where they could find it. Ty complained,

> He's an asshole. He's too violent and he gets angry over nothing. Every time he does something he gets busted. No one even *needs* to snitch on him; he snitches on his own damn self with his big mouth. I try not to be on the block with that fool, but, you know, sometimes you just gotta… I dunno, one day he'll get someone killed over his big fucking mouth. Trust me on that.

Mowf, similarly, spoke of not getting too close to fellow crew members who he saw as being too quick to get into fights and disagreements that turned violent and of how and why he kept them at arm's length:

> Like you have those individuals within a gang that like if you try and disrespect anyone they are at you and those are the people that you like around you just like pit bulls like, you get like psychopaths. I wasn't that type of dude, like I would get involved but it was just like if you said something to my man I'm gonna look at him like yo you need to handle that know what I'm saying. Like if it gets out of like then of course I'm gonna jump in. I'm not gonna be like, yo why you talking to my man like that you know I'm just like on somebody like that. It's certain levels. Like I'll throw my hands for somebody but I'm not just going to be proactive. Those were the dudes who got the crazy names. But if you disrespect me, then I'm gonna have to fight you. If one of my friends or close gang members got killed, that means I'm gonna have to kill someone.

The more violence one is involved in, the higher the likelihood of being caught, and therefore of being more closely scrutinized and observed by law enforcement or

other state agencies. And being involved in 'extra' violence, draws extra attention from law enforcement and, as Mowf describes, can also create negative and long lasting reputational effects that are hard to shake even if the behavior or association ends. Whitey, a retired gang member from the Bronx who had left New York in order to leave gang life and the reputation he had acquired in his time, an attempt to 'try to go straight', told me about the difficulties that he had faced in this effort:

> Every time there was a fight I'd get picked up. It got to the point where I either had to leave town or stay inside or I was gonna get set up bad. I was getting banged up on fights I didn't even *know* about. It was bananas. Like, I know I had the rep and all that, but if I'm at the Rivvy [*Orchard Beach in the Bronx*] & shit goes down in my 'hood, how you gonna snatch me getting off the six with sand in my kicks. And make that shit *STICK*! I was never gonna win up here.
>
> *Whitey*

All that said, a little bit of violence goes a long way in the worlds in this thesis. Excessive violence is almost always indicative of turf battles and rivalries, rather than everyday business or internal disputes. The potential negative effects of excessive violence were often seen as a necessary risk, adopted in the pursuit of enhanced reputation and an increase in perceived loyalty and honor that came from putting in work for one's gang, particularly when that work entailed increased risk of personal physical harm or arrest. Even gang members who would not otherwise commit violence, were motivated to do so by the knowledge that it would enhance their standing in the group, and differentiate between them and regular people.

Throughout 2004, the constant threat of violent outbursts and shootings hung heavy over our little corner of the South Bronx. The crack turf rivalry went unchecked for

over a year and everyone expected one or the other or both groups would soon be rounded up by the NYPD. When they weren't, after a while it seemed as if they were untouchable, which only increased the universal sense of waves of unease. The tension was palpable, even throughout the winter, a period when emotions and incidents usually cool off in gangland, along with the weather. This year, there was little cool-off. But The Spot was in good shape and the street sales force were continuing to make sales.

The status quo in the neighborhood was such that any sense of order that my subjects felt emerged from the stability that was maintained in the drug enterprise, despite the ongoing turf rivalry. Business was good, better than ever, The Spot was running smoothly, and Pits was surrounded by a crew of productive individuals who repeatedly demonstrated their loyalty to him and to each other. Calculability for this group and the individual members, emerged out of the relationships and interactions of daily life, grounded in notions of reputation, loyalty, and respect, despite the challenges brought about by their immediate environment and the persistent sense of imminent upheaval.

The Balance

Pits' general concerns were simple: "make money, stay out of jail, don't get punked." Most of the time this worked out pretty well: there was a huge powder- and crack-cocaine market to satisfy, and even during a drug war this could be done with relatively little fuss as long as one's crew was strong and loyal, which was the case for Pits. As Venkatesh and Levitt (2000) point out in their economic analysis of a gang's books, as long as street violence doesn't reach levels that it is off-putting to customers, business will go on. Moving the stash house a few blocks had the side benefit of reducing

the effects of the turf-war, at least lowering the likelihood of street-clearing shootings and drive by attacks. At least, that's how it appeared to Pits.

Pits ran his operation more thoughtfully than I had expected a drug crew would be run, and more strategically than other younger and smaller crews I had observed. He also put money and other resources into securing loyalty in the local neighborhood. When business was particularly strong, Pits outsourced some tasks to other local sets, in order to, as he said, "keep the balance, I gotta keep the balance". By this, he meant that as long as he "paid in", paid his dues in the neighborhood – treating local 'civilians' well in order to secure their loyalty – they would continue to turn a blind eye or to even assist his crew. If he could run his business in ways that continued to provide him with access to loyal workers and local support, he would have local control that permitted the calculability and sense of order he desired. However, if he stopped paying dues in this way, Pits feared he would lose the loyalty and respect of his crew, and that of local residents, and he could then become a target. And so Pits continuously endeavored to "keep the balance."

Keeping the balance spoke to order in three ways: (1) "make money" involved branding his product and giving it an identity that other crews associated with him, and which generated repeat customers; (2) "stay out of jail" involved staying on top of the relationship between his crew and civilians in the local area; (3) "don't get punked" was covered by monitoring and regulating his crew, and closely observing the behavior of the local market as well as staying on top of in-group relational enforcement and regulation.

Branding

As young dealers rise in status, they move from lookout to pitchman to dealer to crew chief, and one day might have a brand to call their own, distributed through a

network of dealers, pitchmen, and street sellers. Local retail drug markets encourage branding for the purposes of recognition and reputation. Branding also has the distinctly salient feature of reducing information asymmetry, particularly when poor quality or dangerous mixes come to the market and dealers need to ensure that their customers knew where to go in order to, as Pits put it, "get that fire."[44]

Brand identity is powerful in competitive drug markets and is pursued by most retail and wholesale drug entrepreneurs. On the television series *Breaking Bad*, the chemistry teacher and meth cook Walter White unintentionally distinguishes his product on the market by producing high quality meth that takes on a blue tint from the particular precursor chemicals he used. White's meth became known as 'Blue Sky' and everyone in the market wanted to be involved. The *Mitsubishi* and *Dove* brand names[45] were synonymous with quality in the worldwide ecstasy markets in the early and mid-1990s. Rather than being owned by any particular gang, however, these brands indicated specific chemical formulations in the same way that marijuana hybrids are formulations rather than owned brands. Branding in the cocaine and heroin markets behaves on a more local level than in the markets for marijuana and synthetic drugs. In cocaine and heroin markets we find local brands owned by local dealers, and usually with a short lifespan of a few weeks or months before re-branding.

Branding often makes reference to pop culture or current events. In the 1990s *New Jack City* was a popular heroin brand in New York City, so-called after the popular movie of the same name. In 2012, *LeBron James* branded heroin was sold in Philadelphia, so called due to the strength, power, and popularity of the basketball player; the small plastic retail baggies of the drug were stamped with an image of LeBron

dunking a shot. For the way it indicates high potency, a skull or skull and crossbones branding is a perennial favorite, with small details in the image distinguishing between brands. Branding often emphasizes strength[46] or potency, or the type of high the user can expect. Shortly after the attacks on the World Trade Center, *9/11* brands emerged, as did *al Qaeda* and *bin Laden* brands – mawkish reference to the dangerous potency the sellers were suggesting users would get from their product. Potency is a strong selling point as it promises increased likelihood of achieving the 'virgin high' users constantly pursue. For the same reason, in the 1980s, the *C&C* crew, run by George Calderon and Angel Padilla distributed heroin under the brand name *D.O.A.*[47]

Unique to the powder cocaine market is the idea of branding by flavor, with Nesquik being used to add bulk, color and flavor to the drug. Strawberry Nesquik cocaine is very low purity, but popular among young middle class users in New York and Los Angeles, where it costs more than regular cocaine of double the purity. Dealers charge a premium for the product because they can, and users pay extra for the coolness factor, and the flavor, which they find more pleasant. Branding cocaine using Nesquik also allows dealers to monitor sellers who may otherwise be cutting drugs on the side to make extra cash, and allows dealers to monitor sellers who may be moonlighting for other dealers. Pits stamped his Ziploc baggies with a cartoon image of a snarling pit bull, drawn up for him by a talented peewee nicknamed Disney. The brand logo was clean, simple, and sent the message that this cocaine was strong and aggressive. And, importantly, it sent the same message about Pits and his crew.

In local drug markets, if one dealer adopts the branding of another in a way that can be construed as being intellectual property theft or brand piggybacking, there will be

violence. Competition is expected, but brand theft or piggybacking on another's reputation is a serious offense. During the 2005-2006 winter holiday season, Pits learned that a small and fairly juvenile crew near Yankee Stadium had been claiming that they were selling for Pits and his crew. Pits did not know how long this situation had been going on, but it came to light when he had introduced red and green "Christmas baggies" as a holiday branding exercise in the hope that it would give business a boost. Pits pointed out that his "holiday promotion," which wasn't so much a promotion as a marketing ploy, was not only good business sense, but that they had a duty to do this sort of product branding around the Christmas period, given that their the Bloods and their affiliates traditionally rep red and green: "Christmas colors ma, come on, that's hot! We *are* Christmas! Look! [*holding his scarf to his chin like a beard*] I'm fucking Sammy Claus!"

He also bought hundreds of mini candy canes at a local food wholesaler, which were supposed to be given out as holiday treats. The candy canes idea fell flat though, when crew members wouldn't stop eating them, and complained to Pits about the complications of carrying bulk candy canes in their pockets when they were out on the street: they faced difficulties with the bulk of the canes, and when local junkies found out about the candy they began to pester crewmembers for freebies: They knew they wouldn't get free cocaine or crack, but they might get a free candy cane, all of which created risk by bringing attention to the street sellers. The promotion ended before it even took off, with dozens of wholesale boxes of candy canes left sitting in the stash house, earning Pits the nickname 'Candyman', somewhat mocking his tough crew boss identity.

The juvenile crew hadn't introduced candy canes, and continued to sell in regular clear baggies when all of Pits' team was pushing the red and greens, and as someone had noticed, the pitbull logo on the juveniles' baggies wasn't snarling like it was on Pits' baggies. Soon enough, the neighborhood gossip mill returned the information to Pits. When the piggybacking was brought to Pits' attention, the first decision he had to make was how much of a message to send and how broadly to send it. He had to be seen to do something, copying his branding was a serious violation and would very quickly become common knowledge on the streets. Were he seen to ignore it or to let them off easily, he would lose a considerable amount of status and power, and would be putting out the message that he would not retaliate against disrespect toward him or his crew. That couldn't happen. At the same time, a young crew likely has ties to an older crew and Pits had to consider the possibility that they could fire back at him in support of their affiliates. If this were to happen, Pits' crew could find themselves fighting on two fronts: turf rivals on one side and the piggybacking crew on the other. He needed to decide how public his retaliation needed to be in order to get the word out that his crew would not tolerate the disrespect. But he needed to do this without overdoing the public nature of the message, which would have would created additional risk by drawing attention to the act of retaliation, and would also make it more likely to kick off another rivalry with any senior crew with whom these youngsters might be affiliated. Branding practices and promotions were expressions of identity, of boundary making, and of power and status, and Pits didn't want to start something; he just wanted to keep the balance.

The situation found resolution without Pits' crew having to sanction the juvenile crew: First, Pits learned who they were and from that information he learned who had

their backs. He knew of the older crew, had met some of them, but did not have a relationship with any of them and so he could not approach them directly for this situation without it causing problems. One of his female friends worked at a cell phone store on the Grand Concourse, where she was friendly with a co-worker who was dating someone involved in the senior affiliate crew so Pits gave her a message for him, to let him know that his peewees were acting up and may be starting something that they (the peewees) would not be able to handle without the older guys intervening on their behalf or stepping up to fight for them. The peewees were in serious trouble – not only for instigating a rivalry, but also for claiming association with another crew; this was the height of disrespect.

Mutual Regulation & Enforcement

In pursuit of "the balance", Pits enforced the 'good' behavior of his crewmembers using physical, social, and financial sanctions. He constantly monitored them, for example by driving past sales spots or recruiting younger neighborhood residents to be his surveillance team for a few dollars a week. At times deviant crewmembers would be punished without their knowledge, being unwittingly cut out of a profit, or being given slow and unprofitable or high-risk posts on the street. Complaints were invariably met with Pits responding with some vague and noncommittal promise that they would be put on a better post as soon as one came available, or would be brought in on a 'solid hustle' the next time one came up. *Rev*, who ran a small crew under Pits' authority, and who was particularly adept at the surveillance of his sales force, explained, "I listen, yeah, but I don't say anything. Maybe "no doubt, something comes up I got you", or, like that, you

know what I mean. But then nothing ever comes up. Honestly, I usually forget like a minute later anyway."

Regulation and enforcement required that Pits was aware of what everyone was doing, at all times. Most importantly, he needed to be able to find out what they were doing that they didn't want him to know about. He accomplished this in two ways, first by being present, walking past the corners where his peewees were supposed to be working on making sales, or driving around the neighborhood keeping an eye out for anyone who wasn't where they were supposed to be, and, second, "pulling in youngsters for eyes and ears." Rev was lower ranking than Pits, he ran a smaller crew but he faced the same task of figuring out how to best handle observation-surveillance and discipline. Some of Rev's crewmembers saw this as an opportunity to show him what they could do, in the hope of a promotion or other honor. Just as the avoidance of humiliating or financially costly sanctions motivates group members to good behavior, so too the promise of future rewards, usually in the form of increased status or earnings, serves as a powerful incentive to the normative behavior of mutually regulated actors. For Skids, the possibility of earning a promotion was his motivation to "do right by Rev":

Skids: If I do right by *Rev* he'll give me more responsibility. That means more money. More power. That's what's up.

RHF: So how do you earn that? Do you have to make x amount for him? Or is it just, you know, up to him?

Skids: Yeah, it up to him. I dunno, he moves people around when he needs to. I've never been moved down so he gotta be about ready to move me up.

RHF: What about if he doesn't?

Skids: What? Um, I dunno. I just wait. What else am I gonna do?

Skids benefitted from his work ethic, and what seemed to be an understanding that he could use the constant surveillance of the crew and their affiliates to further his career, but others lost out by choosing to fight the surveillance and the work requirements rather than using them to their advantage. One of the sales force, *A-Rab*, in his mid-to-late teens, would get quite heated whenever I asked him about the rules, which he had a reputation for breaking, and the punishments to which he was frequently subjected. On one such occasion he said to me:

> I can't get away with *nothing*, yo. I take a shit and someone gonna report it to Rev. I know he's trying to keep his business on lock, but it's too much ma. When you're at work you can leave, go get something to eat, what have you, right? I go get a fucking Happy Meal he's blowing up my shit "where the fuck you at? Why you sleeping on my money?" Blah de blah. All 'cause some bitch wanted rock and I wasn't on the block for like thirty fucking seconds.

Different crews handled discipline in different ways, but most workers reported that they thought their relationship with their boss or chief to be of huge importance in how sanctions worked. Feen, a regularly fined pitchman for Rev, took a sanguine view of the fines he constantly had to pay from his take. In Feen's view of his relationship with Rev, the behavior that led to his being fined did not create tension between them, and he believed that by always letting Rev know what he was doing and where he would be, there wouldn't be any issues: "I tell him if I'm staying home or going downtown, you know, sometimes you just gotta do other stuff. Yeah, I pay the fine still, but at least he won't be extra about it and I'll be cool for next time. Sometimes he lets it slide, we're cool like that, we're tight." But Rev was more dismissive of Feen than Feen realized, because of this unprofessional attitude he took to their relationship and to his role:

"Always missing shifts" Rev said, "I've given up. I fine him, I give him shit corners, he's just filling in space. We probably make more from his fines than we could from business where he sits so I leave it be."

I observed similar disconnects in a number of crew relationships, and found that there was another benefit to keeping less devoted workers like Feen in the crew: sacrifice. When Rev felt that there was too much police activity, he felt he could put Feen out on the street in a sacrificial way, knowing he would likely be picked up by the NYPD. While Feen was unreliable, he was unwaveringly loyal and devoted to Rev, and Rev knew this. If Feen was convicted of a dealing charge, he would do his time without snitching out Rev or other crewmembers. After a few arrests in a turf, the NYPD usually moved on to another block or another area. When Feen was released Rev would give him a status promotion (albeit one that did not involve additional responsibility) and the relationship between the two would continue in much the same way.

When crewmembers tried to front, tried to act as Rev's equals, he would demonstrate his power by 'streeting' them, sending them out to work on the street corner in the inferior roles of lookouts and pitchmen. This didn't win him much trust and loyalty, but he got a kick out of it and anyone who fought against his decisions to street them did so with the understanding that their protest may cause him to sacrifice them for arrest. Decisions to street someone rarely came from committee votes, and often seemed arbitrary, lacking predictability, and at times seemed more personal than professional. But for the most part, streeted workers kept their grumbling at a low volume.

There were occasions, however, when there had been clear violations of common sense rules and streeting the individual was a rational response. A-Rab, for

example, was 'streeted' for breaking the rules against letting non-affiliates hang out at the stash house when he brought a girl there who he had met that night at a club. It was not unknown for male workers to bring girls back that they were trying to impress, but it was a serious violation and A-Rab just happened to get caught by Rev. The girl in question was new in town, unknown to the others, and Rev and A-Rab had no reason to trust her with the information that she had learned by taking her to the house. While this was not a case of dishonesty or disloyalty, it was nonetheless a serious violation: everyone understood the issue of bringing strangers to the stash house; Rev demoted A-Rab and banned him from all locations where product was stored. In order to show his loyalty to Rev, A-Rab was forced to spend the winter on the street, hustling dime bags with peewees almost ten years his junior. A-Rab felt deeply humiliated when streeted for his error, especially so because it was the middle of winter "freezing to death like some fucking fiend. Girls knowing I'm on my knees" and he was unable to therefore brush it off as something that was okay to be out there. He had learned a lesson, though, as did those who observed Rev's enforcement, and a very important stash house rule was reinforced across the group.

Pits sometimes combined physical sanctions with public humiliation, with the full extent of the physical aspect to the sanctions being relationship based, and usually going through a committee vote. Crew chief's rules were theirs to enforce, and did not typically result in physical sanctions, but other rule violations may be subject to group discussion, especially when it came to more serious and physically enforced violations. Elaborate physical sanctions, such as those involving a number of enforcers or very public enforcement, required a consensus between crew chief and other ranked group members.

This could be thought of as a committee vote, but should not be confused with being a formal process. While necessary and formally binding, 'committee' votes that I observed materialized in strip clubs, bars, and weed-smoke filled apartments. This is not to dismiss the authority of the vote; while these votes took place in a more relaxed environment than we would usually associate with corporate board decisions, they were nonetheless formally binding executive decisions, and were seriously deliberated.

On one occasion, a crewmember by the name of Tiny was caught stealing: "He'd been taking cash, taking product to sell on the side. On his, not on us." Pits and some other crewmembers took Tiny down to southern Queens, where they dumped him in a neighborhood well known for a history of racial tensions. Tiny was drunk, stoned, and half naked, and the assumption was that Tiny would not be particularly safe in his condition:

> So we scoop nigga up from his grandmomses. Mother's Day. I'll never forget that, he's all church clothes and some shit, going on after with "moms dukes gonna be mad." Fam was laughing at him, like "nigga, your *mom* gonna be mad? *That's* what you're worried about right now?" … Sike took his clothes, everything, left him in his shorts & kicks. [*laughing*] … miracle he didn't get lynched.

Everyone believed Tiny was at risk of getting into more trouble in that part of Queens, and some sort of altercation was expected, given his condition. This effectively made it a potentially physical sanction, without anyone on the crew needing to assault him. Some crewmembers felt that Tiny was getting off too lightly, and would have preferred to take him to the basement. Pits, however, disagreed. Fortunately for Tiny, the committee voted for humiliation and risk rather than the basement. This vote came through in part because others had dropped the ball by failing to catch Tiny's small thefts

over the course of several months: “But I’m like, it ain’t worth a body first off, and someone should’ve spotted this sooner. Like, whose fucking job was it to check the accounts, you know? But he couldn’t just be allowed to walk on that.” Adding to the humiliation, before abandoning Tiny, they also took his wallet, which contained the Metro Card he needed to ride the subway or a city bus: “By the time he got back uptown the whole ‘hood knew bout it. We took his clothes and wallet to his baby moms place & he had to go begging her for his stuff.” After he had taken his punishment, Tiny was allowed to remain in the crew.

Control and Order

Violence between Pits’ crew and their turf rivals, while done in pursuit of economic success and local status, brought about their demise. Pits’ decision to relocate his production and storage operations certainly lengthened his crew’s lifespan, although it is hard to say by how much. They were ultimately broken up in later rounds of busts. In my fieldwork, I observed and heard of extralegal entrepreneurs in a variety of businesses being violent, but more frequently I learned of instances of individuals and groups rejecting violence in favor of other types of action. This was most frequently revealed with in-group action, cases where social sanctions were chosen over physical forms of punishment. In the next chapter, I show how independent drug entrepreneurs avoided physical violence in their pursuit of order and control, how this emerged in one-on-one interactions where their interactional behavior controlled customer behavior. And, where this interactional behavior combined with self-control, how their social and professional interaction formula worked to control risk and establish order.

CHAPTER THREE: CREDIT & GUNS

"Hey babe!" I jump into the car, one of many that JoJo has had since the start of our friendship a number of years ago: sports cars, muscle cars, trucks, sedans, he's gone through several. Some were written off in accidents, some he sold. Some, I had heard through mutual friends, had been repossessed. JoJo beamed a big smile at me, "what's good, nerd?" as he checked his rearview and wing mirrors, before gunning it into the heavy downtown traffic barreling down 7th Ave. I leaned over, gave him a theatrical kiss on the cheek, and asked if we could hang out for a few hours until I had to take the train back to Princeton in order to make it to a hockey game that evening.

JoJo and I frequently talked about hockey in the winter and spring. He had played at a respectable level as a teenager, and my appreciation for the game had been energized by the 'Cinderella story' performance of the Princeton Men's hockey team that season. It was my second year of graduate school and some of our ice hockey team were students in my Sociology 101 seminars. We chatted about other sports too – JoJo had been a recruited athlete at a large state school with a richly funded athletics program. After college, however, with no playing future and not knowing what career to pursue, he slid into the role of independent marijuana dealer without particularly trying, not intending to make that his career. At first he was a middleman, bridging between acquaintances from his old neighborhood who had drugs to sell and friends in his new college student / graduate crowd in downtown Manhattan, who were searching for drugs to buy. His business grew rapidly, "in just a few weeks I was doing real money", and he found that he thoroughly enjoyed the lifestyle and sense of status. He "never looked back."

Turning to me, JoJo spluttered as he suppressed a cough, choking on the sour marijuana smoke in his lungs, waving a half-smoked dutch in my direction, he exhaled before taking another deep draw. “I gotta go downtown. We can go eat. I wanna check out some sneakers real quick too. Hockey. Huh. Still doing that? Playoffs yet?” Again, he waved the expertly rolled dutch in front of my nose, “I’m good for now sweetheart,” I said, gently pushing his hand away. “Go *ON*! Psssssh. What’s wrong with you girl? No fucking manners.” Laughing, I continued to shake my head. JoJo pinched the ember into the ashtray and dropped the extinguished dutch into a shallow tray in the car’s center console. The soot and tiny pieces of charred resinous weed on his fingers created a momentary distraction that took his entire focus, and he seemed confused about how to best handle the problem. Finally, he exhaled and licked his slightly burned fingers, briefly pausing to consider his jeans before he decided to rub his fingers on the inside of the front pocket of his hoodie. With his right hand tangled in his hoodie pocket, JoJo used his left hand to lower the windows to let the smoke out, momentarily steering the car with his knee, as we careened down Manhattan’s West Side Highway, on our way to his customer, Nico. Passing Chelsea Piers, after an impromptu 20-block race with a Boxter, “…not a *real* fucking Porsche”, JoJo dropped below the speed limit, exiting the highway at Clarkson Street. A few minutes later we pulled up to Nico’s West Village apartment building.

JoJo called Nico’s cell phone and she came outside to meet us. As she walked over to the car JoJo popped open a secret compartment in his dashboard to get the marijuana, which he had packaged into small plastic jars, each containing an eighth or a quarter of an ounce – the most popular quantities for his everyday customers. JoJo

counted the jars in his lap, automatically doing a mental accounting as he did every time he opened the secret compartment, when Nico said, “Hey babe, I don’t have any cash on me right now. You wanna come by later and pick it up.” JoJo put the marijuana back into the stash compartment and closed it up again. “Sure Nic, but you know I can’t give you no piff without the cheddar.” She began to plead with him, in a lighthearted friendly tone that didn’t sound like desperation, but indicated her expectation that their relationship was such that he would have been more trusting of her: She didn’t have time to go to the bank that morning, she had to be somewhere soon, she promised she would pay him as soon as she had time to go to a cash machine. Her tone was slightly flirtatious, ending “C’mon boo”. JoJo still refused to give her weed on credit, so we gave Nico a ride to the bank, two blocks away, she withdrew the money and we drove her back home so she wasn’t late for her appointments.

I asked JoJo what had just happened: it seemed strange to me that someone would expect a dealer to give them drugs without the money being handed over until later, but if they were close enough that she could expect him to, then I didn’t understand why he wouldn’t. JoJo revealed to me how he earmarked the money he received from marijuana sales, a practice that detached him from any intimacy in his friendship with Nico. He explained that he categorizes drug money in different ways, distinct from his understanding of non-drug money – he would gladly loan Nico four hundred dollars outside the context of a drug transaction, which would entail a different mental accounting. But when it comes to drug transactions, he will not extend credit in a drug transaction, not for anyone, not ever: “That’s my homegirl” JoJo said, “I’ve known Nic for years. I know she’s got the money, but once I start handing out credit like that it gets

out of control… I'd forget who owed what and I'd wind up losing money. I smoke too much weed to have to remember that shit."

Debt & Disorder

At the retail level, it would be exceedingly rare for a drug dealer to provide credit lines to customers. Nonetheless, those I spoke to in the business all gave me examples of other dealers who, they claimed, had been caught out by doing so. One of their main reasons for not entering into these kinds of deals was because of the ways they would have to go about getting the debt taken care of if the customer wasn't so eager to pay it back. In the case of JoJo, he made it clear to me that he eschewed all forms of violence; I was surprised to learn that he doesn't carry a gun, despite having been shot a few years ago at one of his stash houses. His anti-violent approach to working as a drug dealer only succeeds if he doesn't allow customers to rack up debts.

As JoJo explained, if he started giving people drugs on credit the situation would one day inevitably arise when he would be chasing someone down over money, and at some point he would most likely need to threaten the debtor in an attempt to get them to pay up. The problem with threats is that where they don't have the desired effect, it will have to be acted upon (or, the debt abandoned). In JoJo's understanding of how these things work out, combined with his personal convictions and professional risk-aversion, the only way he can be non-violent is by never allowing his customers to put him in a position that could lead to him having to use threats.

JoJo's stance on guns emerged not only out of a concern that carrying a gun would result in his using it, but also because he understood that carrying one – even if he never used it – would create additional risk in his life. Without a gun, he knew that if his

car was pulled over and searched by the police they would only ever find him in possession of less than an ounce of marijuana and he would be released with a fine and a misdemeanor. This is a key quantity in the enforcement of marijuana laws in New York City: A New York Ounce is twenty-five grams, anyone in possession of more than that faces jail time.[48] But JoJo knew that even if he stayed under a NY Ounce, if he was also found to be in possession of a gun, he would be in very serious trouble. Drug possession of any quantity along with gun possession involves very serious charges, with each item intensifying the illegality of the other. New York City is known to take a very hard line on illegal firearms and despite our stereotype of the gun-toting-dealer, JoJo is certainly not the only drug dealer in the city to reject the image, refusing to own a gun in order to ensure he skates on the safe side of the city's gun laws.

I might have suspected that JoJo's pacifistic approach to his job was in some degree related to characteristics of the marijuana market that made it less violent than the markets for other drugs, or to the characteristics of his marijuana user clients. But I observed a similar aversion to violence with another subject, *Angel*, who delivered pills and cocaine to a client base that was similarly possessed of the money to afford their drugs, and with an average age range only slightly younger than JoJo's clients appeared to be. I did observe Angel acting in a more threatening manner on more than one occasion, and he freely admitted to "getting heated" with customers when money was on the line, but only with those who gave him pushback, and who he believed "ain't gonna do anything stupid."

In a business practice consistent with JoJo's refusal to offer credit, Angel's business is a zero-credit enterprise: "Having money out there distracts me, you know, it's

like having two different businesses, on the one I'm selling drugs on the other I'm handing out loans, nah, that's confusing, it makes me nervous." Angel's reluctance to physically sanction customers, and his reluctance to provide loans or credit to friends, had little to do with the protecting the friendship and everything to do with the potential costs: Friends had a lot of information about him and his business, and could easily set him up to be robbed or arrested if he gave them cause to feel retaliatory: "The worst enemy is that custie or that friend you was *just* down with, and now they want their pound of flesh." Just as JoJo resisted violence and gun ownership by refusing to hand out credit or loans, by refusing to hand out credit or loans, Angels refusal to involve himself in these things was motivated by a desire to protect his business, his freedom to do business, and his personal safety and liberty.

Aside from their relationship with guns and credit, JoJo and Angel had central concerns relating to their roles as independent entrepreneurs who don't deal with or rely upon employees or bosses, and who therefore need not concern themselves too greatly with the performance or behavior of others. But if something goes wrong, they have only themselves to blame and they alone will shoulder the consequences of any mistakes made in the course of their professional or social lives. Moreover, while they don't have to assume the risks that are associated with dealing in gangs or with crews, repairing any situation that arises is theirs to accomplish alone, without the benefit of a team with whom to figure out solutions and without the additional skills and knowledge others could bring to the table. For these dealers, control – and their pursuit of control – is revealed in their interactions, particularly with customers. These two men differed most obviously in contrasting stances on gun possession, as I will discuss, but for both of them,

by controlling their relationships with customers as well as controlling their relationships with violence and the tools of violence, they are able to establish control over central questions of identity – who they are – and how to balance the interactional demands of their everyday lives.

Angel and JoJo both sold drugs to educated professionals in their twenties and thirties, artists and writers, college students, and performers. They took on new business through referrals from existing customers and from friends, and in most of the transaction interactions I observed they both employed a friendly and relaxed demeanor. The notable difference in their two approaches to delivering drugs throughout New York City was that while JoJo outright refused to carry a gun, Angel rarely left home without one. Angel dated Sabrina, a dancer at a midtown Manhattan strip club where he regularly sold cocaine and ecstasy to her co-workers. I observed Angel's interactions with dancers and their friends as different from his interactions with female college student or young professional customers who were working their way up the corporate ladder in law, fashion, music, or banking. He adopted a tougher demeanor with his customers at Sabrina's strip club, and a softer and less threatening approach to his white-collar professional clients. Whenever Angel reported to me that there had been 'an incident' or 'some bullshit', in the context of his drug work, it invariably involved Sabrina or her friends and co-workers.

While Angel was slightly more willing than JoJo to allow violence, or at least the suggestion of violence, into his interactions – indeed he carried a gun almost every time he left home – he "didn't enter the coke game as a gun person". His relationship with guns changed a few years before we met, when he was "attacked on the street", robbed of

several thousand dollars and badly beaten. One side of Angel's face permanently displayed the scars from a box cutter used in the attack, which sliced from his hairline, narrowly missing his eye, across his cheek and down to his chin: "After that, shit, after that I always left the house strapped". He knew the gun would add to his woes if he was ever arrested by the police, but he justified his decision in such a way that not only prevented any disruption to his sense of order, but also reinforced it: "What if someone come at me with a piece next time? I'm supposed to what, hold my hands out and like, move the bullets like it's *The Matrix*? Fuck that. *I'm* blasting *first*."

Now while JoJo and Angel were both drug dealers, neither one had ever been a gang member, unlike my subjects in the drug gang. Many of Angel and Sabrina's childhood friends had been involved with gangs in the past, some still were, but Angel kept his distance. Particularly because he was in the cocaine business, Angel tried to "keep clean of all that." In JoJo's case, many of the younger men in his extended family – cousins and fictive kin – were gang members involved in sets of the 9-Trey Bloods. And some of his associates in a legal enterprise in which he was involved were also firmly associated with 9-Trey, in New York, Georgia, and North Carolina. Nonetheless, this didn't impose itself on his business, as he said to me when I asked about the gang affiliations of his family and his lack of drug territory – he sold where he wanted, without a gun:

> NYC isn't Cali. It's not a movie or nuthin'. It's better. *Laughs*. Um, it's, if you wanna sell weed you sell weed you know. Not one's gonna bother me. Unless, you know, unless I roll up in the projects like I'm gonna take over someone's spot. The projects, the hood, all that, it's all gangs, kids. But me, nah, I stay out the 'hood. People uptown, kids, they wilin'. Cops wilin' too, don't get me wrong. It's crazy uptown. People I deal with are all downtown anyway, like, my customers, they all on Wall Street, Tribeca & like downtown. So, um, yeah, but you know they [*his close friends & family members*] 9-Trey [*Bloods*] but I don't

> fuck with that. I mean, people know who I am, my rep is tight, my fam's rep is tight. I stay away from the bullshit. You dig, Rach, I'm good. I'm Gee-Oh-Oh-Dee Good. I'm chillin' [*Laughs*].

JoJo vehemently denied any involvement in 9-Trey, although for approximately a year and a half he hung a red bandana from the rearview mirror in his (red) car with its red rims. This made me question his claim because flagging in this way if you are not an affiliate, especially when you are a drug dealer, would be seen as a huge disrespect, a challenge to the power of the gang, which typically result in a retaliation, or at least a warning of some sort, from real Bloods. JoJo said that the bandana was for "no reason" and although it seems unlikely that someone in his position and line of work would be surrounded by members of a gang, which he periodically flagged without ever having been involved himself, every other aspect of his behavior in the nearly ten years of our fieldwork relationship and friendship gave me cause to believe his claim. Specifically, the language he used, the multitude of non-gang tattoos that were inked on his body, and his lack of discrimination against those who flagged Blood rivals.

Screwing Up

In the drug trade, a lack of discipline goes hand in hand with increased risk. In February 2010, this truism was exemplified by a man called Eddie, someone with whom I share mutual acquaintances. Eddie had been supplementing his legitimate income by selling a little weed, coke, and pills on the side. He had been making good money, so he started to sell a little more. Well, on the day in question, Eddie and his girlfriend Nat came home after a quiet night out, to discover the front door of their home wide open. Concerned that there may be someone inside tougher than them, maybe even armed –

they were, after all, not hardcore dealers, no match for the sort of people who might be intent on robbing them – they called the police. When the Bloomfield (NJ) patrol car responded to the call, Eddie gave them permission to enter the house where the officers found cocaine residue and bags of weed on the coffee table, and detected a strong smell of marijuana emanating from behind a door leading to the basement. The police walked down into the basement to discover a sizable growing operation – wall to wall marijuana plants, seventy-three in all, lighting, and hydroponics systems. Eddie's fear of other drug dealers, and of criminals more violent and calculating than himself, led to his entirely illogical decision to call the police, and landed him in prison for several years.

By all accounts, incidents such as this were very rare, so much so that Eddie's downfall was the topic of conversation for a number of people who knew him, for quite some time after the event. His behavior exemplifies why we often characterize this world as disorganized and disordered: While it may be incredibly rare for such things to happen, because these stories and reports of violence make for a good headline and are politically expedient, these are frequently the only things we hear about these markets, and thus these events distort our understanding of what this world is really like for those who make it their business.

However, there were other incidents that I observed of Angel and JoJo screwing up, not as catastrophically as Eddie, but which were nonetheless damaging either personally or professionally, or both. Towards the end of my fieldwork JoJo was cast in a film role by a friend who is a film director, but JoJo inexplicably failed to show up on set on the first day of filming. Everyone assumed that he had been unable to wake up on time due to his heavy marijuana use and "lazy attitude". Soon after this incident, some of

JoJo's customers let me know that they were using a different dealer, or looking for "a new guy." Some told me this in an attempt to find a new source, which I did not provide. They all said that JoJo had become "too unreliable" and, which was worse for his reputation, that he was very obviously lying to them. These lies were small, inconsequential fibs, but "that sleazy shit" was sufficient to convince even his long-term customers to find another dealer:

> He said he was on the block, but I was down there waiting for like fifteen minutes. He wasn't there. So, you know, I'm calling and calling, same as always, he's not picking up his phone and then when he finally does he's like, 'oh, dude, I left already, you weren't there.' What the fuck? Said he'd come back, but was all labored and shit, like it was my fault. You *know* dude was lying. Come *on* man, like I'm stupid? And I wouldn't care, took the asshole another two fucking hours to roll through. After that I was like, fuck it, I'm not dealing with him no more, he's too unreliable *and* he lies.

JoJo easily slipped into a lackadaisical mode of conducting business. He was also frequently distracted by his constant pursuit of moneymaking opportunities, mostly legal and usually short term or one-offs. These endeavors were, however, typically ill conceived in such a way that they lost money or made him the victim of savvier opportunists. Among these were a career in the entertainment industry (on the talent side) a partnership in an out of town retail store, the location of which would have put off anyone who had done their research before jumping in: "It's a tax thing babe, I'm gonna make a shitload." He didn't, he lost forty-two thousand dollars. And there was a side hustle that involved the money laundering of Euros for a "customer, he's like a banker or something". As he described this deal,

> I got this dude that pays me in Euros. I love it. … I just tell him look, since you're giving me foreign money, just, like whatever you

> give me in euros I'm gonna count it like American money. So [laughs] I always get more, like, you feel what I'm saying. Like, give me a fifty and a twenty in Euros, seventy dollars. … The five hundred euro, the purple shit, get those Barneys, yeah baby. Like word, coz he'll be like, he'll call me late at night, like yo, I got like, I just got five hundred euros, you wanna give me five hundred dollars cash for it? Hell yeah [*laughs*] and I'll come through. There you go, let me get that.

JoJo thought he would be safe by just stashing the 'Barneys' in his home safe. He was very fortunate not to be arrested when he attempted to cash in several of the notes at a currency exchange in midtown Manhattan: 500 Euro notes are notorious for being a favorite of traffickers and launderers worldwide, and showing up with a bundle of these at a retail exchange location would obviously have set off alarms. They refused to change the money, but they didn't call the police on him. It was not a bad way to make some quick money, but it was a stupid risk to take on for the sake of a couple of hundred dollars. JoJo's drive to score on hustles, no matter if they took him away from his main enterprise, invariably led him to either abandon the new hustle or starmaking opportunity – such as the film job – or to distract him from his very profitable marijuana business, as happened with the out of town retail store partnership, when he not only lost money but was also gone for weeks on end.

JoJo's marijuana was known to be good quality, but as I will describe, his reputation other than for this quality was not so good. He was a kind and amiable young man, but even at his best, JoJo was more often than not completely unreliable. He repeatedly failed to show up for customers when he was supposed to, and he was persistently late for meetings for non-marijuana business. Lateness for JoJo was rarely measured in minutes, more typically it was counted in hours. Customers began to know

him as unreliable and unpredictable. I observed him promise clients on the phone that he would be with them in ten minutes, only to then show up two hours later. In one example of this behavior that I describe in more detail later, as I waited on the street for JoJo one freezing winter's day, he told me that he was "up the block" but was actually fifty blocks away. This was not atypical for his approach to the clock and the schedules of others, and his lack of professional discipline was a constant source of disorder in his professional and personal life.

Compared to JoJo, Angel had less interest in side-hustles, but occasionally he would branch out by expanding the selection of drugs that he had for sale. For the most part he stuck with cocaine and ecstasy, saying that he had "no interest in getting caught out in the crack game" but he occasionally sold acid and club drugs such as ketamine, meth, and speed, as well as prescription drugs such as Oxycontin, Percocet, and Viagra. The problem with diversifying, however, was that each additional product reduced Angel's ability to perform his cocaine dealer role on autopilot, requiring him to be more deliberate and reducing his intuition in transactions. This slowed him down and disrupted order in his day-to-day activities, as well as disrupting his interactions with customers who had grown to have certain expectations in their dealings with him. Even if Angel didn't need to pause in the completion of these non-standard transactions, or didn't fumble the unfamiliar aspects of dealing in these drugs, trying to juggle different products with different customer demographics demanded that he pay extra attention to simple tasks. This slowed him down and made him less predictable and reliable, in equal measure to his loss of predictability in the performance of his daily tasks and interactions.

The anxiety and stress he experienced when he was trying to juggle all of this made him less pleasant to deal with, and risked his relationship with his cocaine customers.

'Oh, hey!'

One mid-winter afternoon in 2011, I was pacing a stretch of Thirty Second Street between Seventh and Eighth Avenues. The wind barreled down the skyscraper-lined tunnels of midtown Manhattan, and in the freezing cold there was a light sleet that felt like tiny needles firing into my cheeks. JoJo was late, again. I tried his cell phone, again, and for the fourth or fifth time it went straight to voicemail. I went into a deli to warm up but the cashier scowled, so I went back out to the cold. It was late afternoon and business was picking up at the peep show two doors down from the deli, next to an entrance to a second floor 'massage' parlor. The pizza chain on the other side of the deli was mostly empty, with just a few tourist families sheltering with a slice. They would probably return home wondering why everyone made such a big deal about New York pizza. In front of me were parked three of the dollar buses that were popular for trips to Boston, Philly, and Washington DC, their idling engines filling the air with thick filthy fumes they at least added a few degrees of warmth to the biting cold, what seemed like a reasonable trade off at the time. I sent JoJo another text: "Helllloooo?? Where you at?" I paced some more, calling a few more times. Finally, he picked up the phone, saying, "Rachie! I'm right around the corner, be there in a couple minutes. Where you at?" I replied that I was in the usual place, and asked what he meant by 'right around the corner.' JoJo says 'I'm like almost on the block, right up the street, I'll be there in like five.'

Fifty minutes later JoJo pulls up and I jump in the car, angry with him for leaving me on the street for so long in the cold when he obviously had not been as near by as he

claimed. JoJo responds, 'I told you, I was just up the street' and when I ask 'Which fucking street?' he says, 'I mean, eighty-third. But I was trying, you know I got everyone trying to get at me babe!' As I blast the heat to defrost my hands and feet, JoJo says "I'm going Broadway, downtown, like NYU area, then I gotta go east for something. You cool to hang?" Going east meant going to a stash house either to reload his stock of marijuana – always carrying no more than a New York Ounce – or to hang out between deliveries, playing video games, eating, watching music videos, and smoking. But first he had to deliver to a customer downtown.

We pulled up to the curb outside one of the New York University buildings just off Broadway, a few blocks north of Houston. A young man in his late teens or early twenties, undergraduate age and looking like a student, stepped out from his doorway shelter. I didn't know how long he had been waiting for us, but he looked cold, hands jammed deep in his pockets, his gaze resolutely planted on the sidewalk. He made a beeline for the car as I rolled the window down, and looked surprised to see me in the passenger seat, but talked over me regardless. His tone was that of a stereotypically middle class white male college student trying to talk and behave in the way he sees people behave and talk with young, urban, black, marijuana dealers in movies and on television. Everything was "yo", "fam", "aight", "no doubt", and "that's what's up". As soon as the transaction was fulfilled and the window rolled up, as we pulled away from the curb and into traffic, JoJo and I creased up with laughter:

> He does that stuff all the time! I swear, I just wanna tell him to relax. That's your people, I don't know why you're laughing girl, that's some white thing right there. My black and Spanish customers don't do that! You *know* y'all get all tense and anxious like that. [*mimics a stereotypical middle-class white accent*] 'Oh gosh, I must try to act

> properly around the thug, I wouldn't want to offend him'. [*laughs*] yeah, well, guess what?! Haha I just made money off of you, I don't care what you talk like! And you're scared. So, like, whatever, I'll play along. Stay buying my weed, we good."

JoJo would put his business calls on speakerphone when he was driving, and after each order came in I would ask him about the customer. A lot of our discussions about customers focused on their communication style – how demanding or anxious they were, their tone, and so on. These things were all relevant to JoJo as he decided who to sell to, or who to meet up with first if he had a series of deliveries to make; it wasn't always based on geography. JoJo received a lot of calls from middle class professionals, college students, and graduate students, in their twenties and thirties and to increase the everyday calculability in his life, JoJo categorized these customers in various ways, one being their communication styles, and with each customer falling into more than one category – for example, 'anxious' and 'overly friendly'. The young man outside the building just off Broadway, not only fit into JoJo's 'nervous suburban' category, he also fit into another category based on what he would say when JoJo picked up the phone. Typically, JoJo answered the phone with "Yo", or "Yeah", or he might say the person's name. If he was on his way to see someone he would just shout out how long he would be. But most of the time he gave some sort of greeting. So he would answer the phone, and then most customers said things like, 'hi' or 'what's up JoJo', you know, speaking like normal people do. There was one large category, however, of customers who we called the Oh Heys because whenever they called they were like, 'Oh! Hey!!', sounding taken aback, as if JoJo had caught them off guard when they were busy or distracted by something totally unrelated to their relationship with their weed guy, sounding surprised to see him. But

they had called *him*. Not only was the combination of words and tone remarkable, it was a source of considerable amusement for JoJo. He said to me: "I'm like, what the fuck? *You* called *me* so you could buy some weed! How you now gonna act like you're surprised to hear your drug dealer's voice on the phone? You. You called me. You dig?"

Variation in styles of verbal communication was a non-trivial factor in JoJo's interactions and transactions that I observed, and was consequential in the framing of interactional moments and the exchanges upon which these moments were focused. Sometimes JoJo's customers communicated in ways that may have been perfectly normal to them with their friends and colleagues, but which JoJo felt were inconsistent with the relationship and the scene in which they were involved with him. Sometimes they were excessively familiar, too friendly, in their communicative style and tone, and it had taken JoJo a few years to not get rattled by the polite buddy-buddy mode of interaction. Now that he was more accustomed to it, he was able to laugh about the interactional disconnect without worrying that there was any hidden meaning of the sort that should concern him: "Sometimes they behave funny, acting like we're friends and stuff. I don't know, like, sometimes it sorta feels like there's some big joke on me, but it's not a joke, it's just how y'all act, all happy friendly and shit. What's up with *that*?" But JoJo appreciated that in order to keep their business he needed to either ignore or understand whatever his customers did interactionally. If he didn't, "they could get uncomfortable" and if a customer wasn't comfortable with him they would soon find a new dealer to buy their marijuana from.

Branding & Competition

In their efforts to be competitive in the marketplace, JoJo and Angel employed strategies straight out of any business how-to book: research and development, price competition and special offers, and brand identity practices. In the early 2000s, the marijuana delivery market in New York City consisted of countless networked and independent operators, but was dominated by one, *The Cartoon Network*. This hugely successful and expertly managed marijuana delivery operation was in business from January 1st, 1999 until they were busted on December 1st 2005, with fifty thousand customers putting in over five hundred orders every day, which generated annual profits of around six million dollars.[49] They offered multiple strains of marijuana, at almost every price point, with the quality ranging from better than average to the very best New York had to offer. The Cartoon Network operation was characterized by quality and by safe and reliable delivery, with unremarkable couriers who faded into their surroundings – twenty-something's who were indistinguishable from the average student, carrying backpacks full of drugs around town without arousing suspicion.[50] The way that The Cartoon Network rapidly developed their massive business, however, before they really had time to become known for quality or reliability, was their branding: cartoon characters, unique packaging, and personal touches. It became a status marker to have The Cartoon Network number in your phonebook.

While JoJo's issues with reliability and timeliness became a problem for his reputation and profits, he attracted business with deals and special offers. Angel, on the other hand, made up for the added risk of carrying a gun by being flawlessly punctual and by paying attention to small product and branding related details that can make a big difference to a vendor in a competitive marketplace. When I first met Angel and JoJo,

both had been in the business for sufficient time that they understood the annual ebbs and flows of the independent dealer's trade. JoJo took steps to boost his business with special offers and price deals, while also ensuring that he had high quality marijuana for sale. Angel also chose to distinguish his product from the rest of the market, but rather than offering deals on price and special offers, he instead offered what could be considered 'transaction hugs': little gifts and tokens intended to create goodwill within a relationship built around a very specific transaction. Few transactions are as specific as that between drug dealer and user, and the goodwill that these gifts and tokens created was direct and nontransferable, feeding back into a loyalty that generated more business.

Angel had a number of approaches to this. As any corporate executive or successful salesperson does, Angel made sure that he knew the birthdays of his regular customers, and he tried to know what holidays they celebrated. He gave out Christmas and Hanukkah cards, and, as he said, "holiday cards to the ones I can't figure out". Special customers, so classified because of the size or regularity of their transactions – who were easy to deal with, who didn't ask for favors, price breaks, or freebies; they were treated as friends, with Angel also giving these customers small gifts of their favorite drug along with their birthday or holiday card. He also did little things around national holidays, such as memorial day, July 4th, and labor day. For these he broke out the red, white, and blue packaging, and gave little treats to his best customers.

These 'Martha Stewart' touches didn't create spikes in Angel's business in the way that JoJo's deals and special offers boosted his. Angel's red white and blue July 4th themed mini Ziploc baggies would be unlikely to inspire customers to buy more cocaine or ecstasy than they had intended to, but what these did do was they helped build rapport

and loyalty, somewhat softening Angel to his middle-class customer base. This made him interactionally more accessible, making it more likely that they would recommend him to their friends. And it wasn't just the freelance dealers who entered into these practices: Pits, the Blood crew boss I talked about last week also tried to run promotions: He used Ziploc baggies with the image of a pitbull on them – sending the simple message that this coke was strong and aggressive – and directly tying his drugs to his personal brand, his identity.

While JoJo occasionally made an effort at branding, his marketing gimmicks involved price-breaks and special offers. In fall 2004, spring-summer 2006, and at points throughout the summer of 2007 through winter 2008, JoJo alternated between offering 'two-for-one' specials and price-breaks, often adjusting his weights so customers were not getting quite the bargain that they may have thought. He was competitive against an increasing number of independent dealers who he felt threatened his business, and on a side of the retail drug dealing business where violent turf battles simply didn't happen, especially where you have a dealer who refused to handle a gun: "I'm gonna put my competition out of *business*. Word. Shark-like, you feel me?" Initially he saw a rapid increase in business, with customers turning their friends on to him, and college frat houses posting his business cards and flyers on bulletin boards next to payphones. When he wasn't running two-for-one specials, JoJo introduced other deals that encouraged customers to buy more in order to get a quantity discount at certain breakpoints. For example, customers buying four bags could get a fifth at a steeply discounted price. While many of JoJo's customers dealt only with him and maybe one other supplier, some had other dealers in their phone books, and the new customers that were lured by the

special pricing often had their own regular supplier who they would return to once JoJo's pricing settled back to the market standard. The first time he offered the two-for-one deal, it continued for such a long period that I started to wonder if he intended to ever go back to regular or standard pricing. Once he did, there was a large fall in orders from new and recently new customers, as they either went back to a long-term supplier or found another dealer offering these types of deals.

Angel was less interested than JoJo in price breaks and specials, but he pursued brand identity in ways more consistent with The Cartoon Network model. In the cocaine market, the cut of the product – the agents used and the final purity and its characteristics, which determined color, taste, and how pearlescent the powder looks, can be seen as a form of branding. 'Stepping on' product with cutting agents that either disguise the fact that the cocaine has been cut is a favorite tactic, some cutting agents, such as levamisole or Strawberry Nesquik, can actually elevate the desirability of the product, and the price that can be charged for it. In the case of the former, it is because it increases the powder's pearlescence, making it appear to be almost one hundred percent pure; in the case of the latter it is because of the cutesy value that a young and wealthy user-demographic ascribes to pink coke that tastes of strawberries, even though it has very obviously been stepped on.

Anyone who sells cocaine is challenged by the issue of cutting agents: what to use, what others have used in the batch previous to your receiving it, and what your competition is using. There are some standard cutting agents - baby laxatives, talcum powder, amphetamines and methamphetamine, which usually aren't poisonous, or at least aren't poisonous in the quantities and combinations in which they are used as cutting

agents. Put too much amphetamine in a batch, however, and customers will notice that it's 'too speedy', and might seek out a new dealer. Use too much of any cutting agent and the cocaine will look cut; customers want a good deal on good cocaine not a bag of twenty percent purity. The trick for the dealer is to make the cocaine 'look' like it has a purity of seventy five percent or greater, even if it's under thirty percent. Some cutting agents are potentially very harmful, such as levamisole, a livestock de-wormer, that started to appear in Colombian cocaine in the mid-00s, and which has been indicted in the deaths of numerous users.[51] Levamisole is favored because it adds pearlescence to already stepped on cocaine, giving the impression that it is far more pure than it really is.

Exceptionally pure cocaine is often referred to as fishscale or pearl, because of the pearlescent sheen and flakey consistency as opposed to the clumpy powder of cocaine that has been heavily stepped on. The pearlescent quality of levamisole makes this highly toxic de-worming drug a popular cutting agent that withstands the visual scrutiny of retail and many wholesale customers, and enables dealers to charge customers the prices they could if their product was of considerably higher purity. Angel understood that his customers were not fishscale level aficionados, nor did they have fishscale money,[52] but everyone wanted to be able to brag with their cocaine-using friends that theirs was the best quality, that their guy was closer to the source than their friend’s guy. The challenge for Angel was to cut the cocaine he bought in bulk just enough that he lowered his cost basis while continuing to ensure that his grams were better quality than the average retail gram; he needed to use the correct ingredients in the correct measure, and he had to determine the cuts in the wholesale cocaine he had purchased before he stepped on it,

because each wholesale kilo, or 'bird', had itself been stepped on with different ingredients and in different proportions.

The Occasional Others

Angel was a one-man-show, but occasionally JoJo would have help with his work. Sometimes this involved a friend or hanger-on sitting in the passenger seat or in the back of the car, jumping out to get sodas or food, and keeping an eye out for police or anything else that JoJo may want to avoid. When JoJo needed to get out of the car and enter a building to meet with a customer, and if he wasn't able to find convenient parking, it was helpful for him to have someone else in the car so that he could double-park without worrying about getting a ticket.

One of these friends was a man in his mid-thirties who was on disability after a serious accident and who spent his days either hanging out with JoJo in the car, or playing video games and watching music videos at one of the stash houses. JoJo and Phil were very close friends, but Phil also smoked JoJo's marijuana and because of their friendship, and a sense of pity that he felt for Phil for the medical procedures and long-term pain he endured as a result of his accident, JoJo struggled to charge him for the drugs, the weight of their friendship and Phil's situation weighed him down. In not charging Phil, however, JoJo at times mentioned feelings of resentment, wondering if Phil was simply 'hanging around for the weed', and occasionally wondering if Phil could be completely trusted to be left alone with JoJo's supply. Phil had financial difficulties as a result of his medical needs, and his inability to work, and JoJo wasn't sure if he might be taking some of the stash to sell to his friends. There was never any evidence of this,

but it nonetheless crept into their interactions at times, and was a factor in the ways that JoJo adapted his interactions with everyone else present when Phil was around.

The overlap between personal and professional in their relationship challenged the way that JoJo and Phil communicated and sometimes JoJo asked Phil to stay at the stash house rather than drive with him because he 'needed a break, it's like he's my wife sometimes', or 'he's not acting right with custies at the moment'. When Phil was in the car, some customers were more anxious in their interactions with JoJo, even those who had met Phil before, largely the result of his protective behavior toward JoJo; as if he were jealous of their interactions, Phil would sneer, huff, raise his eyebrow in a dismissive way, and laugh at their nervousness. It was awkward for everyone who was party to the interaction and while JoJo didn't think it would damage his business – 'It's a drug deal, not a massage, Phil ain't a problem, it's what a minute or two? They'll get over it' – it nonetheless was another example of small failings in JoJo's approach to customer service, which ran strangely counter to his exceptional ability to adapt to all manner of interactional moments and tones.

While JoJo was able to appropriately reframe his relationship with Phil such that they achieved professional goals in the context of a trusting personal relationship, he failed to accurately perceive the ways in which Phil's snarky demeanor imposed itself on the drug transactions with customers, making these interactionally difficult and leaving customers with a sense that something dissonant had just transpired. And while JoJo was convinced that this would not be damaging to his profits, it would be impossible to know if customers might have bought from him more frequently if there wasn't the possibility that they might have to contend with Phil's attitude. Similarly, it would seem likely that

over the course of his years of tenure in the business, for much of which Phil was around, customers might have referred their friends to other dealers rather than giving them to the great guy who was increasingly unreliable and often brought along his obnoxious friend.

Phil wasn't the only occupant of the passenger seat, however. Sometimes the 'friend' would be one of the women JoJo was seeing at the time, sometimes it would be young men and women who helped out in return for his mentoring and, they hoped, the ability to run their own business like his one day. Those who were reasonably good at riding around with him without incident were occasionally trusted to take his place when he wasn't able to work. There were a couple of extended periods when it was difficult for JoJo to put in the hours necessary – one of these involved the terminal illness of a close family member, another involved the birth of his first child. During these periods, three of the young men and (non-girlfriend) women who had been riding along with JoJo on his rounds took over the day to day operation of the business, and at this point Phil became critical as trusted protector of the stash house that these workers would visit to pick up supply for deliveries throughout the day.

When JoJo was present, the young protégés were exemplary trainees. When JoJo was not present, these workers performed a brasher identity, more of a Hollywood-inspired version of what a drug dealer should be. On one occasion I went to meet JoJo downtown, only to be met by two of the youngsters driving for him that day: a Puerto Rican man and an African American woman in their very early twenties. I had met the young man once before when he rode around with JoJo and me for an afternoon, he was a pleasant and easy going young man, she was employed by the city and was 'just here for the ride, he's doing the work.' In the car they were relaxed, laughing and telling stories

about their legal jobs and how they hoped to make money on the side by putting in work for JoJo. When we went to see a customer, however, she behaved much like Phil did to customers as they transacted with JoJo: sneering, rolling her eyes, and putting on the performance of what she *thought* she was supposed to present in that role – a tough uncaring drug dealer stereotype, someone 'not to be fucked with' as the gang dealers used to say.

And in the stash houses there was another collection of friends and hangers-on, most of whom spent their days and nights completely stoned on JoJo's supply, and glued to the sofa. I only visited the houses a handful of times, but every one of those times the only real sign of life in these spaces came when JoJo's playfully belligerent pitbull terrier puppy forced them to play with him. I visited two stash houses with JoJo. One was on a good block on the Upper East Side, in a doorman building which offered exceptional privacy and there weren't people constantly swinging by to hang out en masse. In this space it was usually just JoJo and Phil hanging out, and very occasionally one of the younger guys to whom JoJo was showing the ropes might be there helping with packaging product into retail containers. At the other stash house that I visited with JoJo, this one in Central Harlem, it was much more raucous. There was no doorman, which meant a constant stream of people walking in and out. Had there been a doorman the traffic would have aroused suspicion and JoJo would either have had to ban people from visiting, or start paying off the doorman so he wasn't tempted to cause problems for JoJo. So there were visitors, constantly. These weren't strangers or customers, but friends of JoJo, and the youngsters looking to him for mentoring in the business. Whereas the house on the Upper East Side was a laid back, quiet, private space, the Harlem stash house was

frenetic – there was always some sort of packaging going on, always at least one dog running around, always upwards of half a dozen people milling around, walking in and out, phones ringing, with multiple conversations being conducted at one time, and everyone stoned.

The Harlem stash house became JoJo's main stash house when he momentarily fell out with Phil, who was temporarily living in the Upper East Side house. The scene in the Harlem house was vastly different than in the other house, and while JoJo was spending so much time in that environment that it seemed to impose itself on his interactions with customers. It was also during this period that customers were particularly complaining about JoJo's lackadaisical attitude, the increasing frequency of moments when he wasted their time or was dishonest, and what they saw as the repeated failure to perform as they believed a freelance drug dealer should. JoJo's customer base for privately delivered marijuana was very different from the customers buying crack from street dealers, with different concerns and expectations, and each context demanded a different type of dealer-identity-performance, if the interactions were to be successful and comfortable. This was what JoJo understood better than those who helped him out, his ability to tweak his performance with varied interactants meant that customers were forgiving of his reliability lapses or the discomfiting presence of Phil when they met up with JoJo. But JoJo had become unreliable and unresponsive, seemed to have lost focus on his business, and was distracted by personal upheavals relating to his falling out with Phil and the illness of a close family member. The reaction of his customers to his lapses in good practices, more than anything else, revealed to me the surprising extent to which

they perceived of JoJo first and foremost as a small business owner, whose practices with his customers should more closely reflect the work ethic of the dedicated entrepreneur.

Managing Risk, Establishing Order

A lackadaisical and unreliable drug dealer who resists violence and refuses to carry a gun might strike us as someone who would probably not be a particularly competitive drug dealer. But JoJo was, until he became distracted by other things. He had profitable ways of being competitive against other dealers, constantly searching for new ways to steal business from his competition, to "carve out a fatter slice of the custie pie" for himself. Stealing business from rivals is a drug dealing business strategy that we would usually assume to be undertaken by a dealer with a gun, in a violence-framed, Hollywood style territory-battling version of retail drug sales. This was not the case for JoJo and his competitors, whose corporate tactics had more in common with Pepsi versus Coca Cola or McDonalds versus Burger King, than with the Sharks versus the Jets or the Bloods versus the Crips. Angel, who did carry a gun, competed exclusively on the basis of product quality, and by establishing relaxed and comfortable exchange interactions with his customers; neither of these strategies required the gun but, as I mentioned earlier, Angel kept it on him just in case he ever needed it.

There is, of course, a difference between involving oneself in violent behavior and being dragged into violent situations. By all accounts, from my subjects' reports, from my observations, and consistent with what we know from previous research and from news reports, documentaries, and autobiographies, it is extraordinarily rare for independent drug dealers to involve themselves in violence. One consequence of this is that we vastly underestimate the number of such entrepreneurs that exist in society; since

I started doing this work I've been astonished by the number of deeply legitimate, white collar, vanilla friends and acquaintances who have confessed to me that they have dealt, or currently deal, on the side, to friends. Without exception, it has been the most unexpected people divulging to me this information.

Although independent dealers don't seek out violent interactions, they are nonetheless at greater risk than the rest of us are for being dragged into violent situations, either over drug sales or as the targets of car-jackings, robberies, and home invasions. When JoJo was shot, it was by an assailant who followed him to his stash house, with a shotgun that was fired through the door of the apartment, in what JoJo believes was a robbery attempt:

> I saw dude coming down the hall like twenty feet behind me. He wasn't walking right, head down, and I knew something was up. I got to the door & he's almost on me so I duck inside & slam it shut. Stupidly go to look through the peephole & all I see is him raising a shottie. I backed up into the apartment but he got me good, right through the door. My whole stomach looks like hamburger now. Wanna see?

For all of his risk-averse claims and practices, and particularly in the context of this incident, JoJo's continued hard line refusal to involve himself with guns seemed in many ways irrational, and inconsistent with his other risky behavior. He was usually high when he was behind the wheel and he routinely ignored speed limits and highway laws, often finding himself being pulled over for illegal turns and speeding offenses:

> I went to the DMV in the morning. I had to fight a ticket like for improper turn I'll end up getting two points on my license. It's all good. I got a whole bunch of court dates. For like making illegal left turns, like three of them. Shit. I plead guilty to one … I don't have any points on my license so I can afford it. Fuckit. And one, er, one

> ticket the dude was retiring, like the girl at the DMV told me, said the same thing, she said, oh yeah, whatchamacallit wrote this, he's retiring at the end of July. Like just push it back & you'll beat it. And I'm probably gonna have to just eat another two more points.

It was not only surprising to me that someone driving around with marijuana and cash on them would flagrantly break traffic laws, but also that they would do so while smoking or already high, and when the car stank to high heaven of stale marijuana smoke. Remarkably, JoJo was never busted for smoking while driving, or for having drugs in the car, but the traffic violation tickets and points on his license were nonetheless destabilizing to the sense of order that he sought to establish.

For Angel and JoJo, the factors contributing to a lack of interpersonal and business reliability were the same factors that risked their reputations with customers, before the lack of reliability had even emerged. A bad professional reputation can damage an extralegal business enterprise in the same way that it will damage legal business endeavors. An entrepreneur not fulfilling the tasks of their role, such as a salesperson not attending to the customer relations side of their business, will suffer reputational damage, lose customers, and will not be profitable in the long-term.

In local retail drug markets, branding is one way to build reputation and to forge out some recognition for one's business in a market that is often crowded. Branding also has the distinctly salient feature of reducing information asymmetry, particularly when poor quality or dangerous drugs are known to be on the street and dealers want to be sure that the buying population knows their brand can be trusted. Or, as Pits said, when they need to know where to go to "get that fire", meaning the best quality product. The branding and earmarking practices, as well as the promotions, were an expression of

identity boundary-making and power, and were deployed in part by JoJo and Angel 'because they could', meaning that being possessed of the control over the price and quantity of drugs sold, and the rights to brand these drugs as theirs, not their bosses or crew leaders, but theirs, was in itself an expression of power and status, and gave them both the sense that they were a big deal. Subtle differences in their client base as well as in the markets for the different products they sold, informed JoJo and Angel's choices of branding and promotional efforts. So, while JoJo's issues with reliability and timeliness became a problem for his reputation, and framed his promotional campaigns such that really the only promotions that worked for him were price cuts and bulk discounts, Angel was flawlessly punctual and his promotions instead paid attention to small details that make a big difference.

JoJo had issues with reliability. He was persistently late, he consistently misjudged – or lied – about his location and estimated time of arrival, and all of these things caused him to have problems with long-time customers and in side hustles outside of the drug market. He was committed to the drug business, he wasn't talking about trying to get out or anything like that. But his failure to properly serve his customers made it far more difficult for him to stay on top. JoJo's focus on keeping customers happy guided his pursuit of other ways in which he could maintain and build his business. It didn't, of course, make him more reliable or honest, which would have been the easiest way for him to control his business, but he nonetheless did ok from promotions and deals that he offered in a pretty timely way

That said, there were other things that JoJo *did* do right, and which he did very well indeed. The way he adapted to other peoples' interactional style, adopting the

appropriate style himself to provide them some measure of comfort in the transaction was nothing short of remarkable. He made fun of his customers, as I'll show, but in the moments that he interacted with them, he unflinchingly allowed them to dictate the pace and tone of the interaction, even when they said stupid shit or behaved in bizarre, inauthentic, or impolite ways. And sometimes, it wasn't easy, mostly because people are typically slightly nervous during a drug deal. They were all anxious that they were being watched – whether they were on the street, in his car, or in their apartments, where they were nervous that their middle class neighbors might see them with this man covered in face and neck and hand tattoos, and diamonds.

Order, for Angel, involved controlling the possible consequences of interacting with his customers, which had the potential to damage his ability to operate his business. He accomplished this by refusing credit to most customers, and by resisting the urge to physically sanction in circumstances where a gang-affiliated dealer might. Angel's attentiveness to being a reliable and dependable purveyor of cocaine, and his commitment to not entering into friendships with customers, served him well. While he was occasionally distracted by product diversification, he would always step back to focus on his main, easy and profitable, line of business before things became too complicated and damaged his professional reputation.

JoJo not only relied on no one but himself to impose his policies, policies that regulated his transactions and ensured predictability in his business, but he was adept at detaching himself from intimate friendship type relationships in order to maintain his understanding of the immediate transaction and the monies involved. JoJo isn't creating a barrier between personal and business – his intimate familiarity with Nico wouldn't be

apparent in the transaction if that were the case – but he is resolving his main concern, which is to never have to need to carry a gun because of the uncertainty and risk it would introduce into his life. By stringent enforcement of his no credit rule, by earmarking his monies and by refusing to discipline customers or participate in violence – going so far as to refuse to own a gun – JoJo established a sense of order in his everyday world. Where he failed, however, where he personally disrupted the order he had worked to achieve, it was because of a personal tendency to chase promises and dreams, a too-trusting faith in the motivations of others, an exaggerated believe in his own savvy, and a lack of understanding of the fragility of his relationships with customers: They saw him as a weed dealer in a city full of weed dealers, but he thought that they were his loyal friends, even the ‘oh heys’.

CHAPTER FOUR: MANAGING INTIMACY

A man in his late forties or early fifties, in good shape, with a winter tan and salt and pepper hair, was sitting in one of two mahogany leather club chairs to the left of the fireplace. Immediately in front of him a large, glass topped, mahogany coffee table with marble and brass feet held a large bowl of potpourri, a small stack of art books, and a few current magazines targeting the professional middle class male audience – GQ, Wired, Cigar Aficionado, Conde Nast Traveler, The New Yorker, New York Magazine, Sports Illustrated, and Playboy. On the fireplace mantle were a few ornaments of no sentimental value: matching horse-head bookends, an antique silver box of absinthe-themed French playing cards, an ornate cigar clipper, and a faux-antique pewter candle snuffer. Between the two club chairs, a side table held a large marble ashtray and a brass coaster holder containing five brass-rimmed and cork-backed leather coasters. The sixth coaster sat under a leaded glass tumbler in which melting ice cubes were steadily clouding and diluting the man's Glenfiddich.

Two sofas, one directly facing the man, the other to his right, were unfussy in a well worn but cared for aged tobacco leather, and fit well with the décor of the large, high ceilinged reception room. Facing the man, behind the sofa to the right of the fireplace, was a fully stocked walnut paneled bar, with a large humidor cabinet in its center section, containing glass-fronted climate controlled drawers full of Cuban cigars. On the wall behind the man was displayed a series of framed black & white photographs – iconic images of the New York City skyline from the *New York Times* collection. The photographic series was bracketed by two built-in bookcases, stocked with leather bound books, chosen for purely aesthetic reasons.

Behind the bar, the stunning young Japanese woman who had served the man's Glenfiddich studiously polished a black marble tile with a chamois cloth. She was perfectly groomed: her nails, hair, and makeup were all flawless. She wore beautifully tailored Prada lightweight black wool pants, a shell pink cashmere v-neck, conservative height black Jimmy Choo heels, and a delicate freshwater pearl necklace and earrings, looking every inch the young ivy-educated banker or banker's wife. When the black marble tile was bone dry and buffed to her satisfaction, she walked over to the man, gently placed the tile next to his drink on the side table and, with a well-rehearsed fake smile, excused herself from the gathering.

The man sipped his Glenfiddich, took a silver straw and glass vial out of the breast pocket of his suit jacket, unscrewed the top of the vial, and tapped out onto the marble tile about one eighth of a gram of finely chopped cocaine. He looked around the room, eyeballing the diverse collection of women on the two sofas. They were all as meticulously groomed as the young woman who had served his drink, albeit wearing more makeup and their clothing was less 'upper-east side'. Rather than the wardrobe of the young, educated professional, the women he examined on the sofas wore very short, figure hugging skirts and dresses, low cut and strapless tops, and less sophisticated sky-high heels. They were not wearing Prada or Jimmy Choo, and any jewelry was costume.

As he focused his gaze on the small heap of cocaine, the man asked about the girl[53] who had just served his drink. He was informed that she was otherwise engaged and would not be able to join them. "Well, that's a shame", and with a slightly aggravated look on his face the man rolled the silver straw between the thumb and second and third fingers of his right hand before positioning the end furthest from him gently up against

the pile of cocaine on the marble tile. Lowering his left nostril over the straw, he lifted the first finger of his right hand to push it against his straw-less right nostril, creating an adequate vacuum as he sharply inhaled and the coke shot up his nose. He set the straw down on the marble tile and instinctively raised a clenched right hand to bump the underside of his nostrils as he gently sniffed. The man picked up the straw from the side table, twirling it between his fingers as he took a hefty sip of Glenfiddich: “Well, let's see who we've got here then." He nodded at the girl sitting closest to him on the sofa to his right, an indication that she should begin the name parade:

> Hi, I'm Courtney." Smile. "Hi, I'm Amanda." Smile. “Hi, I’m Tyra.” Smile. “Hi, I’m Britney.” Smile. “Hi, I’m Meghan.” Smile. “Hi, I’m Serena.” Smile. “Hi, I’m Sydney.” Smile. “Hi, I’m Tina.” Smile. “Hi, I’m Kat.” Smile.

As each girl introduced herself, the man looked her up and down. Some girls he barely paused on, others received a cool assessing gaze. The girls he was not interested in received a nod, if that. The girls he was most interested in received a “hello”, and he might also use their name. By the time each girl in the room had introduced herself, he had already come to his decision. Taking a gulp of whisky, he twirled the silver straw with a flourish before pointing it at a girl, almost as if the straw had mad the decision for him: "Samantha was it?” “Um, Amanda.” “Yeah. That’s it. I'll take you."

Amanda gently smiled, rose from her place on the sofa, went to the intercom system behind the bar and called the manager to let her know the man had chosen. The manager would tell her which room was available for the session. Nestling the intercom handset against her shoulder, she scooped some ice cubes into a fresh glass and poured

the man another Glenfiddich. She hung up the handset, pulled a Cohiba from the humidor, and walked the man out of the living room and up the stairs.

Identity & Intimacy

For these prostitutes, the main challenge they faced in their daily experience involved dual concerns of how to balance identity and role in such a way that prevented intimacy or intimate interactions from creeping into their workplace roles and their sensemaking of sex-as-labor. This became manifest in a general focus on control: who was in control and who was being controlled. The girls revealed to me that by keeping these designated audiences for each identity separate, they to some extent were able to protect against having one exposed to the audience for the other.

If they spent time with mixed audiences – work friends and home friends, for example – at some point someone will use their working name in front of those who don't know what they *really* do for a living. Such situations were more common than we might expect and were usually redeemable with some fast backpedalling, although not always. The other type of identity profaning, the threat of arrest and prostitution, in some ways concerned them more, at least when the issue arose in conversation or in relation to recent busts elsewhere. Arrest was generally believed not to be an identity-situation that could be saved if it occurred. Even though it would be unlikely for these prostitutes to be prosecuted for a first, or even second arrest, the burden of risking the mutual exposure of one's identities was immense for most of the girls, who did not assume that the law would be likely to give them a break, just in case it didn't.

Their other major concern, the risk of intimacy entering their workplace interactions with clients, was largely under their control, but had much farther reaching

consequences to their nonwork life, imposing itself on their daily lives in noticeable ways. The first technique they deployed to handle this involved a scripting of workplace interactions: from the minute a client enters the brothel and until they leave, everything has a procedure, everything follows a well-practiced script. The environment of the brothel was tightly controlled, there was indeed a scriptedness to the physical surroundings of the reception room that I described in the opening to this chapter, with the bar and leather upholstered chairs, carefully chosen magazines, and the procedures followed by employees and clients: every detail had been carefully considered in order to leave as little to the imagination as possible. Importantly, nothing was like home for the girls, which permitted their detachment from worksex, their categorizing it as a form of labor rather than intimacy.

For most of these women, most of whom were in their early to mid twenties, prostitution was a temporary thing – they were mostly college students or involved in forms of cultural production and this was a way for them to make sufficient money to pursue their dreams, and with great schedule flexibility. Some days at the office were good, some were not so good. But this was also a type of work that risked having a considerable effect on their personal lives – the stigma against it and therefore the necessary secrecy regarding where they worked and what they did, and they needed to constantly perform a mental accounting on the question of whether an immediate intimate moment was work or nonwork. The focus is on the professional norms and personal practices that enabled these subjects to make sense of their relationships with their clients and their involvement in a stigmatized profession

Rules & Exceptions

Walter's brothel occupied a brownstone halfway down a quiet, tree-lined street on Manhattan's Upper East Side, a stone's throw from Central Park. To enter, a client would climb half a dozen stone steps to the front door, where he would ring a doorbell and wait to be buzzed into the vestibule. There were strict rules to be followed, an interactional script of sorts, that applied from the moment a client appeared at the top of the steps until the moment he left. The most strictly enforced rules were those governing his entry, his presence in public areas, and the period in the session room before he removed his clothes. Upon hearing the first doorbell, the manager would look into camera number one, to see who was standing there. If she recognized him she would let him into the vestibule, if she didn't she would ask him his business, as Jasmine explained, "We never let anyone in until we have a clear image of him on the outside camera. Anyone hiding his face under a hat or looking away from the door doesn't get buzzed in."

Once in the vestibule, the client appeared on another camera, at which point the manager would ask him to provide his identity code and password. These were chosen by the clients and were usually some combination of words and numbers that held meaning for them, often nicknames and parts of telephone numbers or birthdays. The manager would look up the client's ID code in the database and check that the description in the computer matched the image of the man standing in the vestibule. If it did, the door clicked open, ushering the client into the high-ceilinged entrance hall, with instructions coming over the intercom speaker: "second door on the left." There would be a girl holding the door open to welcome him to the reception area, where he would relax for a few minutes with a drink and maybe a cigar or cigarette, while he met the girls and decided who he would choose for his thirty or sixty minute session.

When the client chose a girl, she would call the manager on the intercom system to find out which room they should use. Sometimes if the house is particularly busy and none of the rooms are immediately available, they may need to wait a few minutes before walking to the room. Mangers tried not to get into this situation, however, and would turn clients away if there wouldn't be a room available for longer than five or ten minutes. Similarly, the girls would keep a client in the lounge if another client was being escorted out:

> We try hard to make sure clients don't bump into each other. This is a small town, you know how it is, can you imagine if they worked together, belonged to the same country club or synagogue, or their kids went to the same school or something. Not good! Really not good!"
>
> *Lola*

For the same reason, there were rules governing how clients were expected to leave the establishment, the most important of these being that they had to be accompanied by a girl at all times:

> When the guys leave we walk them to the vestibule door, after getting clearance from the office [*the manager*]. It's definitely nicer for the guys not to be left to roam around the place, and it also means we can make sure they don't bump into anyone else, or snoop around where they aren't supposed to be.
>
> *Kat*

For a small and elite group of long term regular clients with whom the house had built a friendly relationship, the rules were relaxed somewhat. The decision on this was always left up to the manager on duty and depended in on her relationship with the client and any immediate situations in the brothel. Simon, who one manager, Lola, described as

"a sweetheart" for his habit of bringing holiday gifts for the house, was one such client. Kat, one of Simon's regular prostitutes, reported that he had visited her on Valentine's Day, laden with "flowers and chocolates *for everyone*!", to which Lola added, "Thanksgiving, he brings pie!" she elaborated, for my benefit:

> We have a few guys like this, guys who've been coming for years, many who used to come to the old place. I still get their codes and names at the door, and I don't let anyone in without checking that everyone [*employees and clients*] is where they should be, but I'll let Simon through the first door before I ask for any information. If it's dead around here I'll let the girl meet him at the door and take him straight to the room.

The accommodations Lola made for Simon (and a select few others) involved what was something of a security performance: she still asked for their identity codes at the door, despite already knowing what those were and, most importantly, knowing that when they entered the vestibule those clients were without any shadow of doubt the clients who they claimed to be. Clients who didn't need to be looked up in the system were not always directed to the reception room from the entrance hall, but instead they would sometimes be met in the front hallway by their appointment, who would be holding their preferred beverage, ready take them directly to the session room. There were very few of these clients – three or four, depending on which manager you asked. For most clients, however, the operational rules and behavioral expectations of the house were strictly enforced, and entailed not only specific actions on the part of managers, but from the girls as well.

From the minute they went on shift until they left the premises, girls were expected to "check our makeup and pantyhose", particularly when there was a client

"walking" – moving through the house – as Allie explained:

> They're strict about always having things straight: lipstick on, hair brushed, pantyhose on and with no snags. And no stocking feet! Heels, always heels. Even if we aren't in session or in the lounge, you know, like, if we bump into someone's guy walking, he might, you know, hey, he might like what he sees and then you get drama when he picks you next time or makes an appointment …. Anyway, it all makes us look more professional doesn't it, like a uniform. It doesn't bother me, rules like that, they make sense.

These rules and practices were all ultimately focused on establishing and maintaining stability and predictability in the day-to-day operations of the house and in the details of session protocol. The house thus operated in known, predictable, scripted ways that permitted the emergence of a sense of order. Establishing a sense of order in a high-end brothel requires not only enforcing a set of rules but also necessitates attending to the risks associated with the acts involved, and the illegality of the profession.

The girls reasonably expected the house – the owner and the managers – to protect them from rogue clients and to enforce established protocols intended to protect them from sexually transmitted diseases. In addition, girls and managers could reasonably expect their coworkers to support the privacy and confidentiality practices that they employed to protect their identities and legal status, and the privacy of clients. These expectations, combined with the girls' accrued expertise, enabled these 'high class' prostitutes to perform their current professional role – 'prostitute' – without needing to think too closely about what that entailed emotionally. Interactional practices that safeguarded against identity exposure and arrest were similarly reliant on expertise and the certainty that expectations would be met, and had to be performed in such a way as to

be unobtrusive, in keeping with the general tone of refined relaxation that the house strove to communicate with its conduct and composure rules, dress codes, and décor.

At Walter's, payment was always taken from clients up front and in full, before the start of the session, and only ever in cash. Although most escort services in New York City at the time accepted credit cards, it was rare for brothels to do so. Walter explained that swiping a credit card and getting the client's signature on the receipt should never be considered a watertight guarantee of payment, particularly for an illegal commodity or service. For that reason he had stopped accepting cards several years ago, after a brief test run:

> A lot of guys, once they've gotten laid they have buyer's remorse. They won't usually do a chargeback, but it happens, and once in a blue moon someone uses a corporate card and gets their accounting people to dispute the charge and it becomes a massive headache. We don't fight that stuff, obviously, we put up some resistance but if the credit card people don't back down we don't have a leg [to stand on]. So we take a wash on the session, with chargebacks and disputes, and we still have to pay out the girl if it was our error.
>
> *Walter*

In expressing their preference for working at certain establishments over others in New York City, the main factor that Walter's girls mentioned as an appealing attribute was the degree to which a house gave the impression that owners and managers cared about protecting them from harm, arrest, or identity exposure. Some of their chief concerns centered on issues of protection against arrest, which they believed would be likely to result in having their dual identities exposed.

Rules and procedures protected the girls and the business, created scripts and therefore predictability, and reflected the standards of a house. There were semi-universal

rules across the trade, which could be anticipated by the status of the house. The status of any house rested largely on their application of standard practices relating to safety and security. Houses were referred to in my fieldwork as "good" or "nice", "ok for a few shifts" or "at a pinch for rent", and the lowest ranking "pussy sweatshops". Girls reported that any decent in-call prostitution establishment with the reputation of being cautious about law enforcement concerns would always insist upon the client being fully undressed before discussing acts or money with the prostitute. This was the case at Walter's, where anyone – client or prospective new hire – had to be naked before managers or girls would talk business with them face to face:

> When I take a guy to a room I'll walk in, scan over to make sure it's all clean & smells nice, then I'll tell him to "get comfortable" and that "I'll be right back". I'll leave the room for a minute or so, use the bathroom, or, if it's a regular customer, get any extra stuff I think we will need, like dildos or extra large condoms, or poppers and stuff. I also get him a second drink then I go to the room. When I walk in, if he isn't undressed I tell him I'll be back in another minute. I'll sort of act, you know, surprised, like I was expecting something, like, you know, nakedness! So when I return, if he still isn't undressed by then, I'll point out he should "get comfortable like the day you were born". If he *still* doesn't get it, I'll put him on the phone with a manager or sometimes get Bridget to come in to explain things to the guy. Most guys know what we're talking about, even if they're new here. I dunno, maybe they figure it out, maybe they just want to get naked. [*Laughs*]
>
> *Jasmine*

> As soon as they're naked I get the money and call the office to start the session.
>
> *Bella*

Rules and procedures varied according to the standards and risk tolerance at a house or escort service. At Walter's and other houses of a similar caliber, there were

stringent rules regarding safe sex practices. [54] Girls saw rules about safe sex as indicative of how seriously the house took the safety and privacy of clients, girls, and managers, and were considered very informative as a measure of standards and risk tolerance. These rules exerted a powerful influence over the establishment, maintenance, and overall sense of order. This applied not just in the immediate context in which any specific rule or practice applied, but also in a more general sense of predictability and stability experienced by employees and clients. In the context of safe sex, high standards of conduct and low law enforcement risk tolerance were always presumed to correlate with stringent condom practices and a clientele that both expected and respected condom use.

The most basic organizational rules at Walter's communicated a great deal about expectations and demands, for both the clients and the employees. Dress codes, for example: There were two sets of dress code – inside the house and outside in the neighborhood. The rules for working clothes inside the house were simple – polished and sexy. Heels and stockings were required at all times, Miranda, one of two prostitutes who had been in the business for over twenty years, occasionally pointed out to girls that "looking like a cheap whore" would not help them much at Walter's, where the clientele went for a more refined style or a girl next door look. Rules and expectations governing dress codes were intended to maintain the standards of the house, and were considered contributing factors to its reputation in the eyes of clients and neighbors.

> When it's over ninety degrees out I'll let the day girls work without pantyhose. Night girls always have to wear them. In winter I don't allow hose above twenty denier, no matter how cold it is out. No runs, etcetera. First violation I tell a girl to go change, or put them on. Second is a fine[55] … If a girl just left a session she might run in to get new ones, or not be wearing any for tons of reasons so I don't fine her immediately, but I watch the cameras, if I see a girl

> wandering around & hanging out bare legged & she doesn't correct it quickly then I'll fine her. … If a girl greets a customer barelegged she gets fined double, unless he requested it.
>
> *BethAnn*

Miranda also reminded girls that there were very important reasons not to look "sloppy" or "like a street walker", having nothing to do with creating competitive appeal for clients:

> If we get busted, you get walked out in cuffs in whatever they find you in. That's what you wear in the cells, that's what you wear to meet your lawyer, that's what you wear when you go in front of the judge. You want to look like the sort of girl that deserves a second chance, not the sort of girl they need to take off the street to protect the good clean folks of the Upper East Side.
>
> *Miranda.*

It is of course much more complicated to enforce rules on condom use and sexual practices once the door to a session is closed than it is to enforce dress codes in open spaces. Of the rules that managers were able to reliably enforce, they were strict about those rules that governed composure and public image, particularly those that instructed on how girls should enter and leave the property. These rules spoke directly to the house's efforts to be an unremarkable neighbor, and therefore an enterprise to which everyone on the quiet, upper middle class block would turn a blind eye. Inspiring their neighbors to tacitly ignore the existence of the brothel was a critical factor in creating a sense of order for the house. Lola explained, "Everyone must be quiet … restrained, no hollering and shrieking, nothing that could upset our neighbors or attract attention."

Bridget, a prostitute with decades of experience, had assumed something of a den-mother role, and had very strict expectations for how the girls should behave as they

entered and left the house. In her decades of experience, Bridget had amassed dozens of anecdotes of brothels and massage parlors that had been busted "by pissing off the neighbors". For Bridget, the impression the girls gave on the street was of critical importance, and went beyond merely keeping their voices down, they needed to be unremarkable in the neighborhood in every way.[56] This included the way that they dressed:

> They have to be appropriately dressed as well, we don't want girls walking up to the door looking like they just got out of the clubs, I don't care how *good* they look, it's out of place on this block. I'm not so bothered about neighbors calling the cops or anything, more that it's disrespectful to the other residents on the street. We pride ourselves on being good neighbors.
>
> *Bridget*.

Lola, similarly, expected certain standards of "street clothes" when it came to the girls' street clothes:

> They can't go out in work clothes, like, not in hooker gear, … smart clothes, suits, or casual Friday, au pair outfits, that sort of stuff. They should look like any other girl in the neighborhood. Sallyanne [*Walter's general manager*] doesn't joke about this stuff. Let's face it, if we upset the woman in fifty-four, she can get us shut down before the end of the day. These people have influence, it's a real nice block, we can't become their problem or we'll all be spending at least one night in jail.

The Session

Walking the client into the room, Amanda followed the standard protocol: set his drink down, check that the bathroom is in shape – clean, stocked, and odorless – dim the lights then leave the room, saying "I'll let you get comfortable, I'll be back in a few minutes." She came to the manager's office to smoke a cigarette, checked her purse had

condoms and lube, then returned to the client after picking up another drink for him from the bar, taking a sly shot of tequila as she did so. When Amanda returned to the room, the client was naked, as she had hoped. As long as clients were clothed, the girls could not talk to them about the session or about money. If a client wanted to put his clothes back on before starting the session – they often wanted to put their socks back on – that was fine, but it was imperative that he first present himself completely naked. Clients rarely argued against the requirement, those that did were either new or already had a reputation for difficult behavior.

Of course, there is no reason why a police officer cannot present himself naked, but the assumption among girls and managers was that it would be more difficult for the District Attorney to prosecute a case where the arresting officer had presented himself naked to the girl before they discussed sex. Girls and managers all believed that the house lawyer would have a reasonable chance of having any charges thrown out under such circumstances, and they also believed that the NYPD would be more likely to spend their resources busting houses that didn't require them to jump through so many hoops in order to gain access and build a case, and they would be more likely to bust places where they could secure easier prosecutions for the District Attorney's office.

Girls sometimes suggested that there must be NYPD payoffs between the owner and the local precinct, particularly when they heard of other houses getting busted when Walter's was never touched. Some of the managers quietly agreed, but presented no evidence. No one spoke about these things in front of Sallyanne or Walter, but on the very rare occasion a girl slipped up and said something casually flippant about payoffs or taxes or other sensitive subjects in the presence of Sallyanne or Walter, the room would

be cleared and the loose talker would find herself on the receiving end of an angry lecture about thinking before speaking. This was known as the "shut your fucking mouth" talk.

Pooling Knowledge

The girls pooled their knowledge when it came to clients, and this contributed to a sense of predictability as well as lowering the likelihood that they would need to emotionally engage with the acts that they performed with these men. When a girl was chosen by a client she had never seen before she would ask around to see if anyone who had seen him before could tell her what to expect. Girls would also share information about clients immediately following a session, if there was anything particularly remarkable to share: "He smells, you gotta entice him into the shower or you're out for the next hour getting his stink off you"; "He tries to kiss, you can stop it with some light bondage"; "He'll try to bribe you for extras"; "He won't tip unless you ask", and so on. This knowledge pooling helped girls to figure out what to do in order to bring a client to orgasm. Armed with this information, girls had total control and could therefore make sessions considerably easier on themselves. By using knowledge to get a client off in the most efficient way, and by citing house rules of one orgasm per thirty minute and two orgasms per sixty minute session, a girl could control how wearing sessions were on her body, and could satisfactorily finish a session whenever she wanted to. The knowledge that permitted this control was of the utmost importance and was a powerful motivation for girls to form closer bonds with other girls and managers, in order to increase their access to the knowledge pool.

For the prostitutes, it was most ideal to not spend the entire session having sex. The more experienced girls hustled hard for one-hour sessions with house regulars whose

quirks everyone knew. They could work using the knowledge they had of the client to ensure that he had two orgasms within the first twenty or thirty minutes, and if there was no other business to be had in the house, they would then spend the next thirty-to-forty minutes just hanging out with him in the room. If there were other clients in the house or known to be on their way, she would try to speed up her client's departure in order to 'get back out on the floor, make more money.' Where this was not the case, when there was no other business going on, she might get herself a drink from the bar, maybe smoke his cigarettes, ask him for a massage, and relax until the time was up. If the client was not okay with just hanging out, and if it was only ten or fifteen minutes until their time was up, she might busy herself with changing the linens and cleaning the bathroom – all things that she would have had to do at the end of the session anyway. Some clients would leave early, but most clients would stay and relax. Clients would often try to convince the girl to 'play' some more, but after a client had used up his orgasm rations, unless he bought another session or laid out the equivalent cash inducement, none of the girls would be prepared to have "free" sex, distinct from nonwork unpaid sex which, particularly outside of a relationship, could be seen as 'free' but was not considered 'freesex' on the basis that nonwork sex was not labor and therefore presented no conflict in that regard, but work sex *was* labor and therefore freesex represented unpaid labor, which the prostitutes as other workers do, endeavored to protect against. When I asked Bella about the orgasm rationing she said:

> There's that rule, you know, two times on the hour. Once on the half. You know about that, right? But if a client books the hour, and busts twice in the first half, I'm not gonna give him extra pussy. What? [*laughing*] Get the fuck out! That'd be giving it away for free! I'm a hooker, not a whore!
>
> *Bella*

Girls happily allowed non-sexual contact at this point in their interaction with clients, who would be welcome to give, for example, a neck or foot massage. Indeed, the luxury of sitting back with a drink and getting a foot massage, or chilling out with a drink and cigarettes for thirty or forty minutes mid-shift was a very powerful incentive to work extra hard for the first twenty minutes. Some clients, however, were aware of the practices, and would enter into a battle of wits with girls who were trying to manipulate a shorter less arduous session:

> I always ask them [managers] to buzz me at the ten minute mark and I want them to start timing the session the minute I've collected the payment. When they give me the ten-minute buzz, if he isn't done, that's my sign to kick up the pace and finish him up. Regular clients have it all figured out, some of them, I know, they don't even think about finishing before they've heard the buzzer go.
>
> *Bella*

The sex was just work and they only tried to do it well in order to finish off clients quicker. This was one of their main ways of shortening a session – giving clients the very best sexual experience from the very start of the session, using tricks that they had learned from each other, so the men had no choice but to spend their orgasm ration. Sometimes girls would ask managers to buzz their room early, if the client was the sort who was known to be difficult to get rid of at the end of the session – as some were, and other times girls would convince their client to take a double – bringing another girl in – knowing that it would most likely make him orgasm quicker, and that both girls would only be doing half the work while still getting paid the same amount as if they did a session alone.

Aggressive clients were rare; the scene across the city had a pretty good way of

weeding them out via the gossip and knowledge networks of girls, managers, and owners. Among the more challenging clients were those who used cocaine during the session. These clients were often difficult interactionally and became worse behind closed doors with more coke going up their noses. Not only were they likely to be demanding and pushy, but could also be incredibly difficult to bring to orgasm. These sessions were emotionally and physically wearing on the girls, and yet some of them looked forward to these clients, with whom they could get high on free coke, despite this being strictly against house rules. The key to the cocaine using clients, they explained, was to swiftly deal with the business side at the very start of the session, as Kat put it, "get him off in the first ten or fifteen [rather than] get worn out by a client with coke dick." Some of these clients were notoriously challenging and unappealing, even for experienced girls, and there was a consensus that girls who were willing to see these clients deserved all the extras they could get and so everyone turned a blind eye to their drug use unless it became problematic or regular.

Girls and managers revealed a solidarity and teamwork orientation when it came to handling drunk and high clients, often extracting from these men as much as they were willing to spend. Sessions with clients who used cocaine or drank heavily would frequently be incrementally extended as the time ran out on each hour of the session. When a girl confirmed as she extended the session that the client was using cocaine or drinking heavily, the manager might try to get other girls involved. Some clients would regularly extend their sessions, and not all clients who did so were high or drunk. But, with a client who was inebriated, and who was getting progressively more so, and who was correspondingly extending his session time, a manager had to make sure that she

continued to provide him with good reasons to stay and spend money. First, sending in other girls bearing gifts of Cuban cigars and whatever it was he was drinking earlier, either the bottle or a couple of cocktail shakers worth, or a bottle of champagne, which he was charged for if he opened it. If he wanted any of these girls to join the session, they collected the money upfront and would report back to the manager "how thick the stack is". The more cash a client had on him, the more he was assumed to be willing to spend.

Solidarity & Trust

Most of the girls at the brothel regarded their work there as temporary and it was usually to support them in some other endeavor, whether the money went to college tuition or to support efforts to establish careers as artists, models, writers, musicians, actresses, filmmakers, or other independent and creative professions. For most of the girls in my fieldwork, their stint as a sex worker lasted longer than they had expected it would. Very few, however, remained in the business for more than four or five years, and most managed to get out before their three-year anniversary. While employed as sex workers, they all worked for more than one establishment, some worked full time at one place at a time, others worked part time at two or three different places simultaneously. Most, however, balanced part time work at a brothel with part time out-call work through an escort service.

A girl's professional and personal reputation among her co-workers was of the utmost importance in establishing order in her professional life, guarding against having to work at houses that were lower status, and continuing to safeguard her dual identity. Dropping status levels involved lowering privacy and anti-risk practices, and was seen as the marker of girls who would go on to have undesirably lengthy careers in prostitution.

Reputation dictated at which places a girl could work, and the experience she would have in the workplace.

Reputation was comprised of a girl's personal and professional integrity, honesty, and reliability, her willingness to bring in other girls on sessions, her involvement in episodes of house drama, and her ability to 'handle' drugs and alcohol – to consume lightly with a client when he requested her to, but not to allow that consumption to impair her decision making ability. Impairment led to risking her personal safety and the safety of the house. Girls with a good reputation were more likely to be "sold" – talked up to clients by managers or co-workers on the phone or in person. These girls therefore made more money. They were also more likely to be pulled in on lucrative "doubles", sessions in which a client paid for two or more girls at a time. Doubles eased the labor requirement on each girl, while paying the same rate, and clients usually tipped much more for doubles than they would tip on a single-girl session.

Condoms were required for all penetrative acts with clients. Oral and vaginal sex were the only penetrative acts offered at this particular brothel, with anal sex strictly prohibited. Three girls confessed to me that they had at least once had anal sex with a client, several others were suspected or rumored to do so. Although this was considered a very deviant act at Walter's, one that would damage a girl's professional reputation and rapidly lose her some friends and weaken her workplace support system, the girls who made this confession to me also asserted that under no circumstances would they have penetrative sex without a condom. Any girl who was suspected to be having sex with a client without using a condom would soon find herself to have no friends at work, no support system. Once a girl was no longer trusted by her coworkers, her sense of order

would be shattered and she would no longer be able to trust the house to look out for her or to protect her identity practices. Similarly, her coworkers would see her as a threat, leading to further ostracism and interactional efforts to remove her from the social system of the house. A usually rather fun, supportive, and laid back workplace could rapidly become very anxious, uncomfortable, and upsetting for a girl who found herself outcast in that way.

Disreputable information spreads rapidly in local groups of elite prostitutes and managers. The managers at Walter's were all female, and all of a similar age and education as the girls. Consequently, managers and prostitutes developed friendships that carried over outside of work, and they become integrated into the same social scene and gossip networks. Bella worked at Walter's three days a week, and once a week she worked at an escort service. Bella was close friends with Lola, who was the manager on most of Bella's shifts at Walter's. A situation emerged involving Lauren, a relatively new girl to Walter's, and Christina, a more established prostitute who found herself competing with Lauren for business. Lauren and Christina had a similar appearance and the clients of one could be expected to find the other appealing. Ordinarily this would be unremarkable, and girls were friendly about the competition that they could anticipate, but this was unanticipated competition for Christina because Lauren was new to the New York City scene and therefore had added appeal. The newer a girl was to the local market, the more in demand she would be for her first few weeks.[57]

Lauren was promoted to clients as being completely new to the house, to New York, and to prostitution; she was sold as a scene virgin. The idea of the unsullied new prostitute, new to town and new to the job, carried a lot of traction with the clients, most

of whom would want to see her at least once even if she wasn't their usual type. In the meantime, Christina's business dwindled. Unable to wait it out for a month or so of losing out to Lauren, before the new-girl aura went away, Christina started a regime of passive aggressive attacks on her reputation. Bella became involved after a night out with Christina and their mutual friend Rosie, who worked at another brothel. The three of them had spent the evening at a downtown bar that was popular with a young, successful, fashionable crowd, where they were looking for potential 'side clients' – men who they could regularly see for money without needing to give a cut of their take to an escort agency or brothel.

> ***Bella***: I was scoping at *1Oak* the other night with Rosie. You know her? Works for Natalia [*general manager of another brothel*]. She told me all about Lauren. She's only claiming to be new to the business. She worked for one of Annie's old girls who started a service down in Miami when she retired, and they said she also worked in LA. Bitch is a lifer acting like she's new. Smart, but I can't trust her now. Worse, Rosie said Nat heard Lauren was filthy. On the raw for tips. Nat doesn't lie. Why would she risk her reputation by lying about some diseased slut?
>
> ***Rachael*:** She has a disease?
>
> ***Bella:*** Oh, I don't know. Yeah, probably. Girls who go raw for tips get all sorts of things. We all know that. Right? I don't know for a fact. But I expect it's true.

Once Bella, Christina, and Rosie all piled on to Lauren's reputation, it wasn't long before the other girls and the managers heard the gossip and began looking at Lauren with skepticism and distrust:

> Lauren. Hate her. She's dirty. I don't know what she does in those rooms but what I hear it's not right, it's not fair to the others. If she's

> sucking dick without a condom then the customer will expect everyone to do it and when they don't they lose business. Not to mention the new girl thing, soon all the guys will see her and expect that. … What if she's charging extra and of course the john pays her, but she's stealing from Walter, isn't she, because we aren't taking a cut and she's stealing from everyone. I wish I didn't have to give her name out on the phone, but Walter and Sallyanne will wonder why and then when I tell them they'll go ballistic. I'll talk to her but I shouldn't have to. God, why'd I always have to hold their hands?
>
> *Lola*

It turned out that Lauren was not entirely new to the business, but it also emerged that she had not been practicing unsafe sex: She had been the victim of a vicious rumor. While Christina believed the accusations against Lauren to be true, she was unable to remember where or when she first heard them. No one else could recall having heard anything negative about Lauren "until Christina began discussing these rumors" [*Amanda*]. Lola and others asked some of the established clients about Lauren's practices in session, whether she had done or offered to do anything that they knew to be against the rules. Clients all reported back that she was "by the book" [*Bridget*]. Lauren stopped coming to work and a few weeks later she called to quit.

It is necessary that managers and prostitutes at brothels like Walter's establish and maintain a personal and professional trust. Managers needed to be able to believe that the girls would stick to the rules and protocols that were in place to protect them. Similarly, managers expected the girls to be honest about the money that changed hands behind closed doors, the acts performed, especially if any of them entailed extra cost to the client, and whether they brought in another girl even for a couple of minutes. In return, prostitutes trusted the managers not to give them away if an outsider[58] calls them at work, which demanded that managers remember every girl's cover story and real name. Girls

also needed to be able to trust managers to adequately vet each client, protecting them from the undesirable clients they referred to as "freaks and psychos", from law enforcement, and, on two occasions in my fieldwork, significant others who showed up, suspicious and enraged. The girls could also reasonably expect that if they upheld their side of the bargain, managers would sell them on the phone to prospective clients.

Following Christina's attach on Lauren's reputation, the working relationship and professional trust between Lola and Lauren disappeared. After the fact, Lola expressed some regret that she hadn't given Lauren the benefit of the doubt, "Shit, I tore her apart man. I definitely didn't sell her to johns. I feel kind of bad about all that, no wonder she wasn't happy here." Nonetheless, Lola felt there had been no other option in the circumstances, given the extent of the professional deviance that Lauren had been accused of, and the possible repercussions for the house, managers, and other girls. In the circumstances, Lola felt compelled to protect the others and her relationship with them: "That's just Christina, I guess. Fired up. But we know that already. Drama, yeah, but I'd still much rather have her here than someone who lies about their history."[59]

Mae West[60]

Everything was peaceful in the brothel, the shift was running smoothly: A steady flow of regular and uncomplicated clients, the standard phone freaks calling in their repetitively idiotic requests and pranks intended to get a rise out of whoever answered the phone, but who everyone knew to ignore lest they felt encouraged to keep going with the calls all night. It was the second evening rush; the first rush was after work, around 4-7, then things slowed while people ate, then picked up again in the after dinner, or 'late at work' crowd – 8:30ish until 10. Then there'd be the steady trickle of guys coming in after

a night out, sometimes with friends. And there was a late night rush before the house closed for the night – the times were flexible but typically they stopped booking new sessions at 1am on weeknights and 3am on weekends. So I'm there with a few of the girls, it's a pretty boring shift – the same regular clients, everyone had made a bit of money already & it was still early so the general feeling was relaxed, everyone was in a good mood. And then suddenly we hear a girl upstairs screaming. We all run upstairs, taking the steps two at a time to the fourth floor, where Sonja had been in session in the 'Mae West' room. She ran out of the room naked, panicked, and noticing that she did not appear injured, Bridget said, 'heart attack?' But no, it wasn't.

As her session came to an end, Sonja had gone to the bathroom to clean up before leading her client out. While doing so she had noticed lice crawling on her body. It was a manager's job to ascertain what had happened and to close down the room for disinfection. The client was furious, claiming that he had never had an STD in his life, and he was deeply affronted that "the crazy whore" had accused *him* of giving *her* crabs. He was further enraged that anyone might believe her over him. This was an older, bearded Hasidic man, with a considerable amount of body hair and whose thick, fetid body odor could be smelled from the stairs. If he was correct, if Sonja had indeed given him crabs, the house would need to do damage control. As shift manager, it was Lola's responsibility to find out the truth by examining him for lice and eggs, evidence of scratching, and any signs of infestation beyond his genital area. All of these things could provide evidence that Sonja had contracted the lice from the client rather than giving them to him. I watched as Lola tied her hair back in a very tight bun, put on a bathrobe to cover her clothing, and covered her hands with latex gloves. From the doorway, I

observed her scrutinize the outraged but compliant client's genital area, with the assistance of a flashlight and magnifying glass. Kat stood in the doorway to the bathroom, where Sonja applied delousing ointment. She was hysterical and Bridget quietly suggested to Lola that she "send this bitch home and take her off the schedule forever."

Indeed, the client was very heavily infested with lice, but continued to try to blame Sonja and the house, becoming increasingly aggressive and argumentative with Lola and Bridget. He was ordered to leave, and Bridget walked him out. Sonja's work clothes were bagged up in multiple trash bags, sealed, and put out in the dumpster. Cleaning the room in this situation would normally be the responsibility of the girl whose session had caused the problem, but Sonja was too worked up, too high: "we just had to get her out of here before it turned into total chaos" [*Lola*]. With Bridget in charge of the office, Lola proceeded to break down the bed with the help of Amanda and Kat. They sealed the linens, pillows, towels, and comforters in trash bags, and sprayed the carpet, mattress, sofa, curtains, drapes, and lampshades with delousing solution. Each bag of items would be laundered three times in almost boiling water. After clearing and delousing the room, solution was sprayed around one more time, and then they shut down the Mae West Room for the night. In the morning it would be vacuumed and deloused again before the start of the day shift. Amanda went for a walk around the block to ensure that the client wasn't hovering outside and then Sonja was sent home with a bottle of delousing ointment.

While condoms were mandatory, two main concerns for STDs that were not resolved by condom use were herpes and lice. The girls employed practices that would at

least give them some chance of spotting potential carriers before it was too late. For the most part, girls started every session by giving the client oral sex, during which they would scrutinize his genital area for possible blisters, lesions, sores, signs of recent scratching, and lice. Other than the very rare occasion that a condom would break at an inopportune moment, the girls' greatest concern regarding the possibility of contracting something from a client was their fear of catching lice. Three cases were reported as having been contracted by girls other than Sonja, over the course of my fieldwork, with several more cases of lice having been detected on clients before being passed to the girls.

There were also occasional reports of STDs: One girl contracted a severe case of pelvic inflammatory disease from an untreated case of gardnerella that was believed to have been contracted from a client performing oral sex on her – the house provided dental dams for the purpose of safe oral sex but they were rarely used. And STDs that girls believed they had caught in their non-work sex lives included cases of chlamydia and two cases of genital warts, one of which necessitated the girl having cryosurgery for their removal. She was back at work less than a month later, sooner than her doctor recommended any sexual activity. With crippling medical bills to pay she hoped she could "get away with mostly blow jobs and just not be available for the guys with the monster dicks, the ones who fuck for the entire hour, or the assholes who fuck like a pile driver." The managers accommodated her in this effort, with Sallyanne's support, in a rare moment that she went against Walter's wishes, "He'd fine her, give her no room to choose who she sees. He's a pig." [*Sallyanne*].

Identity, Risk, & Status

Measures were taken by the house to protect the girls from arrest – these involved rules and enforcement from managers, and informal practices that were supported by management. Informal measures included things like the mentoring practices the more senior prostitutes provided new hires they had taken a liking to. Experienced girls passed on tips and trade secrets that included home remedies for urinary tract infections and yeast infections, tricks for having sex while on their period without the client knowing, methods for bringing a client to orgasm almost instantaneously, and where to go for discounted bulk purchases of 'office supplies': condoms, lubrication, stockings, and baby wipes. In essence, formal measures and informal mentoring practices taught new hires the tricks and methods for detaching themselves from any sense of intimacy, and gave them the script that would enable all of this to work.

Mentoring, however, was not merely about these older wiser practitioners passing on their knowledge to the naïve and enthusiastic young acolytes. Bridget had worked in the business since she was a teenager in the mid-1960's, and was very clear about her approach to new girls and her reasons for being willing to take on a mentoring role:

> Listen, hun, I tell them how we do this. The reality, versus the rules. … I don't just do it for them, I do it for me. If I help a new girl I get to know her: Is she a cop? Is she a junkie? Is she flighty or short term? Is she a liability? You know. If this piece of ass is gonna be the type to cause trouble around here then I wanna know, and I'm making damn sure I don't work her shifts.

Bridget's mentoring was less about a desire to train the next generation, and had more to do with satisfying the impulse to order.

Those employed in the extralegal marketplace, particularly those in a sales position, such as the prostitutes, drug dealers, or bookies I observed, need to develop

finely honed techniques for quickly establishing whether or not someone is to be trustworthy. Their most commonly used technique is the default to distrust. Most girls at Walter's were powerfully motivated by a fear of the social fallout that would occur in their personal lives if they were busted for prostitution. Even though they knew that a bust at this house would be unlikely to result in criminal charges unless they were unfortunate enough to be in session at the time, they still feared the possibility. This fear seemed related to their framing of this work as temporary, the fact that their friends and families were unaware of their employment, and that they were simultaneously pursuing a degree or a career that was inconsistent with having a criminal record for prostitution.

Identity was a key component to any sense of stability, and therefore perceptions of order. Identities were performed and protected in a number of ways. Girls protected personal identities in the house, and professional identities on the outside by using pseudonyms and taking care not to expose conflicting identities out of context. They didn't want it to come out later in life that this was how they funded their start. So they used pseudonyms, with their work name typically invoking a celebrity or fictional character that reflected the character they assumed in their work identity and practices. Identities were also protected through building trust with co-workers, who were depended upon as a supporting cast in the maintenance of each girl's dual identity. Because co-workers were usually the only people who knew both identities a girl held, they needed to be trusted in greater measure than we would typically find in a workplace scenario. This requirement motivated formal and informal trust practices and at times resulted in cliquishness.

When the girls[61] socialized with combinations of 'work friends' and 'non-work'

friends they made every effort to respect each others' cover stories, careful not to expose their current profession to non-scene friends. The few girls who were open about their work with their non-work friends were nonetheless happy to stick to the others' stories and no one attempted to coerce anyone into revealing to friends and family what it was they did for money:

> I stopped lying about work about a year, year and a half ago. I just got sick of keeping my story safe, it was more stressful than the job itself. But I worked for years under a story and I respect other girls' stories. I don't know what I'd have done if someone busted me to my parents or a boyfriend and I'm not going to be the bitch that does it to someone else.
>
> *Jasmine*

The problem with trusting a lot of people with a very important secret – such as the fact that you are a prostitute – and then requiring them to essentially code switch between your identities, is that people can be expected to occasionally slip up. Mistakes become even more likely in relaxed social situations, and more critical in mixed company. Add recreational drugs and alcohol to the mix and it would only be a matter of time before someone unintentionally revealed someone else's closely guarded secret. I observed a handful of instances of this type of interactional failure, when girls accidentally used someone's real name in front of a client, or working name in front of civilians – their non-sex-work friends and family. Usually the mistake was laughed off, talked around, excused as a nickname or joke, or consciously ignored. In much the same way as if you accidentally drop an f-bomb in front of a two year old and don't react, it is unlikely they will repeat it, but if you drop an f-bomb and then panic and plead with them not to use "that bad word", it is very likely they will start shouting it at the checkout next

time you're in the supermarket. Most people didn't notice name slips, as long as no one reacted to them. Sometimes, however, it caused real damage to the girl who had been exposed.

When Jasmine told me that she had stopped lying about her work to those closest to her, I asked if it was common for girls to fully expose an identity or identity stories of others: "Not much. Sometimes by mistake, but I think I only know one time a girl maybe did it on purpose. Usually it's just because girls are drunk, or you know, whatever, and one of them accidentally calls another by her work name." In those situations, she continued, girls usually covered the moment and continued as if nothing happened. But sometimes, friends or family caught the slip and it provided them with the answer to something they had been trying to figure out about their loved one: "We work funny hours, all our work friends are young hot women, we make a lot of money, and we always have a lot of cash around. Like, duh! The name is like the final piece of the puzzle." Regarding the incident Jasmine mentioned of one girl exposing another's identity to her family on purpose, I asked what had happened:

> It was a disaster. Ronnie, she blew up Bella, to her parents and her fiancé! He broke up with her and her parents cut her off. That's when she went to Brazil, what, four years ago… Now she's back & things are smoothed over with her family, but they have no idea she still does this and she won't ever trust another working girl to meet her family. Her boyfriend knows, sort of, but she tells him that there's no sex involved, that she just gives hand jobs and blowjobs, and that's it.

Girls upheld each other's stories out of respect for those who do the same work they do, whether they actually like each other or not, with stable work relationships in

mind and in response to the impulse to order. Lola had very low tolerance for disloyalty or untrustworthiness when it came to supporting other girls in their identity practices. She felt that any girl who revealed another's "hooker persona" to her friends and family had no business working at the house, and should be fired:

> That's a serious liability right there; if she can't act right by her co-workers she has no place here. It's just a standard, a code of conduct: These girls are all busting their asses on their backs to make rent, they all go through the same bullshit on the job, you've talked to them, you know it's not fun. They have to trust each other not to expose them, not to steal from them, not to put their physical or mental state at risk.
>
> *Lola*

Other girls seemed to find it easier to simply keep the two separate by choosing not to combine work and personal social occasions and restricting access to their personal life to one maybe two girls from work, if that. They lost out on some of the support and bonding that came with sharing private lives and identities with their work colleagues, and struggled to access the knowledge pool, but also protected their identities from being accidentally profaned.

Girls also pursued a sense of order by distinguishing not just between their identities, but between the practices and items relating to each. They reframed and redefined items, practices, and situations according to whether they occurred within the realm of the brothel or their personal life, in order to prevent conflict in their perceptions of identity and control. These girls were mostly in their early-to-mid twenties, educated, beautiful, and ambitious, but their work as prostitutes caused conflict in the relationships and dating part of their personal life.

One item that required quite substantial redefining and reframing of its use was baby oil. Baby oil was kept in every room, for use on the clients, typically as a massage oil or as a lubricant for hand jobs. Emily noted that baby oil was something that would always make her think of sessions, and of the men. While it served its purpose, as a massage oil and as a way of stopping a client from seeking penetrative sex because the oil would cause the condom to disintegrate, it was a recurring theme in the girls' more negative reports about their experience doing what they do. The smell of baby oil permeated the house, and girls said they often felt as though the smell was coming out of their pores. One of the girls, Collette, called herself a "hooker without a sex life":

> I'm working & I'm in school. So I really don't date. I don't have time. I mean, we hang out, obviously, but, well, I'm always so beat, I just want to grab a few beers with friends, or go to a club in sneakers to dance, not put on another pair of heels and spend an evening with a guy... Going out with a guy, like going out it's, I'd have to do stuff I don't have time for... Like, my nails, right. My hands smell of baby oil all the time, you know, from using it in session. It's disgusting. The only time I can't smell it is after I get like a paraffin manicure, so I'd have to do that right before the date. That gets expensive, and takes time. All that fuss, for a date with someone I don't have anything real with? And anyway, guys expect stuff on dates, which I guess is fair enough, but it's not like I can say, "look, you're a great guy, and I really like you, but I've been fucking strangers all goddamn day and I'm tired & sore & sick of it, so if it's ok with you I'd rather not." So I just don't date.

The theme of having their bodies worn down was common, whether they were talking about identity switching, tricks and practices intended to minimize the work put into each session, or their expected tenure in the profession. They also focused on the condition of their bodies – working out, worrying about eating right, and establishing their own maintenance regimen. Girls framed different aspects of self-maintenance in

different ways, but anything directly or uniquely relating to their success as prostitutes would be framed as time and money spent fulfilling the requirements of work.

For these girls, not only are their bodies put to work in their profession – a profession they do not intend to remain in forever – but their bodies are also their most important professional tool. In many ways, prostitutes *are* their bodies: their physical health and youthful appearance is the commodity they sell. Skills are important, but are unknown to a client when he chooses a girl who is otherwise unknown to him. Although this has changed with the rise of internet review sites, at the time of my fieldwork clients did not have access to an equivalent of the girls' knowledge pool. Similarly, smarter girls may have been slightly more successful in the long-term, as they were often better equipped to manipulate sessions. But smarts and skills did not convert into being picked by a client who hadn't seen the girl before, and long after the new-girl sheen had dulled, well-maintained girls made more money than those who didn't care for the gym or the salon, no matter how smart or skilled they were.

Aside from personal maintenance, there were other backstage demands on the girls if they hoped to succeed, or at least make as much money as possible. Unless they wanted to wear their "home" clothes at work, girls needed to invest in a small wardrobe of inexpensive outfits that would appeal to customers, and which were (ideally) machine washable. Girls kept kit bags in the house closet area, containing shoes, makeup and lingerie, and hair accessories that they would only use at the brothel. Many girls laundered their work clothes at the house, never taking them home. Upon ending relationships, some girls would replenish their stock of 'house' lingerie with items they

had purchased in the relationship and which they redefined, re-earmarked once the romantic relationship ended.

Beyond the use of pseudonyms and wardrobe, girls asserted control by redefining their understanding of – and relationship with – items specific to sex, most notably condoms, and items that became redefined as specific to sexwork sex, most notably baby oil. As Emily noted, baby oil was something that reminded them of sessions – it was used as a massage oil at the end of sessions, and girls often introduced it earlier if they wanted to prevent the client seeking penetrative sex because baby oil would cause a condom to disintegrate: " If I give him a hand job with oil I can immediately shut him down when he tries to get more". The smell of baby oil pervaded the house, and many girls said that they sometimes felt as though the smell was coming out of their pores. Their relationship to baby oil is no different to the olfactory memories that are well documented as being very unpleasantly experienced by those employed on the "kill floors"[62] of slaughterhouses. In another act of sensory defense, girls explained that they used a different brand condom in their personal life than they used in their professional life. Indeed, many said they would never use the house default condom at home – non-lubricated and mint flavored – because to do so would be to take on the sensory experience of an economically intimate event with a paying client, and introduce it into an emotionally intimate event with a significant other

Working as a prostitute forced girls to examine the conflict that sex work introduced to arrangements in their personal lives – ranging from co-workers exposing their identity, to redefining the transactional nature of sex according to specific acts, items, relationships, and sensory experiences. They actively managed dual identities,

reframed their relationship with items of lingerie, clothing, and cosmetics, and with condoms, baby oil, the specifics of folding a towel per 'house rules', and acts such as kissing[63]. For some girls, the brands of cigarettes that their clients smoked or the drinks their clients had them prepare and serve became associated with one identity over the other, even if they had previously experienced that cigarette or drink in a completely unrelated context. Girls' relationships with particular items and practices introduced additional complexities to their dating and social lives. Resolving these complexities required repeatedly redefining the relationship with each item or practice, reframing the item or practice to fit the relational redefinition of its role.

The labor practices of sexwork forced the girls to confront conflicts that their labor introduced to arrangements in their personal lives – ranging from trusting co-workers with an identity and masking their profession to non-work friends, to redefining the nature of a sexual moment, whether in the dungeon or brothel – according to the performance of certain acts in certain ways, and the items and sensory experiences involved. They actively managed and balanced identities, work and home, and in each they performed the most intimate acts in similar ways, but in a different mindset. In order to account for this they reframed their relationship with items of lingerie and clothing, and with condoms, baby oil, pet supplies, hand soap, Febreeze, and the specific way in which house towels were folded, as well as intimate acts such as kissing and unprotected sex.

A lack of script can mean the introduction of intimacy that the girls do not want in their interactions with clients, and they would therefore diligently and strategically guard against any possibility that this might occur. Without the scriptedness these interactions

would necessarily default to intimate patterns, but a default to intimacy as a means of reducing their mental processing is rendered unnecessary in the presence of this scriptedness, this detachment. By using their knowledge and expertise these prostitutes are able to go about their work without thinking about the dissonance of interacting in unmistakably intimate ways with clients in the deeply impersonal context of the brothel. And by permitting a lack of intimacy, the detachment that emerges from the scripted element to these interactions motivates a sense of order.

By entering into this redefinition and reframing, girls rearranged their relationship with the peripheral items and practices of their sexual transactions in the workplace, versus those of their sexual experiences at home. In so doing they established a sense of control over these items and practices, and control over their dual identities. Most critically, this established for each girl a sense of control over her interactions with clients. Effectively, what constituted a sense of order for these prostitutes emerged as a result of their establishing tight control over the practices, interactions, and understandings – the framing and reframing, defining and redefining – that permitted their universal assertion that *they* were in control, that the joke is on the johns who were, as the girls repeatedly reminded me, "paying for this".

CHAPTER FIVE: CONTROL

The buzzer goes. I stretch my body half out of the desk chair, reaching up to push the entry button that will let the client into the building. Sitting at the reception desk at my part time job, I put aside the paper I'm working on that is due in class the next day, and start watching the security camera. I see a tall figure push the door open and enter the building. He briefly disappears from the range of the camera, then reappears in front of the elevator. I switch cameras. Now he is in the elevator. At this point many visitors start checking their reflections in the floor to ceiling mirrored walls of the elevator car. Not this guy though, he is hunched over, appears elderly, his body shape disguised by his large loose trench coat, his hair hidden under a slightly crumpled trilby. His hand reaches up to his face, either to scratch or pick his nose, then he reaches behind his back and I watch as he scratches his ass. The elevator shudders to a halt.

As the doors open I switch cameras again. Now I have a grainy and poorly lit image of the man's long jowly face, as he takes two steps out of the elevator into the tiny vestibule. He stands maybe three feet from where I sit, almost close enough to touch, but separated by a heavy door made of oak laminate over a reinforced steel core. I watch on camera as the man raises his hand, the same one he used to scratch, and pushes the doorbell. I don't know this man, so I ask one of the other employees if I should let him in. It's late at night, our building superintendent (and informal security guard) is gone for the day, I don't have any protection and there are only a few women here with me on the shift, all in their work attire of lingerie, corsets, and very high heels. "Oh, he's cool" she says, "let him in, I'll tell the others", and she sashays down the hallway, in seven inch

stilettos, heading to the employee lounge while screaming “clear” to indicate a client is in the vestibule.

I open the door and quickly scoot back behind my desk, “Hey, how’s it going? Do you have an appointment, hun?” He smiles in a way that I find slightly disconcerting, but that’s nothing new in this job. “No appointment. Who’s here?” I ask what sort of session he would like. His smile grows bigger. “I’ve never seen you before. Are you new?” This, also, was nothing now. “Well, um, I usually work on the day shift, but I’m only a manager” I say, shifting uncomfortably in my chair and pushing back a bit from the desk to draw attention to the fact that I’m wearing oversized men’s camouflage cargo pants, hi-top sneakers, and a college hoodie; hardly the wardrobe of a pro-Domme at work. He leans over the desk, peering at my outfit, and then looks up to peer more closely at my make-up free face and raggedy pony tailed hair. “Ok. Hold your hands out. Like this.” For some reason, I do as he asks, cupping my hands as if to receive a communion wafer. “Now close your eyes”. I hesitate and he repeats himself with a more insistent tone, adding, with a smile, “I won’t do anything bad”.

I think to myself, ‘This is weird,’ but since the first day I came to work here it’s been weird, in the way that things we don’t understand or which are new to us often seem weird until we become accustomed to them. I see another woman walk down the hallway towards the reception area, smiling as if she knows something I don’t. She wouldn’t be smiling if this could end badly. There are many things that can go wrong in a dungeon, and with very serious consequences; pro-Dommes know the risks and they don’t take this stuff lightly. I closed my eyes, and felt my cupped hands filling up with some sort of small hard pill-like objects that the man had scooped out of the pockets of his trench coat.

I tried to guess what they could be: Prescription drugs? Ecstasy? Skittles? M & Ms? I hoped he didn't expect me to eat them, there was no way… Or perhaps, given the context, suppositories? Poppers? Maybe this was his way of indicating the sort of session he wanted me to set up for him.

The man said, "Open your eyes". I did as instructed, and when I realized what filled my cupped hands I was at once both horrified and relieved. He threw his head back in a bellowing laugh, accented by the wheeze of a heavy smoker, as the woman in the hallway leaned against the wall grinning at me: My cupped hands were full of human teeth.

Identity & Control

For the Dominatrices with whom I spent time during my fieldwork, their central concern involved issues of identity – asserting their expertise in order to verify their claim that they were not prostitutes, and control – in a scene in which the Dominatrices are dominant and their clients submissive the elephant in the corner is the fact that the clients direct the interactions and it is the client's ongoing loyalty that financially supports their Dominatrix. All of the rhetoric, rules, and norms, pointed toward a scene in which submissive clients filled the role of interactional subalterns. The details of the interactions I observed, however, and the interaction-structuring techniques used by the Dominatrices, revealed something else: The house-Dominatrix dominates on command and so while she is physically and psychologically dominant, in the relationship between client and Dominatrix it is the client who is interactionally dominant, no matter how submissive his behavior.

It may seem antithetical to talk about the establishment and maintenance of interactional and professional order in an environment in which the acts, and moments such as the handful of teeth, are not only not considered strange, but are perfectly unremarkable. But it is necessary to push aside any preconceived ideas about what is 'normal' or 'perverse', to consider these interpersonal moments in the context of the Scene and in the context of how each of the moments I describe here contributes to a predictability that grounds the local sense of order. That a submissive client who came to the dungeon to be dominated, interactionally dominated me with a handful of human teeth is emblematic of the contradictory interactional moments that surround the exchange of client-Domina relations, and this points to the paradox from which emerges the dominas' main concern: control.

Challenges to role and status created tension in the dungeon. For the dominatrices more so than for the prostitutes, their instinctively dominant interactional style and desire for professional status in the eyes of their peers, exacerbated questions of control in interactions, and spilled over into tense moments which, as Mistress Ekaterina asserted, raised questions about "who really runs this fucking house." Things were also complicated by the ongoing battle for control between dominatrices employed on the day and evening shifts, those who rented rooms as independent dominatrices, and those employed on the after-hours shift. Then there was the balance of control being worked out constantly between managers and girls, and the house and clients.

(Role)Playing Along

The dungeon was on the upper floor of a commercially zoned building on a side street near Herald Square in the center of New York City's so-called "dungeon alley",[64]

which extends from Chelsea to the mid-thirties, on Manhattan's west side. Once in the reception area, two hallways led off to session rooms, of which there were seven. Each session room was decorated in deep jewel tones and heavy woods and leathers, with hardwood floors covered with Persian rugs. All but one had essentially the same heavy equipment – a St. Andrews Cross, a leather upholstered bed with clips for bondage and restraints, a throne, and a selection of ropes, whips, floggers, tie restraints, and paddles, and a suspension system, from which clients would be hung by their wrists or ankles (or both), sometimes blindfolded and / or gagged, and where they would be whipped, flogged, or otherwise 'tortured'.

In two of the rooms there were coffins, standing on end, and in two other rooms the base of the bondage beds were fully functional cages that could be completely covered to let in no light – coffins and covered cages were used for sensory deprivation sessions. The only room to deviate from this standard equipment setup was the 'medical' room. In the medical room, the floors and walls were white tile and every other surface was stainless steel. Whereas in every other room the lighting was softened by red or pink light bulbs and shades, the medical room was starkly lit by bright white bare bulbs, protected by industrial bulb cages. Next to a stainless steel rolling cart holding an autoclave, and with hooks for the tidy storage of ropes and other accessories, was a large, glass fronted steel cabinet. This cabinet was full of stainless steel tools, which included scalpels, pinwheels, forceps, steel dental 'open mouth' gags, tuning forks, and sounds – long stainless steel rods of different widths, used for 'urethral play' – insertion into the urethra. There was also a large stainless sink with a hose attachment for sluicing down the floors and walls when necessary, and a large steel bed, with channels running down

the sides to drain fluids. Many Mistresses, cleaning people, and managers felt uncomfortable entering the medical room; it was indeed a very creepy room to close down or open up when there was no one else in the dungeon.

Very few Mistresses were trained or qualified to conduct true medical sessions, although many Mistresses were able to use basic medical equipment in a light version of a medical session, and several of the house Mistresses regularly used medical-light equipment on clients, such as pinwheels and sounds. Only one house-Mistress at this dungeon had the training to cut a client or to perform invasive and permanent body modifications such as scarification or implanting pearls, steel, or glass beads below the skin, and the medical room facility was most often required by independent Mistresses who performed real medical sessions. Being qualified to book such medical sessions was a status indicator loaded with information about a Dominatrix's tenure, skillset, confidence in her abilities and training, and lack of squeamishness. It took a certain detachment to be able to cut a client, as well as being possessed of the knowledge required to safely perform this service without causing unwanted injuries, practices that drew blood also required that the Mistress were okay with blood. Mistresses are just as likely to be as squeamish as the rest of us, and many of the Dominas had a small set of scenes that they absolutely refused to do, under any circumstances, usually involving blood, urine, feces, or vomit, depending on that particular Domina's squeamishness profile. Questions of role and status were sources of tension in the dungeon. As well as being central to the emergence of order, one's role and status in the dungeon spoke directly to the germane issue of who was (really) in control of the house and the immediate interaction or session.

Mistress Management

Dungeon shift managers needed to be able to control and discipline women who are not merely dominant personalities, but who also practice domination twenty four hours a day. Most of the girls at the dungeon were 'lifestyle' Dominas as well as professional, and were not accustomed to ever being told what to do. For the most part, the rules related to physical and legal safety, and profit – for the girls as well as the house – and were explicitly communicated to new hires, both verbally by the manager, and in the form of a printed 'employee handbook' which included the house rules, a list of terminology and services that the girls were expected to know, and resources for equipment, clothing, and BDSM education and training.

The dungeon had strict rules regarding how girls and the clients were expected to conduct themselves upon entering and exiting the space.[65] When a client arrived, the girls had to make themselves scarce while the manager let him in, checked his ID and information, and took him to a session room. Usually girls took this time to go to the employee lounge to check their makeup and put on heels if they had removed them for comfort while out of session. Before a client was allowed to leave his session room – even just to use the bathroom – his Mistress had to check that the hallway and reception areas were clear of other Dominatrices or clients. Girls were expected to enter and exit the premises quietly, and without doing anything that might bother the neighbors or attract attention on the street. Some managers didn't let girls smoke cigarettes in the dungeon, on those shifts smokers would have to go outside to the street for their nicotine fix. When they did so it was expected that they would not stand immediately outside the building's entrance. As one manager, Tina, explained "Girls can't stand around outside

smoking and chatting, as if they were advertising their services on the track, if they want to go out for a smoke they can, but they have to walk it around the block."

Tina was a strong rule enforcer, and while two girls in particular fought her on the rules, most behaved in ways that suggested they appreciated her "strict but fair" management style. On Tina's shifts, fines were always enforced for lateness and for not cleaning the rooms after session, and these fines were posted on a whiteboard in the employee lounge. Tina claimed that her ability to manage a dungeon full of dominant women was directly related to the "education" she had received as a single mother of two teenagers:

> I have to fine them otherwise they walk all over me. They think because they're the Dominas they have the control up here. If I let them get away with that, everything goes to hell. These girls, they're not wallflowers, they have strong characters, they get paid to be mean girls, bullies, right? Prima donnas, all of them. But if they're late they miss business, so they get ten minutes grace with me then fines start to mount up. We do thirty-minute increments, capped off at the two-hour point if they miss a whole shift. If they miss an appointment because they're late, that client might never come back. That's not just their loss, it's ours too, and it's every other girl's. They get fined more for that – the late fine and they have to pay the house cut of the session they missed. It adds up. They get fined for not cleaning too – twenty bucks for not taking care of the room right after a session. If they do it when I ask the fine's only ten. I shouldn't have to ask though, you know, they're grown women, and if we don't clean then the place will start to stink and no one'll make any money.

The two girls who caused Tina the most problems – Ekaterina and Katya – were young, beautiful, strong willed, and with just enough experience and popularity with clients to feed their sense of entitlement. Katya in particular was considered difficult by managers. Despite her experience and high skill level, and her popularity with clients, Katya's

reputation with girls suffered because of her propensity to drama, questions about her honesty, and repeated instances of overly entitled behavior; Katya was very difficult to work with:

> So much drama with that one. Every day it's something else. This week she told me some bullshit story about witnessing a break-in down her block, and then prank phone calls, and so she skipped town to the Hamptons to get away from the drama because she felt unsafe. I'm like, what? Call the police! But you can't because it's a lie. So stop lying! Get away from all the drama? Give me a fucking break, she *is* the drama. (*Tina*)

Carrie was one of the more experienced Dominatrices on staff at the dungeon, but she had a very tense relationship with Katya, who she found to be unreliable and something of a liability:

> I'd never book a double session with her unless I'd already seen her here for the shift, she's *always* late, isn't she? At least, on the days that she bothers to show up. But she's a good Mistress, my favorite to double up with, and she always looks fantastic. When she gets going on an interrogation scene in Russian, it's, oh my God, it's crazy how good she is. (*Carrie*)

Professional Deviance

"Difficult" girls struggled to adopt professional norms, rarely adhered to the rules unless they would directly benefit, and the drama they brought to the dungeon disrupted workplace equilibrium. Dungeon rules covered things such as arriving on time for shifts, wearing appropriate clothing for the role of Dominatrix, attending grooming, abstaining from drugs and alcohol before and during a shift, exercising safety in sessions, and not stealing house clients for independent sessions. Scene norms involved things such as the distinction between Dominatrix and prostitute, where the line was drawn to categorize

acts as one or the other, questions of Dominatrix-solidarity, and appropriate behavior with clients. Rules kept dungeons safe; norms kept domination pure.

Deviants and norm breakers were viewed much less favorably by their peers than were the girls who broke rules but adhered to norms. The impulse to order was significant in this: girls who broke rules didn't necessarily cause instability, and their behavior became somewhat predictable after a while. But girls who refused to internalize the norms that everyone counted on to contribute to a sense of stability also tended to unpredictable behavior, and were thus seen as actively challenging the stability and sense of order that their coworkers sought.

Daytime and evening shift girls were prohibited from using drugs or drinking alcohol during or before work, and would be sent home if they were discovered to be drunk or high on the premises. Outside of work hours most of the girls drank alcohol, and many used drugs recreationally, but all were well aware of the practical and rational basis for the prohibition on drugs and alcohol in the dungeon: The practice of BDSM carries certain inherent risks which become magnified under the influence of any substance or inebriant. Clients would occasionally bring in drugs to share with their Mistress, a practice that was largely overlooked. Unless the client became difficult to handle when under the influence, no one minded a client getting high in a session, although some girls refused to session with clients who were smoking crack cocaine, usually citing concerns about getting a contact high.

There were occasionally girls whose drug and alcohol use became a problem. One girl was fired after efforts to bring her alcohol use under control failed. These efforts included getting her into a friendly Alcoholics Anonymous group and giving her shift

flexibility in order to attend AA group meetings. Another quit after she was suspected of using heroin in the dungeon. Although no drugs were found, she had a history of heroin addiction and syringes were discovered in her locker that were of a different gauge to those the house provided for sessions, they were too narrow in diameter – twenty eights, more commonly used for intravenous drug use and by diabetics for injecting insulin. The house used twenty-two and twenty-five gauge needles, and this particular Domina wasn't someone who regularly did the sort of session that involved needle-play, her specialty was 'sensual' BDSM, not medical. As a recovering addict, the non-standard syringes found in her locker were assumed to indicate a return to intravenous heroin use. Great efforts were made to get her affordable counseling and treatment, and girls and managers alike rallied around in a great show of support. But she was unwilling to admit that she was using again; she quit to work at another dungeon.

The Independents

The dungeon did a lot of business from renting out session rooms to Dominatrices who were not employees but who worked in the Scene as independent contractors, 'independents' as they were called. These rentals were on an hourly basis and were only available to independents known to the house, experienced Dominatrices many of whom had been given their start in the business by working at this dungeon. The practice of rentals was not unique to this establishment, but was common across New York City and, from the girls' accounts, worldwide. Some of the girls who worked at the dungeon also moonlighted as independents, a practice that David prohibited for employees but which was reasonably easy for them to hide. House-girls would operate as independents under a different Mistress name, and didn't take rentals from David's dungeon, instead renting

elsewhere for independent sessions. Similarly, girls who worked at other dungeons in the city would come to David's for rentals that their dungeon owner didn't know about.

When independents rented rooms, they were expected to adhere to the same rules regarding the domination / prostitution distinction, and they were also expected to leave the room as they found it. House appointments took priority over an independent's rental and independents had to bring their own supplies – they could use dungeon equipment but they did not have free access to disposables such as condoms, latex gloves, enemas, and lube. If an independent needed supplies that she had not brought with her, she could purchase them from the dungeon. Some independents had private rental rate arrangements with dungeon owners, guaranteeing them breakpoints on the standard rates when they booked more than a specific number of hours in any given day, week, or month, and a base rate reduction or free rentals if they conducted training sessions for newly hired Dominatrix employees.

Independents who were considered 'friends' of the house were often active in the initiation, training, and mentoring of new hires. Those who had worked as dungeon employees and who remained on good terms with the owner after ending their employment were often eager to help out in this way. Not only were they reimbursed for their time and in receipt of preferential treatment when it came to rentals, but David and the managers would also speak highly of them on the Scene and to clients, thereby creating beneficial reputation effects. And there was the undeniable fact that independents enjoyed the power kick that came from being in charge of a training session; they were, after all, professional dominants.

Some of the independents could be quite brash in their approach to schooling and initiating new girls. Calico, an independent with decades of experience in the business and who many years ago had spent a few years working at David's, had a discomfiting approach that she claimed was intended to "weed out the girls who aren't strong enough for this". Other established girls said that it was "more like she wants to assert herself as boss, she wants everyone to see her as Queen of the New York BDSM Scene." As Carrie remarked, though, Calico was kinder than her demeanor suggested, and a lot of her aggressive posturing was defensive: "She acts tough, but … it's because she feels like she's our mom, like she's the *in loco parentis* Dominatrix for NYC. Once you learn about her, it makes more sense, you feel safer knowing she's got your back."

Calico told new hires that they should not deceive themselves that Dominatrices are not prostitutes, calling the differences in the two roles an "intellectually important but mechanically trivial detail… the guys get the same result at the end whether you're a hooker or a Domina, the only difference is how much freak it takes to get them there."[66] On one occasion, sitting in the manager's office at the dungeon, surrounded by half a dozen new recruits who were also new to BDSM, Calico gave one of her bombastic "you're a whore" lectures:

> Lemme guess, you new girls think it's not about sex? When you enter that room, what do you do? You turn him on, right? You cause him to get off, right? You're a whore! It doesn't matter if you don't fuck him! We're all whores! [*reacting to the raised eyebrows & quizzical looks of the* girls]. Does he have an orgasm? Yes. Is it because of what you do in the session? Yes, it is! So what does that make you? You're a whore! I'm a whore! If you aren't ok with that, this might not be for you.

Another independent, Miyuki, was more chatty and friendly with new girls, more laid back than Calico, although with a slightly supercilious edge to her amiability. Miyuki was always enthusiastic to perform service in return for a rate reduction and other incentives. She particularly enjoyed showing the house girls tricky and impressive new skills, such as the correct single tail (bullwhip) technique for achieving the perfect "crack" to make a client jump, or how to crack a single tail with the perfect aim to flick a tensed rope the other side of the room, causing the rope to tighten and release around a client's scrotum. Miyuki's only condition was that the girls she instructed were "serious about their craft". She also enjoyed sharing her insider knowledge on where to get the best custom latex and leather corsetry and accessories, and where to get the best facials, waxing, and eyelash extensions.[67]

Independents were expected to report to the owner or the managers any issues that they observed with girls, clients, or the house. All of the experienced Dominas, whether they were independents or house girls, complained about the behavior, practices, and attitudes of the owner, managers, clients, and other girls, particularly new hires who lacked pro-Domme experience. Some managers participated in the griping, others chose to remain detached, but rarely was this airing of general grievances disruptive in any way. In fact, the grumbling contributed to establishing a sense of order by giving everyone an opportunity to clear the air when tensions arose. The main manager for the daytime shifts, Tina, adhered to a policy of tacit agreement. She resisted any inclination to "contribute to the negativity" because she found it unprofessional and thought that the girls would be less inclined to listen to her otherwise.. Privately, Tina complained bitterly that the girls were quick to blame everyone and everything but

themselves for their lack of business: “When they complain about business being slow and blame it on other girls or managers, all that, I just tell them it’s the market, things are tight for everyone right now. I don’t want to get into it at work, I can’t care enough to take it home with me, you know. They can quit if they want to.”

Purists & Pimps

One of the independents, Bernadette, had been renting space at David’s for several years. She claimed to have been a Dominatrix “since I was small, long before puberty hit me like a truck”, and delightedly told stories of tormenting boys throughout her childhood. In her early thirties when we met, Bernadette was very successful as a practicing Dominatrix, model, and video girl. She had appeared in a Dominatrix role in a number of mainstream movies and music videos, and she was highly respected by other independents, the house girls, David, Frankie, and very much so by the clients. Bernadette lamented that the Scene was becoming more and more about sex, and less about domination: “it’s not how it used to be … we used to take pride in this business, you could only work if you had skills.” She didn’t approve of the organized training given to new girls, which she called “professional babysitting” and “nannying”. Bernadette wasn’t against the idea of training per se, but the format of group training classes bothered her because she saw it as antithetical to the principles of a traditional BDSM Scene: “no one was there to train us once a week, we had to teach ourselves or find a mentor willing to help us develop skills in return for work, errands, you know, like an apprenticeship, cutting your teeth, showing respect while you earned it.”

Miyuki echoed Bernadette’s sentiments: “Dude, I’ve only been doing this for what, six, seven years, and I’ve seen it change even in that short time.” However, Miyuki

was more inclined to criticize the clients for the swing toward informality and the creeping in of non-BDSM practices, rather than resting the blame solely on the presence of less experienced, less skilled girls and the trend toward houses offering quick formal training rather than apprenticeships:

> I dunno, I see it not so much with the girls, but the clients have definitely changed. Now everyone wants a hand job or a blowjob. Every day I get emails and phone calls from guys who are only after sex and think 'Dominatrix' is a euphemism for prostitute. I don't even reply to those idiots.

Calico had similar complaints, but blamed this trend of clients making unreasonable requests on the new breed of professional Dominatrices, "girls who get one or two training sessions then go straight in with a client". Like Bernadette, Calico supported the idea of slower apprenticeships that permit new girls to more fully internalize professional norms and develop deeper personal attachments to the craft of BDSM. Calico also found fault with the clients, and pointed out that they only expected what the girls permitted: "It's not entirely the guys' fault though, is it? All these little girls are doing extras these days, and when guys get head from one of these princesses, they expect it from everyone they see from then on." Miyuki also found fault with dungeon owners, who she claimed endorsed the "sex extras" side of the Scene, and the managers who either turned a blind eye or actively encouraged the practice, managers who she accused of "acting like pimps". In Miyuki's view, owners of dungeons where girls were known for turning tricks were even worse than the managers, she called these owners "lying pimps" who "claim ignorance" but who profited from the blurring of boundaries between domination and prostitution. She found fault with a handful of

dungeon owners in her territories of New York City, Miami, and Los Angeles, and explained to me the disconnect she found between the Scene purity that they purported to stand for, versus what they actually expected of their employees:

> They don't exactly discourage it [*the grey area between BDSM sessions and prostitution sessions*]. I mean, look at the situation over at Ron's [a *previously reputable NYC dungeon*], girls can't work there if they *don't* give head. *That's* domination? *That's* our profession? No wonder clients start to expect to get their dick sucked when a place like fucking *Ron's* does it as standard. My rental on Fisher Island, forget it, it's a fucking whorehouse. LA they're better, the girls more into being purists, but the owners, man, the LA owners are some down low sleazy motherfuckers.

Agreeing with Miyuki's criticism of dungeon owners, Calico was quick to point out that David liked to hold himself up as a Scene purist, but while the Mistresses at David's didn't perform sex acts the day-to-day Scene in the dungeon was a far cry from how dungeons had been in the past. For Calico, dungeons had become too informal, focused on "stripper sexuality" and "serving men," rather than attending to and pushing fetish boundaries or focusing on psychological boundary play in collaboration with submissive male clients. As she saw it, David condoned and promoted a "highly sexualized fetish-light" work environment, which directly contradicted his purist claims:

> And look at this guy, he's got all these twenty year olds running around here like they're doing the Vicky Secret runway, this is *not* what being a Dominatrix is all about, this is whoring, plain and simple. The whole business has changed, gone down the tubes, there's no honor any more.

Calico's argument was that the Scene purists would always insist on proper corsetry, as David did in his own lifestyle BDSM practices. But in the house, girls would

wear cheap corsetry-style lingerie from mall stalwarts such as H & M or Victoria's Secret, which bore little relation to the aesthetic fetishism that is a central characteristic of a true BDSM Scene.

Bernadette also took umbrage at the way some of the house girls dressed for sessions. Bernadette was a traditionalist, and was dismayed at the general grooming and state of dishabille of the house girls: "You would never see girls looking scruffy back in the day, most of us back then were lifestyle, not just playing, but living it too. We took great pride in our appearance and in our craft." 'Back then' referred to the 1990s, less than a decade previously; Bernadette, and other girls, saw a distinct erosion in Scene quality and purity over the decade: "Dungeons back then were better too. This place was better. It needs a paint job, or renovating, don't you think?" When I agreed with her she was quick to point out "it's not the only one, all the old spots are the same, worn."

Calico, despite her dismay at what she saw as the de-professionalization of the Scene, was herself guilty of blurring the boundaries between BDSM and prostitution. I observed her boundaries advance and retreat according to her immediate financial need, and her upcoming appointments list. When Calico needed to make more money, or when business could be counted on to be slow, such as in midsummer, she might perform or participate in acts that the average observer would consider prostitution rather than BDSM, but she did so in an unmistakably dominant manner. Several times I observed Calico with clients who had requested public humiliation, who she would bring out to the reception area to humiliate physically, psychologically, and verbally, before ending with a goddess worship scene that culminated in Calico ordering the client to perform

unprotected oral sex on her. Calico charged these clients much more than they would otherwise have paid for a basic humiliation session.

The Good Fisting Slut

"Ohmyfuckinggod, someone come here!!!" I leaped up from behind the desk, grabbed the baseball bat next to me and ran to the room. The girls who had been hanging out in the office reception area came with me, other girls ran down the hallway from the employee lounge. I paused outside and knocked on the door: This wasn't a brothel, what went on in these rooms involved the highly skilled administration of 'pain'[68] which, done correctly, frequently inspired loud vocal reactions from the clients; sessions were intensely focused and psychological. The Dominatrix in question, Mistress Ekaterina, was extremely competent and certainly not someone any of us there could imagine being put in a professional situation in which she would need assistance. Mistress Ekaterina did not participate in 'switch' sessions, she was never anyone's 'sub', and she exuded the aura of someone not to be fucked with, professionally or personally.

I knocked, nervously: "Mistress Ekaterina, can I get you anything?" It was critical that no one broke role. If this were not an emergency but in fact part of the session scene and I asked if the Mistress were "ok" or "needed help", her role would be momentarily invalidated, ruining the experience for the client. "Rachael! Come in, you HAVE to see this!" Although the doors had locks on them the girls left them unlocked, mostly in case we ever needed immediate access to a room. Locks were also significant to establishing trust between the girls: If a Domina locked the door to her room in session, she risked being accused of hiding something and the assumption would be that she was using drugs

with the client or performing sex acts that were prohibited by formal house rules and by the informal codes and norms of the business.

Gingerly, aware that Ekaterina might not react well to what might amount to my profaning her identity in front of a client, I opened the door. In what would surely have looked like a scene from an X-rated episode of *Scooby-Doo* I peered into the dimly lit room, a cluster of corseted Dominas pushing up behind me to look over my shoulder, and the Louisville Slugger in my hand pressed against the back of my left leg to hide it from the client. As the scene before me registered in my brain, I moved the bat to my side and leaned on it for support. I hadn't fully paid attention earlier when I had helped Mistress Ekaterina locate veterinary gloves for her session. We had turned the supply closet upside down hunting for "the ones that go all the way to the shoulder", the sort that farmers use for birthing livestock. Now it all made perfect sense: Mistress Ekaterina's client, an elderly gentleman wearing lingerie, a garter belt, stockings, and stiletto heels, was bent over the leather and wooden horse, with a ball gag in his mouth. He masturbated furiously, as Mistress Ekaterina's entire arm, up to her shoulder, was lodged in his rectum. In the years I spent at dungeons, I never saw a Dominatrix more unrestrainedly gleeful than Ekaterina in that moment. She beamed a huge smile: "Look at this good fisting slut! He's swallowed my entire arm!"

Who Is Really In Control?

One of the ways in which order emerged for the Dominatrices – both the independents and the house girls – was through the forms of knowledge that came from personal experience and professional tenure, both of which were very powerful signals of skill and status. The more skilled a Dominatrix, the more likely it was that she would

possess, among other things, a broader knowledge that she could apply in creating more imaginative scenes and in repurposing and redefining everyday items for use in session. This knowledge could not be learned from simply watching *YouTube* videos, from reading books, or attending classes and training nights. Rather, this was a practical knowledge that came from being immersed in the Scene and from regularly practicing in both professional and lifestyle settings.

It was fairly easy for a new hire to learn the names and uses of different standard tools, and learning the skills required of most types of session was not particularly challenging. But for less common scenes, experiential knowledge was critical. Unless she had previously participated in a hardcore and technically advanced fisting session, a beginner would be unlikely to know to use veterinary gloves; she may not even know such gloves exist. Moreover, booking or being involved in a fisting session as hardcore and high-risk as a shoulder fisting presupposed that the Dominatrix would have previously conducted countless 'standard' fistings.

Experiential knowledge translated into reframing and redefining practices and items used in the dungeon in ways that these items and practices were not used outside of BDSM: veterinary gloves, clothes pegs, electricity, speculums, sounds, and tuning forks to name a few items, were all used on clients in off-label ways. Similarly, some common words took on different meaning in the argot of the Scene: A Saint Andrew's Cross did not refer to a symbol beloved of Scots, North American Confederates, and Russian naval officers; puppy pads were purchased in bulk not because there was a puppy in the dungeon, but to protect the hardwood floors and Persian rugs during shower scenes. *Showers*, in the terminology of BDSM, did not involve standing under running water, but

instead referred to golden-, brown-, ruby-, or roman: urine, feces, menstrual blood, and vomit. Mentioning these things to people not involved the Scene often results in raised eyebrows, but the dungeon term that non-Scene people find the most troubling is the use of the word slave.

Slaves, on the BDSM Scene, are submissive men and women who offer themselves to dominants – Mistresses and Masters – in return for being dominated and / or for financial benefit. At the dungeon, slaves were hired for training sessions and photo shoots, Mistresses often had their own personal slaves, men or women who would run errands and do chores such as laundry, house cleaning, dog walking, or cooking. In return, the Mistress might give her personal slave a session, may use him or her for practice, or may reward the slave simply by allowing them to serve her in this way. Independents would occasionally bring slaves to the dungeon for sessions where clients had requested a male observer, for example as part of a humiliation scene or, more rarely, where a client had requested a 'forced bi'[69] session.

Dominatrices employed by the house would not bring their personal slaves into the dungeon, but would use house slaves for any sessions there. They often developed friendly relationships with house slaves, who would sometimes come to the dungeon to hang out, usually hunting for a free exchange of mini-sessions in return for chores, such as giving massages or running out to pick up food, cigarettes, or Starbucks. The owner of the dungeon forbade this, but managers were unwilling to enforce the rule because it was an infrequent occurrence, seemed harmless, and created a welcome distraction on slow shifts.

There was one slave who visited the dungeon weekly, but who wasn't a personal slave to any of the girls, and who never participated in sessions with the girls. Pavel was a quiet and supremely polite foot fetishist who visited dungeons all around New York City to give foot massages and pedicures. He brought full pedicure equipment and a huge range of nail polish colors. The girls enjoyed his visits, and managers were happy to set him up in a corner of the office, with a chair ("throne") for the girls, where he would kneel on the floor to worship their feet, always refusing a cushion or towel to pad his knees. The Mistresses knew that David didn't like Pavel being in the dungeon, and by allowing it to continue on a weekly basis, managers reinforced bonds between them and the girls, further motivating a sense of order. This was particularly the case in the slowest days of summer, when Pavel provided welcome distraction and a relaxing indulgence for girls with tired hot feet that were jammed into stilettos all day.

Clients & Sessions

Most customers were white heterosexual males in their mid-forties to mid-seventies. There were a few female customers and, very occasionally, couples. Most of the day and evening clients worked in media, banking, entertainment, and law, some were struggling actors, artists, and musicians, others included construction workers, academics, firefighters, and postal workers.

Customers were required to fill out a session form declaring their good health, revoking any future claims to restitution in the event of injury, arrest, or death, and asserting their willful involvement in the session. They had to list medical conditions or constraints, and any medications they were taking. They signed a statement declaring that they would not take photographs or video, that they were not under the influence of

illegal drugs, and that they did not work for any law enforcement agency. They provided photo ID for the manager to Xerox and attach the copy attached to their session form, which would be filed after the session was concluded. These forms also included a long list of possible scenes, acts, fetishes, and variations on the female Domme / male sub theme that was the standard set up at this dungeon. These variations could involve reversing the sub-Domme relationship, or 'switch' sessions in which the female pro-Domme would take both a dominant and a submissive role in the session.

Clients would check off whatever scenes and acts interested them, in general and in the context of the immediate session, as well as indicating those items or scenes to which they were completely opposed. There was a space at the end of the form where clients could write out any specific scenario or fantasy, and where they detailed any special requests such as wardrobe (e.g. leather, latex, costume, corsetry, stocking opacity, and heel height), equipment needs (e.g. dildo size, whether they would need an enema) and any other details they felt would improve their session experience. These session forms were supposed to be kept on file in the manager's office, and as long as managers could find a client's form, he would not have to fill out another. However, it was common for managers to not be able to find a client's form in the files: there was no computerized system and the sheets of paper were often misfiled or would get lost in the girls' lounge. When their form couldn't be found, customers would have to fill out another. This was a constant source of tension between managers and clients, and between managers and Mistresses.

These session forms were handed to customers upon arrival, after the manager had showed them to a session room. They were given a few minutes to fill it out while

the available girls straightened up before going in to meet them, or while their appointment completed her final preparations for the session. After a few minutes the manager would return to retrieve the form and collect the client's payment. If the client had an appointment, the manager would take the form to that Mistress, who would go in to chat with the client for a couple of minutes to cover the details of his session before leaving to gather any last pieces of equipment. The clock didn't start until after she had all she needed in place for the session.

When a client was there for what was a 'meet-and-greet', that is, when he did not have an appointment with a specific Mistress, he would meet all of the girls one by one in a session room after they had all briefly looked over his form. Each girl would spend one or two minutes chatting with the client about the sort of session he wanted, and this was a chance for girls to demonstrate their interactional domination skills without performing any physical acts on the client. When they visited with meet and greet clients, girls were expected to be appropriately dressed and groomed: stockings, stiletto heels, full makeup with fresh lipstick, brushed hair, flawless nails, no odors (e.g. perfume or cigarette smoke) and no chewing gum. After meeting each girl the client would tell the manager who he would like to session with, and the girl would pull together the equipment she needed, before entering the room to start the session. On the rare occasion that a client chose not to stay, the manager would return the session fee that she had collected ahead of his meeting the girls. This money was collected ahead of time in order to prevent, as Tina said, "time wasters and manipulators trying to scam" their meet and greet girls into free 'mini' sessions.

At the start of the session, whether it was an appointment or a meet and greet, and before the clock started, the Mistress would chat with the client for a couple of minutes about any particular scene he wanted, any extra equipment that she might need, and whether or not he wanted to take an enema. The rooms were fully stocked, but disposable items, such as lube, lingerie, puppy pads, and various sizes of dildos and harnesses were kept in a central supply room. The only exceptions to this pre-session activity were when the girl knew her client's scene without direction, or if a client specified that he wanted her to be in role from the minute he entered the dungeon. In the case of the latter, the client would usually email the dungeon his scene details ahead of time or give them a written scene when he arrived, unless he was seeing a Mistress with whom he had thoroughly and repeatedly performed the same scene to the point that there would be no question in her mind as to what was expected. Those who showed up with written scenes, expecting "performance on command" (*Carrie*), and those who emailed demanding or lengthy scene directions at the very last minute were not well liked by the girls or by the managers, who called these clients "hard to please" and "pushy emotional dom subs" (*Tina*).

Once a girl knew the session scene, had gathered her equipment, and entered the room in role, the clock started. As the end of the session neared, the manager was expected to give girls a five or ten minute warning using the intercom buzzer system. This was done in order that the Mistress could wrap up the scene and allow her client to finish without feeling rushed. A growing inconsistency in managers giving these warning buzzers was one cause of increasing tension in the house in 2006, and by that summer it had become an intense source of manager-Domina distrust, creating feelings of insecurity

among girls and a general instability in the house. New managers were failing to time the buzzers correctly, if they used them at all, and girls complained that they didn't feel as though managers were there to support them. As Katya expressed to me:

> I'm not so sure about Linda working here. She ignores us the minute we go into session and close the door, like we aren't in the building. Then she looks all surprised to see us at the end when we walk out. But, you know, no one gives a fuck what we think, right? Just make the pimp his money, pay the fee, pay the fines, cover her dumb ass when she screws up. What? Fuck that crazy bitch.

Linda saw the buzzer system as "…a courtesy, it's not part of the job description, whatever they tell you." Starting with Linda's shifts, girls started to find their own ways to accomplish what had previously been a collaborative achievement with managers. When it came to timing their sessions and ensuring that they had sufficient time to wind down a scene and wrap it up with a client, girls adopted the practices of independents, who timed their sessions using music. By the fall of 2006, it was standard for dungeon employees to make compact disc compilations of session-appropriate music, timed out to thirty and sixty minutes, and with two or three minutes extra padding at the end. Girls knew their track lists, so when a certain song played they knew that was their ten or five minute warning and time to start the wrap-up and wind-down.

That the girls very successfully adapted in this way lent credence to their assertions that they were in charge at the dungeon. One consequence of this was that managers' abilities to enforce house rules fell apart: "if managers can't even buzz a fucking room, why the fuck shouldn't I smoke a cigarette where and when I want to?" Girls began to resist all managerial control and rule enforcement, and to outright ignore Linda's presence in the space. Managers were struggling to enforce rules, when a core

group of experienced and skilled Mistresses, informally led by Katya and Ekaterina, all became unreliable about showing up on time for their shifts, if they showed up at all. They accumulated fines that went unpaid, but business was very slow and the hiring crisis meant that the dungeon was already operating with the minimum shift coverage; these girls were aware that they would not be fired for rule-breaking in this business environment. Their main complaint was the do as I say not as I do approach taken by managers who simultaneously failed to create a sense of security or stability. They refused to adhere to house rules "if managers don't" and "if I'm not making any sessions". Others refused to "obey Linda's orders since she'll never have my back in the room".

Dungeon business had seasonal ups and downs. Midsummer was typically slow for all dungeons in the city: it is hot, humid, and exhausting to be in New York in midsummer, a time when many people leave the city for long weekends on Long Island or the Jersey Shore, and consequently dungeon business slows down until after Labor Day. A lack of business and an overall perception that managers were unwilling to support and protect the girls in session, placed a wedge firmly between the two groups of employees. If no one was in the position to effectively enforce house and industry rules, most of which were in place for very good reason, and if more experienced girls didn't communicate a generalized sense of trust and stability in their relationship with managers, then the newer and less experienced girls would be more likely to ignore managers' efforts to enforce practices and rules, without which there could be no sense of order. If new girls were distracted by things such as timing and other tasks that managers had previously handled, they would not be sufficiently focused on their session, leading

to poorly done sessions, unhappy, and possibly injured clients. In this environment, new and untrained girls were more likely to unwittingly assume serious risks in session, especially when paired with less experienced clients who may not have felt capable of giving guidance, or who felt uncomfortable breaking role to instruct their Dominatrix no matter what the risks were to their personal safety.

The Night Shift

The dungeons, brothels, and escort services I visited were all shift-managed by women but owned by men, many of whom who took great advantage of their role by demanding free sessions and other perks from employees. The midtown dungeon had a third shift that was contracted out to an independent operator, Frankie, who was, for all intents and purposes, the owner of his business. The tone of the Frankie's shifts differed considerably from the tone of the female-managed shifts – the customers were more extreme "hardcore scenester freaks" [*Ekaterina*]. There was a much more overtly sexual hardcore flavor, and Frankie preferred to hire a different type of girl to handle the different type of customer. Frankie's shifts also played by different rules; the girls who succeeded there were unlikely to succeed on other shifts, and vice versa.

Frankie had control over who was hired and fired on his shifts, and how successful each girl was – he would allocate girls to clients and when shifts were quiet or when a certain girl had attracted his favor he would cold-call clients to hard-sell appointments with the girls on his shifts. He allowed the girls to behave in ways that were not acceptable on the day shifts: drug taking was allegedly commonplace, and he also expected the girls on his shifts to dress differently: On other shifts, girls were to dress in fetish gear but were expected to keep it on the mild side – that is, corsets, stockings, and

heels were de rigueur, but anything that fell into close to the category of lingerie or "stripper wear" was met with disapproval. On Frankie's shifts, however, girls were expected to wear the skimpiest items of clothing, the more lingerie, the better, and towering stripper-heels with clear platform soles and stiletto heels. Some of them worked topless. Frankie also took advantage by arranging "training sessions" with girls on his shifts, and by offering to take photographs of them for the website and for their portfolios, in exchange for sessions, dates, and sex.

The girls frequently reported having a problem with Frankie. Not so much in the realm of specific and identifiable 'incidents' between them, more generally these problems stemmed from his misogynistic interactional approach, the girls' dislike for the ways he treated women, and his insistence that his girls "dress like cheap strippers", the very close relationship he had with some of the night shift's clients, and his misogynistic framing of women in general. On the one hand Frankie's relationship with clients could be of benefit to his girls, for example if business was slow and he leveraged this closeness by picking up the phone to cold call clients into making appointments. But on Frankie's shifts it was also much more common that customers would behave in unacceptable ways, or try to do things in session that were prohibited, that the girl had said no to, or that the client had not paid for. That said, Frankie was also in a much stronger position to handle client misbehavior without things getting out of control: His close relationship with clients served him well in this regard, as did his intimidating demeanor. Frankie was good at talking a client down if they were too high, and he was sufficiently intimidating that he was capable of threatening, coercing, or physically

restraining a client if need be, something that would have been much more challenging for the female managers on other shifts.

However, the same interactional skills that gave Frankie the edge when it came to laying down the law – either with clients or girls – were the very characteristics that caused problems between Frankie and the girls and managers. At one point, Frankie's staff dwindled to the point that he was unable to put a full shift together. This was not unheard of in the Scene, particularly in the summer, and with the rise – at the time – of *Craigslist* and other online marketplaces for independent BDSM / prostitution and "silly girls wanting to have a go, make easy money, without having a fucking clue what they're doing" [*Calico*]. When staffing issues began to cause serious problems for Frankie's shifts, his main girl, Soraya, started throwing her weight around and threatening to leave, empowered by the knowledge that she would surely put Frankie out of business if she acted on her threat. Frank had her working seven nights a week, on some nights she was his only girl. Although Soraya was ultimately loyal to Frankie, at the time she was totally burned out by her schedule and workload, and the workplace drug-use.

Frankie asked David if girls from the other shifts could spot or work a swing shift for him. Although Frankie paid out less on each session, business was even slower on the other shifts, so a few girls agreed to give it a go, seeing this as a chance to at least make their monthly rent. Those who volunteered were put on Frankie's schedule for a week, but after the first shift only one girl was willing to return. Some of the girls who hadn't worked that first shift but who were scheduled for other shifts were put off after hearing reports from the girls who worked the first one, and they also backed out.

Discontent & Disorder

In the dungeon, although the dominatrices were explicitly dominant in their interactions with submissive clients, these moments were nonetheless infused with an uncomfortable sense that, because the clients were financially dominant in the transaction, because the dominatrices *needed* their clients in order to sustain their lifestyles, well, behind the dominant identity veil, it in fact appeared that the supposedly submissive clients were the dominant parties. This presented a quite substantial interactional challenge to the dominatrices, as they worked it out through their balancing of work and non-work conceptions of self, with all of the contradictions that this entailed. The tension was most felt for those girls who were also deeply dominant in their personal lives – those who weren't appeared to more successfully see what they did as 'just work', or 'the job'. But, as in any other profession, there are those who struggle to leave work at work, as was also the case with some of the prostitutes who struggled to maintain stable romantic relationships. While the gang members and freelance drug dealers employed branding, earmarking, and violence-limiting practices as an expression of identity and power, the sexworkers in my fieldwork worked *especially* hard to create boundaries, to prevent any negative form of identity overlap, and used identity practices as a method of marking boundaries and establishing control, but for the most part this was accomplished by the scriptedness that they introduced to their labor that protected their non-work intimate moments from their work ones.

CHAPTER SIX: PLAYING THE BOOKIE

Driving over the Willis Avenue Bridge, from Manhattan to the Bronx, after midnight, in his prized Cadillac Escalade, Tony reaches for the pint of Coors Light he had taken from the last bar we visited. The glass has been wedged between his legs all the way up the FDR Drive, and half of the beer has spilled onto his jeans, giving the appearance that he has urinated on himself. Not that he minds: He's Tony, NYC bookie, Mafia associate and, in his mind at least, harder than his critics and tougher than the law. We're on our way to a strip club, where Tony wanted to introduce me to Tino – a veritable Mafioso I had read about in newspapers long before I started hanging out with mob bookies. He was also possibly the only person whose judgment Tony might care about. He wouldn't think much of Tony's wet patch, but Tony was too drunk to care, so drunk that this was one of the rare occasions when he let anyone else behind the wheel of his 'baby'.

The afternoon's meetings with customers had spilled over into the evening, and then stretched into the night. We had started at a bar in uptown Manhattan, several hours earlier, before moving to three other establishments. By the final stop Tony had regaled customers, and anyone else within earshot, of his fearlessness in the face of the law, his control over his business, and his prowess with women who were not his wife, and who, in his telling of it, were not only throwing themselves at him, but, as the night went on, grew in status from girls next door to strippers and, finally, to claims regarding a certain famous Victoria's Secret model who we had all thought was dating a strapping twenty-something movie star millionaire.

Tony is in his early-thirties, pig-faced, short, overweight, and balding. His breath smelled like something else, projected several feet, and made it difficult to have a conversation, never mind to believe that he was getting all of this attention from women. He was also remarkably cheap for someone who claimed to be so hugely successful and cash-wealthy. And yet, swinging the balance in his favor, in a perverse way, was the fact that Tony was tightly & notoriously associated, through birth and marriage, with a powerful New York / New Jersey Mafia family. He was quick to brag about this association, particularly when he was drinking, and especially in the presence of good looking young women, many of whom were attracted to this characteristic like moths to a flame.

Despite Tony's bravado in how he referred to recent busts of bookies across the city, he privately confessed that he needed relief from the stress of his work environment, as busts, arrests, and convictions enveloped his professional and social worlds. The District Attorney's office had been making inroads in their efforts to disband New York's Mafia families, John Gotti Jr. was becoming known more for his legal deal-making than anything else, and other high-ranking guys were currently awaiting trial or sentencing, or were known to be the subjects of ongoing investigations. Tony talked tough at the bars, with liquid courage and girls to impress, but he was rattled, as were other bookies I knew at the time.

From early October until November 30th, 2005, in the parking lot of the Huck Finn diner in Union, New Jersey, a silver Acura was parked without being moved. Employees at the diner had thought it belonged to the friend of a coworker, but no one asked anyone in an effort to confirm this. It was a warm long fall that year, and on

November 30th, a customer complained about a "foul odor and a mass of flies swarming around the trunk of a car" in the parking lot. The same car that had been sitting there for several weeks, and it also turned out federal authorities had been looking for it. When the police arrived they popped open the trunk, where they discovered the decomposing body of a sixty year old man who had been shot twice in the back. It was a dairy salesman by the name of Larry Ricci.[70]

According to prosecutors, Lawrence, 'Larry' Ricci was also a mid-ranking associate for the Genovese family of the Italian-American Mafia in the New York area. It was alleged that he was heavily involved in union fraud and conspiracy hustles, and that he was close with Michael Borelli, who prosecutors accused of involvement in healthcare and construction fraud, gambling, and loansharking. Borelli, it is claimed, worked for Tino 'The Greek' Fiumara.[71] Ricci was a co-defendant in a federal racketeering trial in Brooklyn, NY, but had disappeared in early October. One month after he failed to show up in court, he had been in absentia acquitted on all counts. But it was reported that Fiumara and other high-ranking Genovese family members had been encouraging Ricci to plead guilty so that the dust could settle for the organization. It was later widely alleged that Ricci had not only been resistant to taking a plea, but had also been talking loosely about Fiumara's bookmaking business and what he claimed were Fiumara's plans to take control of the robust sports bookie markets in Central and South Jersey, the Jersey shore, and Philadelphia.

At the time of Ricci's disappearance, I was doing fieldwork with Mafia-associate sports bookies in New York City and New Jersey. Tony and Dom, and Dom's partner Vinnie, were my main research subjects in this, and when Ricci disappeared it intensified

the anxieties they had regarding the risks involved in their professional lives. Over the following few months a roundup of bookies associated with the Genovese family meant that a great many customers were suddenly in need of a new bookie. While this was great for business for Tony and Dom, it nonetheless contributed to the anxiety felt by these already jumpy bookies. Every interaction was suddenly intensified, in an environment in which everyone believed that they were under constant surveillance, not just by law enforcement but also by their coworkers, employees, bosses, partners, customers, and families.

Role And Status

The central concern of these sports bookies involved ensuring that they don't get manipulated. They were, as I will show, rather more paranoid about interactional manipulation than most of us typically are. Indeed, this could be seen to be the case for most of my subjects and therefore does not distinguish the bookies from the rest of my fieldwork sites, but the bookies performed their paranoia in more observable ways. Handling their concerns involved managing the lines on games such that the house stayed ahead, and ensuring that customers paid up in full and on time. The bookies were at pains to present themselves as having total control over their business dealings and their relationships with customers and clerks, a control that they endeavored to deploy over everything in their social and professional sphere.

Bookies operate what are called 'wirerooms', places where they manage their business. Tony's operation was more a case of him and his clerks operating remotely rather than relying on a physical wireroom, although at times he did use vacant or rented office spaces and apartments for this purpose. Dom and Vinnie's operation had physical

locations in New York City, but they had clients throughout the tri-state area, as well as operating online gambling websites, registered in Central America, with bets processed through the wirerooms in New York. I spent most of my fieldwork for this chapter at one wireroom, located in a warehouse building in a previously industrial neighborhood that experienced an influx of artists and young professionals in the late 1990s. The building has a video intercom entry system and an elevator, which was invariably out of service. Bookies necessarily break the law in the practice of their profession, and these subjects would also occasionally drink and drive, get into fights, take drugs, and experience problems at home that usually stemmed from infidelity. But they also had stringent operational rules to which their clerks had to adhere, for example, Dom prohibited smoking in his wireroom, saying, "because it's against the law in New York."

As with the gang members, the bookies frequently asked for my opinion or advice about things on which I was not qualified to speak. Dom was deeply paranoid, and periodically used a lot of cocaine. He would sometimes call me at 3am asking me to identify the men sitting in a car outside his house. He didn't text me a photograph or anything, just gave these extensive descriptions of 'average white guys in suits', before asking if I thought they were 'Feds', and then bombarding me with questions about what he should do with his life. More typically though, these subjects would ask my opinion on things unrelated to law enforcement or their businesses: they asked me for fashion advice when buying gifts for mistresses, for medical advice when they suspected that they might have caught a sexually transmitted disease, and, in the case of Dom, for marriage advice when his wife busted him after he gave her a case of HPV that he had picked up from one of his mistresses.

These bookies and clerks all engaged in various legal and illegal pursuits other than their bookie enterprises, and each had spent time in prison on a variety of charges including racketeering, drug and gun trafficking and sales, money laundering, loan sharking, and assault. On the legal side, Dom and Vinnie were union member construction workers, on most jobs they were in a shop-steward role, pretty high ranking on a worksite, and with a legitimate income that matched their lifestyle so there were no red flags on that front. One of the simplest foundations for a racketeering investigation is when investigators identify their suspect as, for example, a construction worker with four young children and a stay at home wife, earning $150,000 a year but living in a five million dollar home and driving a current year Maserati. Suffice it to say, all investigators need is for something to not add up. Tony was also involved in construction, but more as a developer, and he didn't have the union association that automatically put Dom and Vinnie on the investigators' radar, but his firework business was bigger and attracted seasonal law enforcement attention that Dom and Vinnie did not need to contend with.

While wireroom life generally came across as being rather chaotic, there was nonetheless a logic that ensured a stability in the practices and techniques that enabled these bookies to handle concerns that would otherwise undermine their ability to establish a sense of order in their lives. By maintaining a reputation for being strict about payment terms, and by their willingness to use violence if necessary, they validated their role-performance in the eyes of customers and associates. Adapting to the context of each interaction, reframing and redefining their relationship to the wager or cash according to the behavior of their transaction partner, they fluidly detached themselves from the meaning of the individual or the monies involved, in pursuit of successful transactions.

This was central to their handling of concerns that focused on questions of dominance and power, and resolved many of their fears and anxieties, without necessitating violence and thereby establishing stability and order in the wireroom and in their professional and personal/professional relationships.

I observed Dom manage his relationships with customers and employees, with other local wirerooms, and with his family and friends. He constantly questioned his relationship with violence, the message he sent with his occasional violent outbursts or moments of forgiveness, and how this worked in his personal and professional worlds. At times he called himself "a loser for being soft", other times he declared that administering a violent physical sanction to a recalcitrant customer had him "all messed up." Now, it is necessary for sports bookies to actively regulate their employees and customers, in large part because this is an illegal business that operates by providing credit to customers, and where employees have considerable control over how much debt the business is exposed to. A sense of order could only be felt where the bookies successfully regulated the payment and debt behaviors of customers, and clerk-customer relationships. Broadly speaking, those who run wirerooms face a Machiavellian choice: operate as a violent and coercive boss and service-provider, or run the risk of others underestimating your ability to regulate and exert control. These bookies, therefore, had to take charge of every scene in which they were involved, establishing the pecking order in every interaction, repeatedly making it clear who had the upper hand.

Being A Bookie

Illegal bookies base their lines ("money lines") and spreads ("point spreads") on calculations made by actuaries for Vegas casinos. These lines and spreads represent a

handicapping that expresses which team bookies think is more likely to win. In the days and hours leading up to a game, bookies adjust their lines and spreads to account for the bets ("action") in their books, fluctuations in the Vegas numbers, and any other unexpected events that could affect the outcome, such as player injuries. And bookies and clerks anticipate that most bets in a shift will be limited to a small set of sporting events, and they memorize the lines and potential last minute changes for those games before they memorize the details of other, less popular events.

Bookies and clerks are also attuned to the betting tendencies of each of their customers, and can predict with great accuracy how each client will bet on any given day. Typically, a customer would call in a bet to the wireroom or their clerk on game day, once the lines had settled. It was rare for customers to call in their bets much in advance of the event, simply because the lines could fluctuate quite considerably before game day, and there was always the potential for massive disruption to the lines at the last minute. These disruptions occurred when there were unexpected last minute changes to a team's game setup – for example, who would play in which line or last minute changes to the injured list – as well as other unexpected events that could drastically change the odds of any particular outcome, such as weather events, or late-breaking distracting scandals involving players or franchises. Once the betting lines shook out any uncertainties, settling at a point where they could be expected to only move incremental amounts, customers who did not have standing wagers would start calling in their bets. Sometimes, and particularly in playoffs and championship games, the lines could become turbulent again right before the start of the game, due to an influx of last minute big money bets from professional gamblers and syndicates.

When things are going well, wirerooms operate at a frenetic pace. If a clerk makes a mistake with a wager he will be held responsible for any losses he has caused the house. For the most part, clerks take possession of their customers' wagers and obligations when they accept the bet. There was, consequently, no argument from clerks regarding the paperwork and accounting that they were expected to perform on their customers' accounts. Illegal bookmaking operations require detailed record keeping: wagers, lines and spread changes, game outcomes, layoffs, and customer account balances were all part of this. A layoff is where bookies will wager the other side of the bet from another bookmaker in order to balance their exposure, it's used, for example, where they are getting a lot of one-sided business for a local game.

There is a shorthand used in the business, standardized across the industry as the shorthand used in other professions such as on Wall Street trading desks. Just as every entity listed on a stock exchange has its own shorthand identifier – its ticker symbol – so too does every sports team have a shorthand identifier used by sports bookies. There are also notations used for different types of wagers and outcomes. For example: *BIGSAL Jags -3.5 .10 W* tells everyone in the wireroom that the client known as 'Big Sal' holds a winning [*W*] ticket on the Jacksonville Jaguars [*Jags*] and that the spread on the wager had been set at minus 3.5. Spread bets don't depend on a direct win/lose in the game, but instead a customer's outcome depends on by how much their team wins or loses. In this case, Big Sal bet on a spread that meant he would win only if the Jaguars won the game by more than four points, which they did. The *.10* indicates the size of the wager, in this case Big Sal has bet one thousand dollars.

The universality of the shorthand speed up order-taking and can be seen as a form of interaction that standardizes workplace processes and the necessary mental accounting practices demanded by these transactions. It also creates a basis for employee mobility, such as in the case of Sammy, an older Polish-Irishman who worked with both Dom and Tony, and others. This shorthand also permitted clerks to handle each other's tickets if one is out sick or detained by law enforcement, thereby establishing a sense of agency and status for the clerks. [72] This shorthand therefore contributes to the creation and maintenance of a sense of control and role consistency. For clerks, it means that they have more professional agency than they might otherwise, that they are able to move between wirerooms with some ease, giving them the power to place demands on bosses in order to ensure fair working conditions and commission rates, and timely pay.

To make a bet a customer would call one of the clerks, the wire-room number, or Dom's cell. After each game, clerks tallied their books—though they all knew exactly where they stood during every minute of the game—and Dom did the same for the entire wire room. Once the totals were logged for each clerk and customer, they set up meetings to exchange money and start setting up the action for the next game with customers who didn't have a standing weekly arrangement. Customers who did have a standing arrangement with their bookie or clerk would usually receive a call or text message to confirm that this week would be the same as all of the others. Or, if this were not the case, what the new arrangement would be for that particular week. Customers were expected to fall into line with the process and schedule, but most meetings were conducted in the afternoon or evening, or at weekends, reducing the extent to which it might be an imposition or difficult for customers who had 9-5 jobs, which was most of

them. Thursday was the preferred day for meetings, across the business in New York, but the clerks were happy to meet on other days, as long as debts were covered by Friday. Dom and Tony usually attended a few Thursday meetings with one or two of his clerks, but only meeting with high roller customers or those with whom he had other business or who were close personal friends or family members. These meetings usually took place at bars, where Dom and Tony would drink heavily, and sometimes the meetings led to nights out that lasted well into the following day. Their clients were a varied lot who, for whatever reason, just liked to bet on sports: frat boys, athletes, waste-management guys, firefighters, cops, doctors, lawyers, and former felons.

It was not unusual for clerks' customers to never meet the bookie who ran the wireroom. Meredith and her fiancé Luke, two of Sammy's customers with whom he was very friendly, and who placed bets with him through Dom's wireroom, never met Dom. They were both in their late twenties; Luke was employed in a research capacity by the federal government, Meredith was a therapist specializing in pre-teen learning disorders. They were relaxed and easygoing people, but Dom refused any interaction with them because of Luke's government connections. Meredith and Luke only placed a few bets a year, on major events such as the World Series, Super Bowl, NCAA Basketball, and NBA finals. They were also involved with Sammy as customers of his small sideline in marijuana sales, which he did to subsidize his own little habit. In response to Dom's fears about Luke, Sammy always met with the couple far away from the wireroom or any of Dom's regular locations, and far from Dom's old neighborhood where he sometimes hung out.

Failure To Pay

It's about ten at night as we head downtown, Dom driving to collect a debt from a customer who works at a bar on the west side. When we arrive the place is packed, but the doormen know Dom and they let us right in. One of the bouncers guides us through the crowd to the side of the bar, the area where servers pick up drinks and where there wasn't a crush of customers.

Ryan, the bartender comes over and tells Dom that he's busy, can we wait. Dom says sure, we have a minute or two, but not to take long. After fifteen minutes Dom is irritated and signals silently to Ryan to hurry up. The bartender holds up three fingers, which Dom takes to mean three minutes. Another fifteen minutes goes by and Dom is seething: "This guy is taking advantage … he's playing me". Dom suspects that this transaction won't be as straightforward as he had expected, so he walks behind the bar, has a brief word with Ryan, and returns to the server area. Ryan asks one of the servers to return from the floor to cover the bar for him, and shows us into an empty VIP alcove. As Ryan lights a cigarette, he tells us about how he had to help out his girlfriend with some bills that month, because she lost her job, and he doesn't have the money he owes, not even a fraction of it. Dom is furious. He looks over at Vinnie and Jimmy – Vinnie is by the door and Jimmy is at the entrance to alcove, chatting with the bouncers whose job it is to keep the 'I' in VIP.

Dom is physically imposing; six-foot-four or so of prison yard muscle, sporting a hefty beer gut, enormous hands and fists, a square jaw supporting his heavily scarred face, and with a flattened nose from it having been broken so many times. Guys called him the 'two ton gorilla.' And Dom is loud, rambunctious, and enamored of alcohol and cocaine. Consequently Jimmy and Vinnie came on these meetings in part as his team, his

backup, but mostly in the role of babysitter in case Dom snapped and made poor decisions that might create further problems, such as violence.

Taking a deep breath, Dom puts his arm around Ryan's shoulders and tells him that he understands, but that this understanding comes with certain conditions attached: "I get it, you gotta help wifey out, of course, that's what a man does." As Ryan starts to look relieved, Dom continues with a harder tone to his voice: "It's a shame she lost her job, sign of the times ain't it bro, money's tight for all of us. A man takes care of his debts. You hear me? I'm not supporting your girlfriend, she doesn't do anything for that money. And you're racking up interest here." By his next paycheck, Dom explains, Ryan will owe $4500 on a $2000 wager. He looks crestfallen and says he doesn't know how he will cover it. Dom tells him he should pay as much as he can, that he'll give him an extra month. Over that period, however, the interest will continue to accrue and he will have to pay in full at the end, "or wifey will have a new job, as your home health aide." As he stands to leave, Dom pats Ryan's head, before guiding me out of the alcove into the main bar and out to the street, as Jimmy and Vinnie follow behind. Walking to the car, Dom gives the play by play of the meeting to Jimmy and Vinnie, telling them he is "running out of patience for that little bitch."

Degenerates & Schnooks: Controlling Interaction

Unlike drug dealers and sex workers, who insist upon payment before transferring to the customer any commodities or services, bookies' customers make bets on credit. Some customers are more likely to pay on time than others, and bookies typically account for this by giving less favorable odds to those who they call 'degenerates' – customers who fail to pay on time. Most customers know this, and are timely with their payments to

avoid the label and to keep their bookie happy. Others, though, aren't so reliable. In Dom's wireroom, one degenerate, Angelo, was a close childhood friend of both Dom and Vinnie, someone they considered family.

October 1st, 2005 was a big day for the New York Yankees, playing their Boston rivals at Fenway Park in the AL East Championship game. The wireroom was frantic, the phones were ringing off the hook, with every light on the Turret consoles lit up to indicate either an incoming call, an active call, or a call on hold. Everyone was taking orders, shouting out questions about the lines, stamping tickets and yelling for coffee refills. Angelo calls in a bet on the New York Yankees. The Yanks haven't had a great season so the Vegas line is running in Boston's favor. But New York bookies anticipate a flurry of sentimental bets from the Yankee faithful customers, so they nudge the line slightly. Not doing so would leave them open to massive payouts in the event of a Yankee win. Angelo is not only a degenerate, he is also a diehard Yankee fan. The line adjustments that penalized both his behavior and his fan status inevitably led to a heated discussion between Angelo and the clerk who picked up his call to the office phone:

Tommy: Ang. What's up buddy?

Angelo asks for the money line on the Yankee game

Tommy: It's on the move. I got you. Hold on a sec.

Tommy puts the call on speakerphone and turns to Dom and Vinnie, mouthing 'Angelo', with a shrug. Vinnie rolls his eyes as Dom shouts across the room: 'one six five', while motioning with his hand across his neck to indicate that he expects Angelo to complain about this and that he is unwilling to move the line in Angelo's favor.

Tommy: Yo Ang, Yanks are moving here [*pauses*] one six five, buddy.

Angelo: [*laughs*] Yeah, you're a regular fucking comedian Tommy. What's the line?

Tommy: I'm gonna do you a solid, Ang. I can't budge here, one six five.

Angelo: What the fuck you mean you gonna do me a solid, you dumb piece of shit. Lines opened at 155. I got 150 at Stardust and Hilton. Doing me a solid? C'mon kid.

Tommy: So go bet with Vegas.

Angelo: That's what you supposed to do for me man. You think I'm stupid? You know I can't bet this game with Johnny, you guys are sick.

Tommy: The line I gave you is the line I got pal. You want it?"

Angelo: No. I don't fucking want it! I want 150. You think I'm stupid or something? Tell your boss. He can't be treating me the way he treats his degenerates and the schnooks with these Yankee lines. What kinda fucking line is that? That's not the fucking line he's giving his wiseguys *[Wiseguys here means savvy bettors, not mobsters]*

Tommy: Look Ang, the line is the line pal.

At this point Dom took the phone from Tommy:

Dom: Ang, what you doing pal? You wanna bet or not? You're tying up my guy right here, you know we don't have time for this shit today.

Angelo: Yeah. 50 dimes.[73] But I swear man, one of these fucking days.

Dom: Yeah yeah, tough guy. If I need to see you it's Thursday, k? Same as usual. Think you can remember for once?

Angelo: Uh huh. Sure. Say hi to the kids for me.

Dom: Yeah. Alright pal. Oh, by the way, tell Tina we've got her cake stand at the house from the christening. Lisa can bring it over next weekend.

Angelo's negotiation was based on his desire to receive what he considered 'fair' odds, a 'fair' line on the game. The "one six five" that Tommy offered reflected a line of negative $165: Angelo must bet $165 in order to win $100 (he would also receive his wager back). Angelo's gripe was that two of the larger books in Vegas – Stardust and Hilton – wee offering $150, a full $15 lower layout on the bet. The line that Dom was offering non-degenerate customers nonetheless started at $160, controlling for the high number of sentimental bets that came through the wireroom on big Yankee games such as this.

The back and forth in the exchange – from the mild and personal "say hi to the kids… my wife has your wife's cake stand" to the blunt, transaction related "wanna bet or not" highlights Dom, Tommy, and Angelo actively engaged in reframing their relationship to each other as well as to the transaction, incrementally redefining the relationship and the transaction as the interaction proceeds. As a form of relational accounting, this interactional process supported the organizational decision to discipline 'Angelo-The-Degenerate', while obtaining a somewhat detached stance in the relationship with 'Angelo-The-Buddy'.

At several points in the exchange, however, Angelo pushed the boundaries and rules of interaction. He struggled to accept his 'degenerate' role, loses face and poise, and becomes upset. It is clear early on in the conversation that he will not dominate, and the conversation only extends as long as it takes him to realize this. When Tommy says "I can't budge here, one-six-five", he shuts the door to negotiation, but puts the responsibility for this on the Vegas lines rather than the wireroom, himself, or Dom and Vinnie. In this Tommy is also working to protect Angelo, his face and ego, from the

reality of his degenerate role and the consequences of that as shown in the punitive terms of the wager.

When I asked Dom about his relationship with Angelo, in the context of their history and Angelo's behavior, he told me:

> Fucking Angelo man. He always bets these games, never pays on time. I always gotta chase him down. I'm too fucking soft, me. Too nice. What I should do is tell him to fuck off. But no, I won't. Every time I say, ok, sure pal. So I give him a fucked up line. At least that way, when I get paid, it compensates for the hassle. And if he wins it's not gonna break me.

On several occasions I heard Angelo trying to get a deal on the line, but failing, and he was not the only customer to behave in this way. This episode exemplified the balance of work vs nonwork identity in interaction for Dom and some of his long-term customers, a context to which he adapted when he needed to regulate their betting behavior in these ways. When Tommy mediates on the phone, Dom has no choice but to assert the line on Angelo, this is a business after all. But he temporarily redefines his relationship with Angelo in the immediate transaction, ignoring his friend's bluster and bravado, sticking to the line in a way Angelo must expect, established by the professional norms of the business. All of this is accomplished while Dom negotiates his own sense of order and identity, and what these factors, Angelo-The-Degenerate, Angelo-The-Buddy, and the transaction all mean to him.

On this particular day, the Yankees won, beating the Sox 8:4. After all his fuss over the line, Angelo did well from his $5,000 wager, which earned him a $3,000 profit. So, while Dom manages to redefine his relationship with Angelo, temporarily, in the context of the transaction, he does so without turning the wireroom, or the immediate

interactional space, into 'a zone of utter impersonality'[74].

Losing Control

Dom was often mocked behind his back for being overly paranoid, but his paranoia stemmed from a fear of losing control, rather than being scared of prison itself. His outlook on the possibility of doing more prison time was in fact pretty stoic: "I'm ok about getting thrown in prison again. You know, three or four years is all I'll get. You can't smoke in there any more, you get to work out a lot, and they feed you good. It'd be good for my health. If I get sent away a few years it'll add twenty years to my life expectancy."

Beginning in fall 2005, and lasting until I moved to Europe for a year in summer 2010, then continuing upon my return to the United States in 2011, Dom would occasionally call me in a panic, convinced that "the Feds are sitting right outside my house" or, "I swear there was a car on me when I picked the kids up from school". Often on these visits we would walk around the Princeton campus, talking about the laundry list of investigations that Dom believed were targeting him, relating to what he called 'mystery' phone calls to his home and cell phone – in Dom's view of the world there is no such thing as an accidental wrong number, it's *always* the 'FBI snooping' on him. And he talked about specific FBI agents who he said had contacted him. I don't know if any of this was in fact true, or (more likely) something that had been whipped up by his paranoid mind.

When one of his closest confidantes from his time in prison was re-arrested, Dom's paranoia suddenly got a lot worse and these regular phone calls turned into him paying surprise visits to my office in the sociology department at Princeton. On one

occasion, as we were sitting in his car outside, he told me: 'My fucking life is over. The fucking Feds got Joey Bones over the weekend.' I replied, 'Got? As in, arrested? What charges?' And Dom said,

> ***Dom***: The usual. RICO. Bets. That construction corruption shit I never can figure out. Fucking pricks. There's *real* criminals out there, you know?! But all they do is bother hard working guys. Bones never hurt anyone! [*noticing my raised eyebrow*} He didn't! He dealt with people who had it coming. … He's no threat to the community. Those bastards, he's in no mind to do another bid. He'll do anything to stay out or he knows it'll fall apart. He'll lose the house, everything. … He'll snitch. I know he will.
>
> ***RHF***: Really? You think so?
>
> ***Dom***: Yeah. And on me. Am I being paranoid? What do you think he'll tell them? How should I act? What should I do? Should I go see his wife? Ask her to give him a message? Should I call the Feds? Should I deal with him? I don't care if he gets me in jail. But I don't want people thinking I'm a snitch if he is. You know. …But if me being friends with him means guys think I'm a rat too… No fucking way! That's too much for me to deal with! This is too much. I can't eat. I can't sleep. I don't wanna leave the house. Especially not with the kids, you know, in case I get pinched in front of them. I'm sitting in the fucking house staring out at the street all fucking day. Every time I see a strange car drive past my chest tightens, like I'm having a heart attack. It's driving me crazy. I know they're watching me. I wish they'd just take me or stop. I hate being watched all the fucking time like this, I feel like a zoo animal.

Dom was a smoker, as were most of the clerks, particularly Sammy who chain-smoked over a pack a day. Other businesses in the building allowed smoking on their premises, despite it being illegal at that time under New York City health codes. The wireroom stood out among the businesses in the building, because of Dom's prohibition on smoking in the office, and his insistence, even when he wasn't there, that his clerks, many of them aging and morbidly obese, descend the five floors to smoke outside, in all

weather and even when the elevator was broken. He strictly enforced this rule, and made sure that others in the building knew that his was as he called it, "a law-abiding, smoke-free premises." This was one of the reasons why the clerks and Dom chose to spend so much time working out of local sports bars instead – even if they weren't allowed to smoke inside bars they still didn't have to walk down five floors, and back up again, just for a nicotine fix.

While it may seem odd that mafia associate criminal bookies with sidelines in other illicit ventures would be so adherent to health code laws, especially when many bars and other businesses regularly flouted these same regulations; the wireroom would have much bigger problems if a neighbor or nosy Fire Marshall reported them for a smoking violation. Dom's behavior was somewhat paranoid, but perhaps not entirely irrational. And yet, it was contradicted by much of his other behavior. When Dom drank and used cocaine, he would spend nights away from home in bars and strip clubs, and with women he had just met. Sometimes he would pass out on park benches or sidewalks. He had mistresses, one of whom became very expensive to keep and then proved to be very difficult and even more expensive to get rid of. Others gave him sexually transmitted diseases. Others threatened to tell his wife. He was a liability to himself and to everyone who depended on him, professionally and personally, especially when he went off on days- and weeks-long coke and alcohol binges. But he would not let anyone light a cigarette in the wireroom, just in case a neighbor called the Fire Marshal. It might seem that this contradiction needed to be resolved in the wireroom for a sense of order to be maintained, but many areas of stability in the wireroom were similarly contradictory, from Dom's interactional technique that established and maintained order in his

transactions, to his approach to and understanding of physical violence.

Beyond Control

In the summer of 2004, a year before Larry Ricci disappeared, Dom's wireroom, and others across the New York City area saw their business boosted following the bust of a major New York City based operation, referred to by prosecutors and in the media as *The Hank Burrough Gambling Organization*.[75] This enterprise ran three wirerooms and was strongly linked to New York's Colombo Mafia family, employing two of the sons of the late family boss, Joseph Colombo, and a number of known Colombo family associates.[76] These wirerooms operated in much the same way as Dom's and Tony's did, with traditional face-to-face exchanges and in person interactions between bookies or clerks and customers. The Hank Burrough Gambling Organization supposedly grossed between ten and fifteen million dollars a year, although Dom said he believed the number was probably lower, he thought closer to about eight million dollars, but, he said, "Who the fuck cares, that's still a big fucking bucket of dough!" And so, with the Hank Burrough crew out of the picture, new customers flocked to Dom's book, and some existing customers began placing more or larger wagers.

After this May 2004 bust, customers flocked to Dom and Tony. On top of the start of baseball season, and NHL and NBA playoffs, they were getting sudden and unexpected new business at an unprecedented rate. Not only this, but the Summer Olympic Games were around the corner, and the NFL would soon return to play. Dom wanted everyone on deck but the order volume was more than they could handle so they had to bring in more clerks who they could quickly bring up to speed. Since everyone in the business was experiencing the same wave, it was impossible to bring in clerks from

other wirerooms, and so Dom let Sammy bring in a new trainee, Eduardo.

Eduardo was a young man from the neighborhood around Yankee Stadium. He knew the scene in his neighborhood very well indeed: who the numbers guys were, and the bodegas and mom-and-pop restaurants where locals were able to make small bets, and he was very eager to become a clerk for a big operation, a proper wireroom. In return for Sammy's support, Eduardo would run occasional errands such as picking up takeout food, cigarettes, and coffee, to take to Sammy when he was in the office, and they became a solid duo: "Sammy's the best" Eduardo told me. He "helped me figure it out, showed me the ropes with clients and all that. He's a good man, right? … Like, he's done more for me this year than my pops did. Yeah, these errands aren't favors, it's me giving him respect." Likewise, Sammy had a great deal of affection for Eduardo, and appreciated his enthusiasm and dedication, telling me "He's a good kid, a little young, immature, you know. Parties harder than I can these days. But he doesn't fuck it up at work, and always on time. I like working with the kid. I like the kid a lot."

The few times that I met Eduardo he was easygoing, gentle, and had a great sense of humor. Sammy told me that Eduardo had a very effective tough guy side to him that would serve him well and be a benefit to the wireroom. Tragically, a couple of months after he began shadowing Sammy full-time, he suffered irreversible neurological damage following a seizure. Sammy visited him in hospital the first few days, but stopped visiting once he knew Eduardo was going to live, because it was "too difficult to see him so altered, he's never going to be ok ... I can't look the kid in the eye, how could I tell him he can't work with me again. I can't sit by that bed giving him false hope." He never mentioned Eduardo again.

Dom was upset by what happened, but not out of love for Eduardo. Rather, losing Eduardo in this way, and at this time, had a very destabilizing effect on the wireroom. Dom had to take on the workload he had counted on Eduardo to take care of and, right when they needed everyone to be one hundred percent on the job, Sammy had sunk into a deep depression that subdued everyone around him. Dom struggled with the identity demands of the job when he was under immense pressure as he was at this point in time. This was not the only time that I observed Dom getting into difficulty when challenged by unexpected events, but it was different. Unexpected shock moments typically only lasted a shift, maybe a weekend, were usually game or team related, and would also be felt by other wirerooms and customers.

Most typically, adaptation required adjusting to employee turnover or a heavy loss to the house after a mis-lined game. Unpredictable atypical moments that affected the organization were generally restricted to events that affected the outcome of a game and, therefore, profits. In one example, on October 1st, 2005, a bomb went off on the campus of the University of Oklahoma, immediately outside the football stadium, shortly before half time during a football game against Kansas State.[77] The wireroom had taken a ton of action and the phones were still going when the game started. Dom wasn't willing to take more bets so he turned the phones off and we all went out to get something to eat. Watching the game on television at a sports bar when the bomb went off; I saw the blood drain from everyone's faces, Sammy was devastated – his father in law was an Oklahoma alumnus – and then a grey-faced Vinnie quietly reminded us all "there's a ton of money on the line."

"Ten Fucking Gs"

Despite the stereotype of the violent leg-breaking debt-collecting bookie, what I observed was that these bookies don't necessarily turn to violence, or even the threat of violence, in the pursuit of their professional goals. Where violence does occur, it is not always as a direct sanction for a specific act of deviance; some wireroom employees told me of incidents when they simply lost their cool and took things too far when under pressure. We all have moments when we snap without meaning to, but for most of us this entails being rude or verbally snapping at someone in an ungracious or unkind way. Most of us don't get physical. And Dom may not have needed to rely on violence in his business dealings, but it was broadly known that he *could* be violent if he chose to be. He had been in a lot of fights as a teenager, and built quite a reputation as a young amateur boxer. In prison, he held his own. Dom didn't enjoy violence, however, and after he found himself in physical altercations he would invariably tell me things like "the stress of all this made me snap." But when he *did* snap, he could be very violent indeed.

In the wireroom, Dom acted as his own collection agency. Although it is possible to somewhat predict the outcome of sporting events it is more difficult to combine that with a reasonable prediction of betting behavior. Even if the games go as expected the wireroom may nonetheless take an overall loss, depending on the amounts wagered and involving the highest payouts. When customers didn't cover their debts, they would be sanctioned, usually by being temporarily barred from placing bets at the wireroom. If this ban was permanent, other wirerooms would also be informed, and sometimes they too would ban the customer, particularly if they ran a lot of layoff business with the wireroom that had issued the initial ban.

Dom cannot however be legitimately described as non-violent. He had an

'enforcer' reputation, in part due to his intimidating physique, often aggressive demeanor, and criminal record. Physical sanctions were extraordinarily rare, and although he would perform bravado, saying things like, "no one screws me over without a smack" or, "I fucking taught that little bastard he can't cheat me", he also revealed other moments when he had difficulty with this role and his disappointment with himself after the fact. Consequently, Dom issued a great many threats – he was something of a blusterer – and when he did follow through, he did damage, but he rarely took it that far.

Dom told me about one remarkable exception to this, involving a friend who owed the wireroom money, a debt that had gone on for quite some time. Dom was tired of chasing it down, and had a number of other things causing stress in his life at that time. On a warm late-spring day, we walked through midtown chatting about work, life, the weather, the usual topics of mindless chitchat. I asked Dom why he looked so tired and worn down, and he told me how he and an old friend had "got into it" over a gambling debt:

> I had a horrible weekend Rach, horrible. Had to go to Jersey, Brooklyn and the Island after work Friday [*referring here to his legal job*] then back to Queens before I went home. Got into it with someone I've known for years, a good friend. He owed us thirty grand. But dumbass shows up at the diner, hands me an envelope, and there's only ten in it! … Ten fucking Gs. What'm I supposed to do with that?

I shrugged and asked what he did:

> I grabbed a fork and stabbed him in his eye is what I did. Do you have any idea how difficult it is to poke an eye out? (*To which I shake my head & Dom continues*) Nah, neither did I, but it is. Real fucking difficult. *I* was struggling! It didn't work! Still, I think he got the picture pretty fucking clear, right?... I dunno, you just don't

> want that shit going down with people you care about man. It's got me all messed up.

Despite his detached approach to Angelo and others attempting to get better lines or extensions to pay their debts, Dom had been unable to detach himself on this occasion – with this client, for this money, in his immediate frame of mind – even though to do so would have been a legitimate way to avoid the violence and the self-hatred that followed. Somewhat self-servingly, Dom claimed to have been overwhelmed with the concern that letting this debt slide would damage his reputation, and it was far too old of a debt to contract out as a layoff. His reaction that he was 'all messed up', revealed the extent to which this was a totally failed transaction: he didn't get his money, he created additional anxiety for himself, and increased his risks. Taking charge of a scene is very important, establishing a pecking order in each moment establishes who has the upper hand if an interaction starts to go awry, and it is rare for participants in extralegal exchange to handoff control of the scene to the other party. So, while Dom had dominated the interaction in the diner in a physical way, this physical domination created disorder for him, creating a sense that neither party had truly dominated the exchange.

Being possessed of the capacity to be violent – or to order acts of violence – and being possessed of a reputation for this, enables bookies to fulfill the requirements of their role. Dom, Tony, Vinnie, and Sammy and the other clerks, willingly take risks that most of us could not tolerate. If they are caught, they will go to jail, they will lose the opportunity to raise their children, and they would risk losing their wives. They also run a higher risk of injury or death than most of us. And they therefore face the central problem faced by almost all criminal entrepreneurs: how to regulate their employees and

customers, such that they stay alive and free. Physical violence was very rare, and for the most part, the day-to-day was all about maintaining non-violent control over betting lines, customer credit lines, and clerks.

The Loyal Rat Bastard

Excepting the occasional quarrel, Dom was fiercely protective of his head clerk, Sammy, and was always willing to step up on his behalf. On one occasion, Sammy was having difficulty recovering a personal loan he had made to an acquaintance, Jack. Sammy had loaned Jack the money Sammy to help him bridge a tough month at a new restaurant he had recently opened in the East Village. At the time of the loan, Sammy told Jack that it would be backed by Dom. When Jack didn't pay on time, Sammy reminded him of this, and let him know that Dom would be getting involved if the money wasn't repaid within the week. Jack began to avoid Sammy's phone calls and visits, despite having met Dom several times. Jack was well aware of Dom's reputation; I had previously observed him mock Dom's size and "meathead" demeanor, behind Dom's back. In order to straighten things out with the debt, Sammy and Dom decided to visit Jack's restaurant together. After an indulgent meal they asked their waiter if they could meet the chef, to thank him. When Jack emerged from the kitchen, according to Sammy, "he saw Dom and the blood drained right out of his face, he went white as a ghost. Dom gave him a pat on the back, had a quiet word, and we left. The little dickhead repaid me a week later."

Not long after this, Dom again demonstrated his deeply caring loyalty to Sammy, deciding to "punish Tony for disrespecting the old guy." Tony had brought Sammy over to hi wireroom for a few shifts while he was short-staffed and busy. But the reason Tony

had been short-staffed was because he had been shorting paychecks and not paying them on time. He had also been aggravating his clerks in other ways, as well as customers and other bookies – he had been late to pay on all things, not just clerk commissions, and it wouldn't be long before he lost customers and other wirerooms started to refuse to take his layoffs. Dom and Tony regularly got together, every few weeks or so, to discuss business, share information on mutual customers and employees, and to gossip about new wirerooms opening, old wirerooms closing, and any busts or investigations that they knew about. Sammy usually accompanied them for these nights out, as they were one evening late in the fall of 2007.

Dom was annoyed with Tony over his financial mismanagement and the problems it had caused for Sammy, "he's making everyone who deals with him look shady." And he was irritated by Tony's disregard for employees, for his own professional reputation, and stubborn insistence that he was nonetheless making more than everyone else. Dom said, "All he talks about is the money he's got. But he's late to pay, he's late to pay his guys, late to pay his customers, late to pay me on layoffs. And it's always someone else's fault, right? He's a fucking joke, gets my blood pressure all hot." In addition, Dom objected to the way in which Tony had recently disregarded Sammy's need for shifts, especially when Sammy had always been willing to help Tony out when asked. Tony had taken Sammy off the roster at the last minute, but Sammy needed those shifts to cover some unexpected medical costs. This wasn't the first time that Sammy had wound up in financial difficulty, and had to ask Dom for a short-term loan. Dom helped him out and threw him a few shifts, Sammy decided that he would never return to Tony's wireroom, and they decided to get back at Tony.

Dom explained to me that they came up with a plan at the end of the night out, telling me they had been "at dinner and Tony made this dumbfuck comment at the end really showed he has no class." When Dom drove Sammy home, they came up with the plan "Sammy brought in one of the guys at Tony's, a couple weeks later we call the guy when all the games are done, have him slide in a winning ticket for us, right under Tony's nose! Couldn't have been easier! We got him for over twenty grand and he never fucking saw it coming!" Sammy let a few clerks and customers know what had happened, and in an instant Dom had reframed Tony's status and reputation, making him look foolish and incompetent. The incident also boosted Dom's status and reputation, framing him in the role of the bookie who could be tough in smart ways, not just with violence, and who clerks could trust to act with integrity. By highlighting Tony's financial laxness, and lack of control over his business and clerks, Dom and Sammy reinforced the professional standards of the business, which expected bookies to be able to regulate their customers, clerks, and finances.

On other occasions in my fieldwork however, Dom and Sammy's relationship was not so stable, and there were times that this became a negative force in the wireroom. As much as Dom was willing to stand up for Sammy in situations like the incident with Jack's debt, and with Tony's disrespect, he was privately not always convinced by Sammy's claims of loyalty, and he never would be. Over twenty years before my fieldwork, Sammy had been accused of snitching on some high-level west coast gamblers, which had supposedly earned him a lifetime ban from Las Vegas. Sammy didn't deny this ban, but claimed instead that it was a punishment for his having been "caught counting", by which he meant counting cards, a major violation in casinos and at

underground games, but not illegal and therefore not punishable in the legal system. Dom was convinced, and claimed to have corroboration from others, that Sammy had turned state's evidence after the counting bust, and that he had done so without the prosecutors even needing to put much pressure on him. This created considerable conflict for Dom, who enjoyed Sammy and wanted to be able to trust him as his sidekick, but when faced with this sort of information could only think of him as "…a rat, and a scared pussy rat at that, the worst fucking kind."

Bookies are necessarily secretive and cautious but are no different than the rest of us in occasionally having an inexplicable soft spot for a disreputable friend, or a friend who has been disreputable in the past. In some cases, these friends turn out to be a liability, but sometimes they do no. Although the thought of Sammy becoming a liability worried Dom, he forever had the soft spot for his head clerk:

> I love [him] with all my heart, but when it gets to a certain point I can't trust him… He's an agent's wet dream, … why do I still care about the little bastard? Huh? You're the genius. You got an answer for that? I let him work for me; he could be robbing me blind. But I can't help I like the guy. Look at me, I'm too nice, that's my problem. Always gets me into trouble.

Over my years of fieldwork and acquaintanceship with Dom and Sammy, I never saw Sammy cheat Dom. That said, on occasion Sammy would take joy in Dom's mistakes and small losses, particularly when Dom had been drinking or using cocaine and had refused to listen to Sammy and the other clerks if they had strong objections to the lines he was setting. When his cocaine and alcohol use caused miscalculations, Sammy and the other clerks would try to correct him, but Dom rarely listened. On time, when the wireroom was taking big losses on a game, Sammy said to me: "I told him it's the wrong

line. He's an idiot. Then Dave tells him, and Frankie. Finally, he decides to change the line. Dickhead."

At other times, Sammy and the other clerks enjoyed watching Dom's inebriated errors lose him money, even more so when they had tried to correct him on the line. Sitting at a bar, eating lunch and watching another game on which the wireroom was losing a lot of money, while Dom was in the middle of a cocaine binge, Sammy suddenly slammed his palm down on the bar, gleefully saying: **"**You see that field goal? That just cost the house fifty grand. And it's only the first quarter. Ahhhh, [*to bartender*]: "Lemme get a B & B, hun, and whatever Rachael wants"]. Settle in kiddo [*pats me on the back*], this'll be a fun game."

Sometimes Sammy would call Dom to tell him he was paying out a customer who had won on a game or on the horses, Dom would question whether the customer was "on the up and up", whether they had legitimately placed a bet. He trusted Sammy's word in these situations, and Sammy knew this. It would have been very easy for Sammy to slide a ticket in, as he and Dom had done with Tony, but he didn't take advantage of his privilege with Dom in this way. While Dom huffed and puffed about Sammy's informal practices with customers' tickets, his annoyance focused on it being a "bad business practice", rather than suspecting Sammy of dishonesty. For all of his paranoia, and his protest that "I can't trust him … he could be robbing me blind", Dom never accused Sammy of lying about customer bets, and it seemed that he was right not to worry.

Whenever they had these discussions about bets with occasional customers who had not paid upfront and where there was no ticket, Dom usually ended the conversation with a reminder to Sammy that he was aging, unfit, and not particularly healthy: "Yeah,

you fucking croak on a Tuesday how do I deal with all the tickets in your little fucking head? Huh? Tell me that!" Of course, had that actually happened, or if Sammy were arrested or otherwise unavailable, the wireroom would indeed face considerable difficulty matching customers with bets that had been placed without tickets, and the wireroom could quite easily take a loss from those who knew of Sammy's practices and might try to capitalize on the immediate disorder. Sammy said he found Dom's 'obsession with tickets' to be incomprehensible, but for Dom this practice was fundamental to maintaining order. When Dom would begin the if-you-croak speech, Sammy would smile, knowing that in a few minutes he would say, "Ok, fine, pay the bastard, and stop doing this shit to me." The interaction was repeated time and again, with Sammy fully in control from the moment Dom mentioned if-you-croak.

Although Dom and Sammy's relationship often seemed antagonistic, and while it would be difficult to say that there was a real trust involved, there was a shared goal of minimizing their personal and professional risks and making money. While Dom was occasionally troubled by his knowledge of allegations from Sammy's past, and although Sammy at times cruelly enjoyed watching the fallout from Dom's poor line-making skills, drug and alcohol use, paranoia, and marital infidelities, neither one expected the other to disrupt the professional and personal worlds they cohabited; their relationship conditioned the status quo under which the wireroom interacted, internally, and with customers. And it worked.

Control

The bookies' and clerks' central concern focused on ensuring that they maintained their reputation in such a way that validated their role-identity, from which

the other factors contributing to a sense of order would all follow. This involved managing the line on games such that the house stayed ahead, having a reputation for being sufficiently – but not excessively – violent, being trusted and respected by clerks, customers, and other bookies, and presenting a believable performance about not fearing arrest. They needed to present themselves as having control over everything in their professional and personal sphere and while wireroom life often seemed chaotic there was nonetheless a logic to the their interactional norms, which enabled a sense of control. Role-identity was validated by successfully adapting to the context of each interaction, by reframing and redefining their relationship to a wager, money, or customer, in the context of their relationship with each exchange partner and with that individual's behavior. This was crucial in their handling of concerns regarding reputation and power, and was key to resolving fears of manipulation and control, without necessitating that they resort to acts of excessive violence. There was the pretense of trust and honor among the bookies and with the clerks, with disappointment and surprise, but rarely violence, even where there was evidence that trust and honor had been broken. In extralegal business, we might expect a sense of obligation and reciprocity to exist with one's co-conspirators. This was not always the case with these bookies.

After my fieldwork, Tony's operation shut down with outstanding debts to customers, and he left town. For Dom and his wireroom, control emerged from successfully managing interactions and relationships ace. As much as Dom revealed a hair trigger temper to his inner circle, he almost never snapped on or around customers. Nonetheless, they knew the legend of his fury enough to know they never wanted to be the target. Although Dom's trusted friends knew him to be hot-headed and, for much of

my fieldwork, drinking too much and using cocaine, he worked hard to control other details that could make the wireroom either a stable workplace or a complete rollercoaster. He wasn't always successful at this.

For the bookies, a sense of control emerged from the adoption of universal practices and interactional norms and expectations, as well as actively ensuring the good behavior of clerks, customers, and other bookies, and by guaranteeing that their wireroom was known for good financial management practices. Their central concern focused on ensuring that they maintained their reputation in such a way that validated role-identity, from which the other factors contributing to a sense of control would all follow. When they failed in this regard, in their interactions and control, these incidents resulted in failed transactions. Where this happened, their claims of control were invalidated, presenting an identity that was dissonant to their role-identity, creating situations that could only be resolved in coordination with their team of clerks and collaborators. It is hard to say how much of a sense of control might have existed without Sammy as head clerk. And it is impossible to know the extent to which Dom's struggles were the consequence of increased tensions and skittishness felt by bookies in the New York area at the time, and in the context of many of his close friends being arrested and turning state's evidence. Regardless of all these things, however, at many points in the fieldwork I really did wonder if this was the best choice of profession for Dom and for Tony. Sammy, it often seemed, should have been the one to be officially in charge.

Dom's central concern focused on ensuring that he maintained his reputation in such a way that validated his role-identity, from which the other factors contributing to a sense of control would all follow. This involved managing the line on games such that the

house stayed ahead, having a reputation for being sufficiently – but not excessively – violent, being trusted and respected by clerks, customers, and other bookies, and presenting a believable performance about not fearing arrest. He needed to present himself as having control over everything in his professional and personal sphere, and while wireroom life often seemed chaotic there was nonetheless a logic to the interactional norms, which enabled a sense of control to be felt and order to emerge. Role-identity was validated by successfully adapting to the context of each interaction, by reframing and redefining their relationship to a wager, money, or customer, in the context of their relationship with each exchange partner and with that individual's behavior. This was crucial in their handling of concerns regarding reputation and power, and was key to resolving fears of manipulation and control, without necessitating that they resort to acts of excessive violence.

CHAPTER SEVEN: MAFIA MARKETS

Leaving the central Sicilian city of Enna, the road follows a steep hillside down to the farmland of the valley below. I drive past entrances to opulent villas and dilapidated farmsteads, as the rural road narrows and twists through the foothills. To the east, *'a Muntagna* – Mount Etna – belches smoke and fire into the sky; to the southeast, on the other side of the citrus groves that cut a swath from Catania to Agrigento, the 2,700 year old city of Siracusa is stuffed to the gills with summer tourists, seasonal workers, students, and researchers. Northwest of here is Palermo, with its lengthy history of shady dealings, glorious architecture, spectacular food markets, and some of the friendliest people of any Mediterranean city. To the west lie Trapani and Marsala, the salt flats, and tuna fisheries, and, due south, the ruins and temples of Agrigento.

It is the dog days of the central Sicilian mid-summer; the air thick with the scent of plumeria, honeysuckle, and burned fields. It is drought season, the ground is parched, and evidence of seasonal wildfires lingers in dark puffs of smoke dotting the horizon, burned trees, charred hedges and verges. Local farmers patrol their properties, monitoring livestock and the proximity of the wildfires, as well as keeping tabs on the activities of their neighbors.

A few miles out of Enna, the small medieval town of Magasenu[78] sits high up on a hillside. In the center of the town is a bright piazza, dominated by the Catholic Church at one end and the Town Hall at the other, and the typical collection of storefronts and services: a pharmacy, a small newsagent / general store, a bank and a men's social club, a tobacconist which doubles as the post office, a pasticceria, coffee bar, and gelateria. Magasenu is a typical rural Sicilian fortified hill town, and, as with others in the central

highlands, it enjoys breathtaking views of the island and across the sea to the North African coastline in the distance.

Day and night, all year round, Enzo can be found at work in the piazza, he is a fixture here rarely absent other than when especially intense winter weather at this high elevation forces him to take refuge at one of the bars. From his highly decorated traditional food cart, painted red and gold, and with small bells and garlands hanging from its awning, Enzo sells panelle – crispy citrusy chickpea fritters, and pani[79] – sautéed beef spleen, tripe, and lung, which he stuffs into sesame bread dunked in hot oil then covered with fresh local ricotta and caciocavallo cheeses. Hot sauce is optional, and delicious.

This area of Sicily has long been considered a Mafia stronghold.[80] This is where secretive and densely knit local communities are highly distrustful of strangers; in these parts, most people know someone whose family has a long association with Cosa Nostra, and everyone here knows exactly who their local Mafiosi are and which of them are currently in charge. The men of Enzo's extended family are heavily involved with Cosa Nostra and all of his male relatives are members or associates of the local cosca (Mafia family; *pl. cosche*)[81]. Enzo's relative Nino, is a high-ranking boss in his mid sixties, who lives in Palermo but visits Magasenu regularly to see Enzo and the family. Giuseppe and Nino do business with many of the same people, but their primary affiliations are to different (although not rivalrous) cosche.

Day in and day out, Enzo sells pani and panelle from his cheerful cart, at his patch in the piazza, surrounded by the hustle and bustle of daily life being performed around him. And he watches, everything: Enzo sees who talks with whom, in what observable tone, how often, and for how long. He sees who takes an espresso or an aperitif, which

men strike up conversations over a granita or other such prop purchased from the gelateria during the evening passeggiata. He sees looks and glances that are supposed to only be visible to their intended recipients, and gestures that others may think unremarkable. What Enzo lacks in formal training, education, and transferable skills, he makes up for in his observational access and knowledge, particularly when it comes to undocumented, guarded, interactional moments. Observing and understanding every interaction in the central piazza of this rural Mafia stronghold, over the course of a lifetime, Enzo happened to become be one of the most knowledgeable and powerful individuals in Sicily.

Staying Relevant

The central concern for the Mafiosi and their associates in Sicily was twofold. First, there was a deeply held fear of losing any local fiefdom, through which they were able to adopt the role and status of the respected local authority figure. Second, they feared losing access to beneficial or protective information and knowledge networks. These fears were overcome in three ways: Establishing themselves as skilled experts in their chosen profession; establishing and nurturing critical relationships, particularly with individuals tied to the legal power structure; and surveillance and anti-surveillance practices. They sought to establish themselves as blithely unconcerned, deeply plugged in, irreplaceable in the surveillance culture that dominated their professional and personal lives.

In the course of my fieldwork in Sicily and Calabria, I often observed that the social worlds of my research subjects were framed by a complex series of observations and interpretations: everything eventually came down to surveillance, anti-surveillance, and access to the knowledge produced. I was introduced to Enzo by one of the employees at a hotel owned by a friend of a friend. This man was employed in a landscaping and

maintenance role, and his family had been residents of Magasenu for many generations. When I visited these small towns, the weight of community surveillance was heavy – I stood out as a stranger and a female alone in an area where this was still looked upon with curiosity and some suspicion.

The late Judge Giovanni Falcone, the most famous of the anti-Mafia prosecutors and a Palermitan himself, wrote "the Sicilians' tendency to discretion, not to speak of muteness, is proverbial. In the ambit of Cosa Nostra it reaches levels of paroxysm." This being the case, having the power to observe in the way that Enzo does in his piazza, and the ability to perform and interpret non-verbal communication, is very highly valued indeed, and his family benefit massively. [82]

Mafiosi and 'ndranghetisti and their affiliates, revealed to me that their greatest concerns center on the fear of becoming redundant to their group, their constituents, or in the professional enterprise in which they are known to specialize. They handle these concerns in a number of different ways, permitting a sense of stability and order for individuals and for groups[83]. Their fears of redundancy, of irrelevance, are not unfounded, nor are they divorced from concerns about law enforcement intervention and arrest. While we would expect these individuals and groups to be concerned about arrest and imprisonment, and they all claimed to be somewhat so, their overarching concerns were irrelevance and redundancy, seen as preconditions for becoming isolated, which would in turn leave them prone to arrest or assassination.

It is a desperately bad situation indeed for members of these groups and their associates to find themselves becoming isolated, and is something that typically occurs in the run-up to a major arrest or a hit. Social and professional isolation is imposed as a

precursor to being 'set up', turned in, or killed; it is the ultimate expression of redundancy or distrust. Arrest of imprisonment on the other hand are typically viewed as temporary situations, and very rarely inhibit a Mafioso's freedom to continue to conduct business, as long as his cosca continues to support him. Isolation, however, ensures that an individual will no longer have access to the social and professional worlds that have previously shaped their life. This is financially, professionally, socially, and psychologically destructive, and happens to be an exceptional method for ridding oneself of a rival or punishing someone for a serious infraction. And in addition to these effects, isolation removes all status and power, rendering the Mafioso target a social and professional exile. It is not uncommon for Mafiosi reduced to this state to soon be killed off, either by their own or by others who have been waiting for some sort of payback.

This practice of actively isolating weakened individuals is well documented. The organized crime literature, biographical reports, news media, and prosecutorial reports have shown that, in the orbit of Sicily's Cosa Nostra, the Neapolitan Camorra, and Calabria's 'ndrangheta, members, affiliates, associates, and enemies, are often separated from their group before being otherwise punished.[84] It has been alleged that this was the case in the arrest of Bernardo Provenzano in 2006[85]. And the State has been known to play the same game when dealing with the Mafia -- isolation was experienced by General dalla Chiesa, and Judges Falcone and Borsellino shortly before their murders. Judge Falcone wrote in his diary that he and Borsellino had been abandoned by the Italian State, signaling to Cosa Nostra that they were no longer protected and that they were now fair game for their enemies.[86]

Isolation is the extreme, but there are other measures that can be used before things

go that far. Irrelevance and redundancy indicate an increased risk of expulsion from the group, or the removal of protective benefits to membership. And so these individuals protected themselves by establishing themselves as skilled, by nurturing valuable and relationships – often by establishing themselves in a brokerage position in these, and by establishing themselves as sources of knowledge and information about other relevant individuals or groups.[87]

What Enzo lacks in formal training, education, and transferable skills, he makes up for in his observational access and knowledge, particularly his knowledge about undocumented interactional moments. In the world of Cosa Nostra, social status is not so much *who* you know, or what you know, but how you can transform any relational knowledge into useable currency, all while monitoring and protecting what can be understood about you and the extent to which it can be commoditized.[88] Accessing such information starts with observing, or having access to an observer. Not everyone has the access Enzo has, and so they find other ways to guard against redundancy. For some, this entails proving their ability to be violent in the name of their group, often at great risk to themselves; for others, this may mean working as, for example, a doctor or lawyer, shopkeeper, accountant, politician, concrete executive, or hotelier, using their position to assist their group in entrepreneurial endeavors, money laundering, trafficking, or bid-rigging, or providing medical or legal assistance to group members.

The Invisibles

Those who lacked Enzo-quality surveillance insights employed other strategies for obtaining similar knowledge. One tactic used in urban areas and tourist towns tapped into the observational access of street beggars. Similar to Enzo, street beggars are able to

observe their surroundings while they themselves fade into the background, their constant presence rendering them almost invisible.

In Palermo I spent several days observing one particular beggar who spent his days kneeling on a square of cardboard near the famous Hotel et des Palmes, breaking occasionally to limp up via Principe di Belmonte, in the direction of via Ruggiero Settimo. This three-city block stretch of via Principe di Belmonte is pedestrianized, lined with cafes, shops, and banks on the ground floor and apartments, legal, medical, and financial practices on the upper floors. The street was a popular stretch for tourists and Palermitani alike, and it was easy for beggar-observers and ethnographers to fade into the background for lengthy periods of observation.

This particular beggar patrolled a patch that extended a couple of blocks north and a few blocks west from the Church of the Holy Cross at via Roma and via Mariano Stabile. Most of the time, however, he knelt on his cardboard square, particularly in the morning and afternoon rush hours, and at lunchtime. He never looked upwards, his eyes were focused on the pavement or straight ahead, slightly into the distance. He never met the disinterested gaze of the tourists and businesspeople who threw money at him, and he was wordless except for whispered deferential blessings he would deliver in return for a few Euros.[89]

When not kneeling on his square of cardboard, the man limped around the immediate streets, but not to set up in a new location, and I never saw him buying food or anything to drink, and he never engaged with patrons seated at the cafes. Periodically he would enter into a barely perceptible exchange with a swaggering and casually dressed young man in his mid-to-late twenties, an interaction that was repeated every few hours:

The two men would cross paths as they strolled in different directions down a pedestrianized street, greeting each other with almost imperceptible nods when they had no reason to stop. Sometimes, however, they would pause, with the older man seeming to solicit money from the young man, who would react in one of two ways: he would either angrily blow off the older man, or would give him a few coins and a smile.

I learned from a Palermitan friend who had worked in a nearby hotel all his life, that the older man was reporting to the younger man any observations he had made; which shops, stalls, and cafes were busiest, which taxi drivers were doing the most runs, who was walking and talking, who was eating with whom, and information about who was visiting the professional offices – the lawyers, accountants and doctors – on the upper floors of the buildings lining the street. All of his time was spent observing.

Meat Cleavers & Marmalade

Speed walking through the market, trying to politely but urgently navigate my way around dawdling shoppers without causing a scene, I hoped I wouldn't lose my footing on the grease-coated cobblestones littered with trampled fruit and vegetables. I didn't know if the man was still chasing me, waving the bloodied meat cleaver with which he had threatened me moments earlier, but I kept moving, looking for a break in the stalls where I could exit the market and, I hoped, reassure him that he had successfully chased me from his territory.

I had made the mistake of raising my camera to take a photo of the worn façade of a beautiful old building at a corner of the market. Just out of the range of my camera stood a farmer at a very small stall, where he butchered lamb to order. Carcasses of small lambs hung from a rail, and on the large cutting board in front of the farmer were a few cuts left

over from lambs he had butchered for customers earlier in the day. I suppose he must have thought I was taking a photograph of him or the young man behind him who, I realized in hindsight, had shielded his face with his hands and turned his back to me as I had raised my camera. As the young man reacted, the farmer had picked up the meat cleaver, shouted at me "No! Basta!"[90] waving the cleaver in my direction, before lumbering out from behind the stall to chase me down the greasy cobbled street.

The produce markets I visited in larger towns and cities in Sicily[91] were all structured in the same way: tightly packed stalls and carts overflowing with produce, clinging to ancient city walls lining the twisting cobbled streets of historic neighborhoods. The tarpaulin canopies of the stalls diffused the sunlight to tint everything below in warm red and yellow tones. During market hours these narrow twisting old streets were brightly lit and heaving with activity. But by the afternoon, and certainly into evening, they became deserted, the territory of stray cats and dogs, the stone walls echoing with the sounds of family life – cooking, laughter, arguments, television and music, all coming from the apartments above.

The produce markets are set up starting at around four in the morning, officially opening for business around five, and thronging by six. The business at the fish markets winds down first; by nine or ten most mornings it is mostly over for the day. The produce markets were bustling throughout the morning, and continued to do business into the afternoon, particularly at the weekends. People from all over town, the suburbs, and farther afield, converged here to stroll and to shop. And there was more to buy than the produce offerings: housewives examined cheap electronics, home accessories, and clothing – bundles of socks and t-shirts, knockoff soccer shirts and hoodies, and all manner of

inexpensive footwear. Large groups of young people swaggered through, flirtatiously performing for each other while checking out costume jewelry and accessories for personalizing cell phones. Children pleaded with mothers to buy them candy and loud bright toys, and in the produce sections, customers crowded butcher, grocer, and fishmonger stalls, as stray dogs slinked their way through the crush of tables, crates, boxes, bodies, and hand carts, picking up any scraps they could find and occasionally barking at rivals for scraps. From fishmonger to mixtape-seller to toddler, everyone was shouting in order to be heard over the shouting of everyone else.

Sometimes I visited the markets accompanied by Michele, who would walk me through, occasionally nodding or briefly chatting with young men who, he told me, acted as his eyes and ears. These young men were obligated to alert Michele the instant they observed anything amiss – particularly with regard to pricing or the behavior of stallholders. Michele spent a lot of his time visiting with merchants, checking on the status of any disputes, and gathering knowledge about other stallholders and farmers. On one occasion, a farmer selling at the market mentioned to Michele that a dispute he had been having with a neighbor had not subsided and was causing more problems. In particular, he complained that this was imposing a financial burden on him that was making it difficult for him to keep his prices at the prevailing market rates: He needed to make more profit in order to stay afloat.

The problem for the two farmers began the previous summer, when wildfires had burned down fences and hedges that separated their properties. Their livestock would now roam across invisible boundaries, as we would expect them to. The market farmer claimed that these incursions onto his land had caused considerable damage to fruit-bearing trees,

that the other man's livestock had been drinking the water on his land and the hay he put out for his livestock, and all this had resulted in a loss of income and had imposed upon him unexpected costs.

Michele explained that he knew from his relative Giuseppe that the farmers had been told to rebuild their fencing, which the man agreed was indeed the case but he claimed that it was more complicated: he had little money for materials now, he was old, his sons were busy and he couldn't afford to hire farmhands, especially when he was struggling at market. Michele suggested that he label his produce as 'organic' and 'mafia-free', and told him to raise his prices accordingly. And he reminded the farmer that Giuseppe had agreed to 'provide' the materials, but the old man pointed out that if he was buying materials from Giuseppe, he would struggle to pay extortion, the 'pizzu',[92] to Michele that month and possibly the following month. Laughing at a request for a reduction in the payment, Michele told the farmer that the sooner he fixed the fences, the sooner his financial obligations would be easily met. The old farmer nodded, resigned to his defeat, but before we left he insisted that Michele and I take jars of fig and blood orange marmalade his wife had made. Michele agreed, and even paid for the items, before adding that I must also have a bag of the farmer's almonds, calling them "the best almonds on all of the island." The farmer beamed.

U Pizzu

Michele regularly walks through his territory, visiting the markets most days, and when he is not there he learns what goes on from his lookouts and loyal market vendors. He has access to a great deal of observational information in this way, but for other Mafiosi collecting the pizzu, particularly in urban areas with a lot more activity than in

rural towns, accessing this quality of information could be a much more complex undertaking. Pizzu is a private tax levied on almost every business by prevailing mafia families in most towns and neighborhoods in Sicily and Calabria (as well as Naples and Mafia controlled pockets of other parts of Italy), and can run as high as tens of thousands of Euros for larger businesses such as supermarket chains. Pizzu has been described by Diego Gambetta (1993) as an extortion that masquerades as protection when people pay to protect themselves against the very same individuals who are collecting the pizzu. It is exceptionally rare for a business to resist demands to pay, for fear of arson or other attacks, which are commonplace in such situations.

In one pizzu collection that I observed at a restaurant, the business was in a tourist zone and co-owned by a Mafioso who belonged to a different cosca that had once dominated the area. There was a history of violence in this rivalry, although it was some years since there had been any real problems. On this particular visit, beyond the simple exchange of funds, the performance served two purposes: establishing presence and authority, and asserting status by showing off (for) the visitor as a way of asserting power and a lack of concern over the possibility of being exposed or observed.

The restaurant was tucked into the corner of a cobbled tree-lined piazza, on the periphery of the central tourist area in the city's old town. Accessed from one of the main thoroughfares via a dark and dimly lit alleyway, the narrow opening of which could be easily missed by the casual passer-by, and with a pretty baroque façade heavily draped with unruly tendrils of scarlet bougainvillea. The boundary between Gli Frateddu and the street is marked with terracotta planters, overflowing with vibrant red begonias and deep violet pansies. This mid-range Italian restaurant is comprised of a cavernous interior dining

room and, like many others these days, a smaller smoking section, half inside half outside, and which encroaches out into the plaza, and which is covered with thick plastic tenting that retains cool air in summer and the warmth of the space heaters in winter.

For this visit to Gli Frateddu, Nino and I were accompanied by one of his sons, Antonio, as well as Nino's close confidante, Alessandro. As Antonio opens the door in the plastic tenting, standing aside with his arm outstretched to usher in Nino and myself, the manager, Calogero, comes rushing over to greet us from his seat behind the bar, deep in the restaurant's vaulted-ceilinged interior. A big fuss is made to ensure that our table is perfect – Calogero picks up the glass at my place setting, chastising a waiter for the imaginary fingerprint smudge he claims to have noticed. Instantly, all of our glasses are whisked away and a team of waiters emerges from the back of the room, energetically polishing fresh glasses as they speedwalk over to our table.

Calogero expresses his concerns to Nino regarding a negative review the restaurant has received in a popular tourism guide: They have been accused of relabeling bottles of wine in such a way that makes them appear to be of a better quality. They are accused of fraudulently selling this wine to their unsuspecting tourist customers at massively inflated prices. The city is in a big push to boost its tourist trade, after decades of corruption and violence, so inspectors are hot on the trail of establishments that receive these types of negative review. To counter this, Nino sends Antonio to the car for stickers, magnets, and a credit card sign, all featuring the name and logo of an Anti-Mafia organization, for Calogero to display at front of house. This will present the image of a small business that is Mafia-free, Mafia-fighting, of the sort that tourists these days are keen to patronize; no one wants to put money into the Mafia's coffers, and the Mafia therefore must ensure that

patrons feel that they are spending their money in establishments that are supposedly free of unseemly association. It is a simple, effective solution that resolves the issue of reestablishing trust with tourist-customers, adeptly finding and exploiting a market in the desire to avoid establishments with which they were associated.

Calogero was also concerned that this accusation put a regulatory spotlight on Gli Frateddu, which could trigger surprise visits from city inspectors eager to appear to be tackling the 'mafia problem' in a city desperate to shed its questionable past. He is naturally concerned about attendant problems that a regulatory spotlight could bring to a Mafia-owned and operated enterprise, which was necessarily under suspicion before any of this happened. Nino says he will "take care of this little problem", and the matter is closed.

Nino and Calogero frame and define the exchange and their relationship in the context of accomplishing a specific transaction, against an interpersonal background of intense disdain. They must detach themselves from the history and tradition of rivalry in order to achieve the result they both desire. Ordinarily, Nino would not attend these pizzu collections, although the ownership of this particular establishment made it a special case requiring the exacting performance of a sense of mutual respect in order to keep relations smooth. I was also aware that because I was not routinely taken on these meetings, some of what I observed that day was performance for my benefit, presenting the sort of scene that Nino imagined I wanted to see. Regardless, they both played along, Nino and Calogero and their supporting cast, and the details of the interactions, the microinteractional ebb and flow, unconscious gestures and tones, and the cues and clues deployed by participants shaped the overall tone of the moment; these interactants simply magnified the undirected

version of what was taking place, and I was able to observe even more closely the identity work both sides put into this performance to make their transaction a success.

Lawyers & Lemons

Local authority is the purview of able to access the quality of observational knowledge gathered by actors such as Enzo and the Palermitan beggar. Indeed, those with locally recognized authority are those who also have vast reserves of intimate knowledge of the others in their orbit. Combining this knowledge with a reputation for being unafraid to use violence, or for having access to those skilled in violence, will render a local boss very powerful indeed.

We know that local power is one of the foundations upon which Mafia-type groups have traditionally created and maintained stability and order. This manifests itself in urban areas via neighborhood territories, and rurally in territorial distinctions according to village, town, or small group of villages. In the case of the Sicilian Mafia, we know that Mafiosi who are on the run from law enforcement often rely on the support of their local powerbase to provide them with resources such as shelter, food, transport, and documents such as identity cards and passports, with which they can become 'safe'.[93] Holding and retaining local power requires considerable access to local knowledge, and being possessed of local power will in turn increase this access. Similarly, being a local boss in a juridical role only serves to increase one's power and access to information.

Some bosses serve their local community in the manner of a local politician. In one rural village in southern Sicily, I learned that the head of the local cosca held regular visiting hours for locals to meet with him to discuss any issues they may have for which they required his input or mediation. A situation arose where there was a growing dispute

between two brothers, fighting over access to a shared driveway. The brothers had inherited a large estate, which was split between them, the driveway physically dividing the two halves of the property. One of the brothers, Giacomo, took control of the citrus groves on this land, and lived in a newly built farmhouse on his side of the estate. The other brother, Giorgio, had renovated the estate' seventeenth century mansion and old mill, which he developed into a small luxury Bed and Breakfast with a fabulous small art gallery and restaurant, which were open to the public.

Accessed from a rural, single-track, tree-lined road, the unpaved dirt track driveway was about half a mile long, tree-lined in parts, and with a number of gates along its length that provided entry to the fields, groves, and farm buildings. At the end it forked into two tracks, one to the Bed and Breakfast and the other going into the groves in the direction of Giacomo's home. The driveway was not in good condition: many of the potholes were big enough to disable the average rental car. Winter and spring rains had exacerbated the potholes, and the intense dry heat of the southern Sicilian summer had further eroded the dirt surface. Giorgio had tried to maintain the driveway to a reasonable standard for his guests, most of whom drove small rental cars that were easily damaged by the rough driving conditions. He believed, however, that Giacomo should share the financial burden for driveway improvements and, moreover, argued that Giacomo's farm vehicles and workers greatly contributed to the erosion of the surface by driving too fast and scattering the gravel with which Giorgio had tried to patch the surface.

Giacomo was unwilling to share this expense, and had his own set of grievances, not the least of which being that now the Bed and Breakfast was busy he and his farm laborers often found their access impeded by guests driving at a snail's pace on the narrow

roads from the nearby village, and on the driveway. Giacomo felt that the Bed and Breakfast and the farm should have separate access, and that it was Giorgio's responsibility to create and pave a new driveway for the B & B, leaving the existing track and it's access to the fields, groves, and farm buildings to Giacomo. This tension between the brothers had been brewing for some time, new energy was injected into the fight with every round of the citrus harvest, of which there are a few each year. The most recent spring harvest had been very damaging to their relationship, and the brothers now only talked through their respective lawyers. Giorgio's niece told me that the lawyers had "tried and failed to adjudicate the problem or find a solution" and that they were now at an impasse. The brothers were "growing impatient" and had totally "lost faith in the power of the legal system to help in any way." By mid-June, the B & B business had entered high season, which would last until early September, and the traffic on the driveway was busier than ever, causing even worse delays for work on the farm. This was all made worse by the condition of the driveway, which had already disabled two small cars that summer, and was slowing others down as visitors exercised even greater caution with their small two-wheel-drive rentals.

Late one night Giacomo planted several rocks in the middle of the driveway, rocks that were large enough to break a car's axel. Giorgio learned of these from a family returning from dinner in the nearby beach town, who had narrowly missed hitting the rocks. Armed with a flashlight and work gloves, Giorgio spent the middle of the night clearing rocks to the side and checking for any other obstacles or traps. The next morning his wife, Antonella, invited me over for breakfast, and told me about what had gone on the night before, and what the next steps must be. Giorgio, she said, "went to see Giacomo at

dawn, to try to reason with him, but no, nothing. We're very worried that someone will have an accident, it's very dangerous and could become very expensive!" I asked if Giacomo would repeat this or if they thought he regretted what he had done that night, "Of course he will do it again. He sees how it upsets Giorgio, yes, he will keep doing this until he is stopped. But we can't do anything about this." When I asked if the police had been called because Giacomo was putting the health and safety of their guests at risk, surely it had become worthy of police intervention, Antonella smiled gently as if to indicate that I didn't understand, and told me "Oh no. They won't do anything. There's nothing the police or the justices can do about his opinion that he has more rights than we do. He won't change his mind … No, the police cannot help. This morning, Giorgio has gone to see Amadeo. They must sit and talk it out with someone sensible there. Amadeo will fix things."

Amadeo was the local Mafia boss. Giorgio and Giacomo were known to him, and both had good local reputations. Amadeo's approach to their dispute would be entirely without bias, a mediatory role rather than one-sided sanctioning. Sure enough, when Giorgio returned later that morning he appeared happier and more relaxed, and that night there were no more rocks planted on the driveway. While the relationship between the two brothers may have been difficult to repair after this, their fight over driveway access seemed to have reached its conclusion. After the summer harvest and the end of the B & B's high season, Amadeo's crew started work on a new driveway for Giorgio's Bed and Breakfast, partially funded by Giacomo, to Amadeo's profit.

Most fascinating to me in this situation was the absoluteness of Amadeo's role and judgment, revealing how fundamental his mediatory authority was to local order. There

was no question about sanctions, physical violence, threats, or any other menacing behavior that we might expect in this sort of interaction. Just as a constituent might implore their local political representative to help resolves issues of land access and rights, so Giorgio had visited Amadeo for mediation. In return, Giorgio and Giacomo reconfirmed an unspoken agreement that Amadeo and his family were in control of the local area, that they would remain loyal to his cosca, and that this loyalty would be expressed in deferring to his authority as well as continuing to gift him with small 'favors' and indications of respect. These favors involved such things as accommodating last minute reservations in the sold-out restaurant, gifting baskets of freshly harvested lemons and blood oranges to Amadeo's elderly mother, and providing farm, gallery, and restaurant jobs to his friends and family – jobs that were held on paper, if not in practice, and which therefore facilitated Amadeo's illicit businesses and money laundering requirements. Neither Giorgio nor Giacomo had any qualms with this arrangement, having saved considerable money on their mounting legal fees, and perfectly happy to express loyalty to a local boss who had never brought any harm to them or their family. Of course, Amadeo *is* a Mafioso, and there is necessarily a constant undercurrent threat of violence that serves to moderate interactions such as these.

While Amadeo and his cosca certainly had access to violence and could have forced a one-sided solution rather than a compromise, punishment is not the default response in situations such as this. Amadeo was able to secure loyalty and favors by mediating without coercion or violence, the gifts and favors he received in return were part of the payment for his service, not simply for the immediate mediation, but also for his being available on an ongoing basis. The baskets of freshly harvested citrus had little

monetary value to either Giacomo or Amadeo, who could certainly afford to buy fresh fruit for his mother, but having the farmer deliver large baskets of his finest-looking and freshly harvested lemons and blood oranges made the gift much more valuable than its financial value would have been. Amadeo's mother would be delighted by these tokens of respect toward her and her son, and such matriarchal approval held great value to both Amadeo and to Giorgio and Giacomo. The 'on paper' jobs were economically and strategically more valuable to Amadeo, would provide the basis for taxable income and occupational legitimacy for those working in his other operations, and bound Giacomo and Giorgio to Amadeo even more strongly than before.

Redefining the real value of goods and services as unrelated to their monetary value is a constant in mafia relations with their constituents and clients. The real value of protection, from whomever, and of these mediation services, is expressing in gifts that attach an intimacy to the exchange or transaction that could not be achieved by simple monetary payment: The diligent glass-polishing performance of the waiters at Gli Frateddu, the almonds and marmalade presented at the market to Michele and myself, and the tokens presented to Amadeo, all these things carry a value far greater than their financial valuation would be. This is a system of exchange that imputes to these goods and services a transaction value that eclipses their formal utility or monetary value. By redefining goods and services as a form of currency, establishing a system that imputes real values, which can be known, to gifting and favor practices, these exchanges reinforce the power and status of local bosses and their cosche, concretizing their role in securing order through their role as ultimate local authority.

The Wild West

At one o'clock in the afternoon on a very hot Sunday in July, my bus pulled into the Moorish city of Marsala on Sicily's western coast. It was not at all as I had expected: a ghost town, every business was shuttered, stray dogs ran down sidewalks littered with all kinds of trash – plastic bags and bottles, food wrappers, receipts and newspaper pages, and a surprising quantity of glassines and hypodermic needles. I carried my luggage to a small kiosk across the square where, after I struggled to speak an Italian he recognized, the African proprietor told me in heavily accented French, and with frantic hand gestures, that "obviously" there would not be any taxis at the taxi stand, because it was Sunday. Of course he was correct, this being a particularly adherent region of a Catholic country. He called a couple of drivers to see if they would take a customer, but no one was willing. Two male mechanics in their early-to-mid twenties strolled over from their shop across the street to buy cigarettes and lottery tickets. Overhearing my conversation with the proprietor, they asked me where I was coming from to have arrived at such an inopportune time, and where was I going that I didn't have transport.

I explained that I had arrived on the bus from Agrigento, on my way to a small village a few miles inland, in the dusty craggy hills overlooking the Marsala salt flats, Trapani, and the Egadi Islands; Sicily's 'wild west'. One of the mechanics asked where I was from: "New York" I replied. They looked at each other, looked over at the garage at the work they had to do and offered me a cigarette as one of the mechanics made a brief phone call. Suddenly, and without saying a word, he picked up my bag, threw it on the back of a *Piaggio* pickup van that was roughly held together with fraying baler twine, and indicated that I should get in. With no other options, and disinclined to hang out much longer with the stray dogs in the deserted square, I climbed into the passenger seat, a

decision I briefly regretted ten minutes later as I found myself straining to hold the Piaggio's door in the closed position as my chauffeur pushed it to its absolute maximum speed – a rattling thirty-five miles an hour – as trucks and buses flew past us on the northbound intercity highway.

Arriving at our destination, forty five minutes later, at the edge of a vineyard that spread across the hills behind a recently renovated villa, I was astonished to see that my bag had not been ejected from the Piaggio's truck bed somewhere between here and Marsala. I went directly to the poolside restaurant, where my friend Stefano awaited my arrival. At Stefano's table were also seated an elegant couple, and as he walked me over he explained that these are his friends Lucia and Salvatore, who, he said he believed, would be "…interested in what you are doing here. And you will be interested in them."

Lucia and Salvatore were a married couple, both physicians, he in his early to mid fifties, she in her late forties, both successful and with the accessories that denote wealth – Rolex, Hermes, and Chanel. Lucia's English was more comfortable than Salvatore's, and over a glass of wine she and I chatted around a variety of subjects ranging from graduate school and medical residencies to fashion, interior design, travel, and politics. She told me that she and Salvatore had lived in Palermo for many years, but now lived in the upper middle class coastal city of Bagheria, some twenty miles from central Palermo, where they had some respite from Palermo's hustle and bustle. Before they left to return to Bagheria, Salvatore invited me to a dinner party at their home the following week: "The Governor[94] will come, you must meet him, he will be fascinated by you." He laughingly followed with a joke about how this was an important high profile friend to have "for a boring local physician", and it would be "special to be able introduce him to the girl from New York." I

soon learned why this was so amusing to him: Salvatore's professional and personal friend network was vast and influential: "He knows everyone, he's the most connected man in Palermo" as Paolo later told me.

As they stood to leave, Salvatore turned to me, saying "Funnily enough, I believe you know my very close friend Rosario." Indeed I did, I knew him quite well, and his children who were around my age. I would see Rosario and his family in London in a few weeks, where I would attend a dinner in celebration of one of his young grandchildren.

Mattanza[95]

Rosario's family was from a long line of fishermen on Favignana, in the Egadi Islands[96], just off the coast of this part of Sicily. Favignana is a small island, most easily reached by ferry or hydrofoil service out of the western Sicilian city of Trapani or by private boat. Known for their beautiful secluded beaches and coves, clear water and diving spots, the Egadis are dotted with small vacation homes and fishing villages. Favignana is best known for three things: its stretches of turquoise shallows and secluded rocky coves, the tufa rock from which most of the island's homes are built, and the ancient tradition of the *mattanza* – the tuna hunt that exploits the fact that the water surrounding the Egadi Islands is a Bluefin tuna spawning ground. An ancient tradition in the Egadis, particularly in Favignana, the mattanza requires three longboats, a large and intricately boxed net comprised of a series of one-way chambers, expert knowledge of tuna spawning times and locations, and a couple of dozen strong and brave men willing to hook and haul thrashing fish, which can weigh several hundred pounds, out of a watery cage full of flailing tuna and sharks, using what are essentially long-handled scythes.

The ocean channel between Favignana and the neighboring island of Marettimo is known as the site where some of the healthiest and most robust Bluefin tuna in the world come to spawn. The dock in Favignana town borders the site of the famed Florio tonnara (tuna fishery), now no longer in operation. The mattanza had long been Favignana's economic base, but as the traditional mattanza went out of favor with tuna exporters and European regulators, and as the fish became fewer and smaller and thusly insufficient to sustain the island's economy, the Florio tonnara ceased production and the islanders sought out other economic prospects.[97]

On one visit to Favignana I was accompanied by Paolo to meet his father, Rosario. We were to meet for lunch and a tour of the island, where Rosario's ancestors had all worked as fisherman and on the mattanza longboats. Although Rosario and his family no longer lived in Favignana, he had asked that we meet there because "This is my home. You want to know about me? Favignana, the water, this is who I am. You must understand this before you will understand anything else." Paolo was a close friend who I knew from New York and London, and Rosario had known of my close friendship with his children long before he met me.

A few hundred yards from the Favignana dock is a large, bright town square, again hued in the pinks and golds of tufa. From April until October the cafes and gelaterias lining the square are packed with tourists, mostly from Sicily but some from further afield on day trips or short breaks from the larger islands of Sicily or Sardinia. Rosario still spent time in Sicily and returned periodically to Favignana, which he called his 'refuge', where, as he explained, everyone knew him and gave him space and peace, which he struggled to find elsewhere. Indeed, as we sat in the square people passing our table deferentially nodded

and smiled at Rosario and Paolo, some reaching out wordlessly to shake their hands, others quietly welcoming them 'home' and wishing them well.

Walking down the narrow streets leading off the central piazza, lined with small tufa homes, Rosario explained to me in great detail his business operations. I learned of his preferences in putting together crews to operate boats, how he found and satisfied buyers and sellers, the challenges he faced, the ways in which he negotiated, and what he did when things didn't go to plan – if a contract was reneged on or otherwise went unfulfilled. Everything in Rosario's professional world depended on relationships and reputations, and of being possessed of vast pools of observational knowledge of his profession's practices, events, and people.

Obtaining stability in Rosario's line of work required a constant monitoring of market activity, protecting what others know of you and performing everyday operational tasks in such a way as to ensure the easy and smooth completion of contracts and transactions, as well as maintaining and building personal and professional reputations and relationships that may be used as leverage if the need arises. Reputation in this context is comprised of two main factors: influence and skill. An unskilled crewman, for example, creates risk for the remainder of the crew, and can be the source of failed transactions or lost contracts. Rosario took on sizeable contracts to broker and facilitate cargo loads that passed through southern Italy, Spain, Portugal, Ireland, and West Africa, to destinations that included the cities of England, Germany, and France, eastern Europe, and the Middle East. He was a middleman, brokering connections between those who owned cocaine for export and those hoping to buy cocaine to import. He had no interest in production or sales, only brokerage; his sole focus involved linking the two ends of the market and, for

an additional fee, setting up transport crews and vessels. My lovely friend Paolo's father was a broker in the trafficking of massive quantities of cocaine.

Trafficking

Rosario's role as broker demanded forms of observational knowledge that could reveal patterns of relations and encounters, the unspoken trusts of his industry, as well as the business activities of co-conspirators and rivals. Rosario and colleagues he introduced me to were at pains to point out that they are businessmen. Explaining the remarkable lack of violence at their level of the trafficking industry Scavello explained that while violence remains an option, it is never first choice, at least when it came to basic disputes involving money or product: "People don't kill over disputes in this business. That's what drug dealers do, but we aren't drug dealers, we are businessmen." There was one universal exception to this non-violent approach to trafficking; the case of the snitch, who will always suffer the consequences of their actions. Rosario, violence-averse as he was in his day, nonetheless had no qualms contracting violence out to specialists. One such specialist, Ruco, explained his role as "You could say I step in and straighten things out." Another associate explained how that he turned to Ruco and other associates in the same role only if real need arose and that this was not commonplace: "I get paid on time, I don't worry about my clients in that way. And if there is a problem, I turn to Ruccolo and Mesi, the collection agency."

My non-local Mafia subjects typically defined their role according to their skills and role in the legal labor market. In the last two decades, an increasing reliance on skills and expertise improved the speed and efficacy with which traffickers were able to adapt to law enforcement interventions, legal changes, military actions and naval or coast guard

interdictions. The meritocratization of the transatlantic trade in cocaine, with its reliance on reputation networks and an increasing turn to verifiable skills, was accompanied by a lowering of the barriers to entry which led to a wider distribution of knowledge and shared resources, creating a more efficient and resilient industry than that which existed in the cartel era up until the early 1990s.[98]

Rosario's son Paolo had benefitted from a very expensive education, which trafficking had paid for and which he could use to open up doors in every legitimate industry. He used the skills and qualifications accrued through his management role at a blue chip financial services firm, as well as the relationships he had built at school and university, as resources for his father's business endeavors. "On the side" Paolo was a money-laundering expert, a "paper trail pyromaniac" as he put it, who took particular pride in his ability to stump even the most talented forensic accountants. However, as Paolo explained, he did not aspire to this but before his mainstream career took off, when his wife was expecting their first child, he turned to his father looking for side work:

> I didn't think I'd do this, um, join up. It always turned me off; I didn't aspire to this. My mind didn't change one day, I didn't wake up thinking, "you know what, today I'll go to the dark side" [*laughs*]. It just happened. Shit happened. I realized it's not as if I have to do things I don't like, I'm just doing my job and I'm damn good at what I do. It was easy to help out after work and, you know, weekends and stuff. Look, I know where the money comes from and where it goes. But I have to sleep at night. I see my face in the mirror every morning. So I move money from left to right to right to left. That's all. Blocks of numbers.

Where the pizzu collectors and local mediators redefined and reframed relationships and the goods and services received in return for their 'goodwill', those in Rosario's professional sphere neither required nor inspired such practices or the

performance of gratitude. Rosario explained to me that one of the more important qualities of a trafficker and their enterprise is the participants' ability to adapt in the face of unexpected challenges, even when these participants could be separated by thousands of miles. Challenges include arrests, the seizure of drugs, resources, and equipment, tax audits of the businesses through which they launder proceeds and pay employees, the presence of snitches, and the introduction of new technologies. Their business exists in a state of constant adaptation, as methods of production, concealment, processing, payment, delivery, and money laundering can become riskier or easier, depending on the accrual of skills, resources, and knowledge.

Knowledge Networks

Being possessed of the ability to access information is an important factor across the board for my subjects in Sicily, from the local to the regional and global; only the level of detail changes according to the business enterprise and its geographic coverage. The importance of knowledge brokers and agents, of their knowledge networks and observational skills, is revealed in the status and success of individuals such as Enzo, Nino, Antonio, Giuseppe, and Michele, all of whom benefit from Enzo's ethnographic privilege, with their power in great part obtained from having access to his knowledge. In Palermo, accessing a similar quantity and quality of information posed greater challenges to Nino and Antonio, and their power in the city was instead fortified by Nino's reputation for violence, and the obligations of loyalty associated instead with the payment of the monthly pizzu. Of all the subjects, as traditional and important as their role is, Nino and Antonio's status in their organization, was the least secure: In today's Mafia, in which earning a reputation for the ability to employ violence is a far simpler accomplishment than attaining

the skills and relationships required in successful and resilient twenty-first century enterprise, they were eminently replaceable.

A lot of what Mafia organizations do involves legal enterprise and legal services done in illegal ways. While some Mafiosi seek to establish authority by violence and force, those whose authority is locally recognized as authentic, and respected for that, are those with vast reserves of intimate knowledge about others, and the ability to use it. Combining this knowledge with a reputation for being unafraid to use or contract out violence therefore renders a local boss very powerful indeed. The 'global' entrepreneurs I met put considerable stock in their professional skills and expertise, and in that of those with whom they did business. Their typical business relationships were based not on local knowledge and kinship, but were almost entirely founded upon professional and personal reputations, prior interactional experiences, and the skills and expertise of partners and employees. In the case of 'perceived' these were rapidly proven or else lapsed as a marker of usefulness or ability.

In order to be possessed of local authority, it is necessary to know as much as possible about those you know, and those they know. Local authority does not typically require accessing information about those outside the scope of 'local' or regional where the enterprise is limited to a local territory. Observational knowledge is less likely to accrue information on friends-of-friends-of-friends, and for those whose role in criminal enterprise is either non-local or reliant upon understandings of non-local relations and interactions, this becomes essential. Observation, therefore, was the provenance of those in positions of local authority - or in pursuit of those positions. To the extent that observation was employed by those active in larger regional, continental, or international

enterprise, the knowledge they sought to accrue was more limited to who was interacting with whom, rather than caring for the details of those interactions.

The wonderful Sicilian author, Leonardo Sciascia, once wrote, 'Privilege, to the Sicilian, is not so much the liberty of enjoying certain things as the pleasure of forbidding them to others.' He wrote, at the time, of the Mafia, of Mafiosi, and particularly of their machinations involving local power structures. In this sentence he rather perfectly sums up the approach and mentality of the Mafiosi I met. By doing this, by forbidding things to others, they create markets from which they themselves can profit, whether in protection or, as has more recently been the case with garbage collection in Naples, by taking and failing to follow through with public contracts that then create a clean up market that they ably exploit. In the world of Cosa Nostra in Sicily and the 'Ndrangheta in Calabria, social status is not merely who you know, how you know them, and what you know about them (and vice versa), but more specifically this status involves how competent you are at accessing quality information *and* transforming it into social and professional currency, all while monitoring and protecting what can be understood about you and the extent to which others are able to convert that knowledge into their own currency.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

In March 2014, a Deep Web[99] site called The Hidden Wiki went offline. This was the main reference site for the Deep Web, the part of the Internet that cannot be reached through a regular browser, and which is not indexed by companies such as Google. The Hidden Wiki was taken down by a hacker known as Intangir, referring to him/herself as the Deep Web's "judge, jury, and executioner."[100] Intangir's intervention involved 'doxxing' – identifying and broadcasting identities and other protected or inconvenient information that the people in question would prefer not to have known about them[101]. Specifically, Intangir was intent upon doxxing individuals who do everything they can to stay anonymous while they produce, supply, disseminate, or provide online hosting for child pornography. The Hidden Wiki was not a child pornography site, but had infuriated Intangir, and rightfully so, by actively maintaining a list of links to sites that exist for the sole purpose of disseminating such material.

Intangir is not the only entity policing the Deep Web in this way: Three years previously, in October, 2011, a collective claiming to be part of the hacktivist group Anonymous performed a Distributed Denial of Service attack on a company called 'Freedom Hosting', a Deep Web site hosting service, and in so doing they forced the closure of forty child pornography websites. [102] But Anonymous didn't stop there; they posted online the names and details from over fifteen hundred individuals registered as users of one of the sites they had accessed, the uncomfortably named 'Lolita City'.[103] When they released this information, Anonymous stated that they intended to continue to regulate the Deep Web in this way: '…It does not matter who you are, if we find you to be hosting, promoting, or supporting child pornography, you will become a target."[104]

And they challenged the FBI and Interpol to pursue the leads that they had posted on the Internet. In August 2013, the owner of Freedom Hosting, a twenty-eight year old Dublin man by the name of Eric Eoin Marques, was arrested and extradition proceedings were started against him.[105]

What does all this have to do with order and identity in extralegal enterprise? Here we have one more example of a community in which privacy and identity are closely guarded, more so than in the daily lives of most of us. Deep Web markets for illicit goods and services oftentimes represent the Wild West of the internet – although more people are using the Tor browser necessary for accessing the Deep Web, this social space for the most part remains the territory of sophisticated internet users. And it is the location of all manner of criminal activity, a space where criminals and law enforcement lurk anonymously in the same corners, attempting to identify one another while protecting their own layers of identity This is a social sphere where there is inherent risk to adopting a community identity, and where authentic and appropriate identity work is critical.

When individuals affiliated with Anonymous collaborated and pooled their knowledge, skills, and access; when Intangir deployed his or her knowledge, skills, and access; when Mafiosi, drug dealers or sexworkers deploy identity work and surveillance, they similarly act as ad hoc participants in and enforcers of mutually beneficial community codes of conduct. And whether online or offline, these examples reveal the mechanisms by which informal regulation can be more effective and powerful than State efforts to intervene in trust- and relationship-based social systems. What Intangir and Anonymous did with the Hidden Wiki and Freedom Hosting was effectively the same

process as in offline instances of examples I have given here of groups regulating members or rivals by them over to the State: When Mafiosi turn over to the police an isolated co-conspirator who is no longer useful to them, or where a drug gang crew boss 'streets' a junior crew member thereby leaving them prone to arrest, these are all instances of similar processes, protecting their sphere – whether that be a drug corner, a local territorial power base, or the Deep Web.

Identity Work

In this thesis I have examined how my subjects worked the 'work' / 'nonwork' boundary, highlighting their performances and how they manage moments in which the performance is disrupted. Identity work reframes moments and experiences in context, rebalancing experiences in pursuit of a sense of order. Here I have examined what prostitutes and dominatrices, bookies, gang members, and drug entrepreneurs do in their efforts to monitor, protect, and project individual and group identity, in pursuit of a sense of order, through knowledge-seeking and –sharing. All of this revolves around the production, performance, and understanding of individual identity work. For example, I show Nico asking JoJo for credit, sexworkers accidentally revealing a coworkers 'real' identity in the presence of a customer, or her 'work' identity in the presence of non-work friends; and the effects on their identity work of the interpersonal dramas of everyday life: When a bookie's mistress tries to shake him down. To take the last example, when a mistress challenges a bookie's masculinity by shaking him down for money under the threat of calling his wife, it threatens the authenticity of his deepest held nonwork identity (family man) *and* the fundamental nature of his work identity (tough guy).

This began as a study of order in the context of criminal transactions. The focus gradually narrowed to an examination of the ways in which the individuals I studied deployed forms of identity work in the pursuit of a sense of order. Throughout, I have compared their interactional behavior to the ways in which we all behave in the non-criminal realm, how we perform and adapt our identities to the immediate moment, but with motivations that relate to their criminality and which exacerbate the requirement that their presented identities be wholly authentic and appropriate to the immediate context.

I have highlighted the ways in which these actors master (or fail to master) interactional moments and understandings, in pursuit of successful transactions and market longevity. Daily we seek information on, and regulate, each other's identities in myriad ways. While the details of the foundations to order vary by context, the drive to create and manage a sense of social and professional order was a constant in the lives of my subjects. Their identity work accomplished a reduction in perceived risk and uncertainty, defined their roles and validated their authenticity and credibility in any assumed role. This in turn establishes the stability and predictability necessary for accomplishing daily life in an otherwise unregulated social and professional environment.

For the actors in this study, the ability to observe and learn of the actions and behaviors of others was critical, particularly of those who they considered to be current, future, or recent business partners, or rivals. In the introduction, I explain that these professions are 'risky' in that they create risk for the participants, to varying degrees depending on the enterprise and the extent of its illegality and the realities of threats or acts of violence between participants. As a result of their work, all of the subjects in this study faced some risk of physical harm, arrest, or social exclusion; as I have explained,

their professions fall under the label ‘dirty work’ (Hughes, 1952). The scriptedness deployed by these actors in their handling of the demands of their labor contributes to authenticity and enabled my subjects’ pursuit and management of ‘the balance’. This often involved the reframing and redefining of characteristics of their labor, and the relationship between their ‘work’ and ‘nonwork’ lives such that they are able to dismiss any inconveniences associated with the stigma of their ‘dirty work’ or the characteristics that denoted it as such.

The Enterprises

The drug gang members were mostly involved in the crack cocaine business, on the street retail level. They faced challenges from rivals, and from people in their neighborhood who wanted to get rid of gangs, and the violence that tends to surround them. The neighborhood was in the middle of a turf war and the young gang members performed all the time to broadcast status and affiliations. The crew boss, Pits, aimed constantly ‘to keep the balance’. This, to Pits, spoke to order and stability and was a powerful motivating factor in his efforts to balance ‘work’ and ‘nonwork’ such that he did not find himself being manipulated, scammed, or set up.

The drug gang crews also broadcast their perceived status, their big guy identity, by posting videos on websites such as YouTube and MySpace. When GQ broadcast violence online, other crewmembers spoke of being concerned that he was overdoing it, creating needless risk for them all. GQ’s efforts to look big and powerful caused interpersonal rifts, conflicting with the identity work of individual crewmembers as they pursued ‘the balance.’

In contrast, JoJo and Angel, the retail level freelance drug dealers, despite their different drug-types, faced the same challenges in their daily interactions with customers. They were in a constant negotiation with what constituted an authentic 'drug dealer' identity, and how that is to be performed. To that end, they scripted transactions with customers to prevent deviation from what they thought were best practices. JoJo refused to own a gun, Angel always carried one, and both refused to give customers drugs on credit because of the necessary violence they would become involved in if customers didn't pay on time. JoJo's anti-gun stance was made easier by his no credit rule, and Angel's gun carrying contributed to the authenticity of his 'cokedealer' identity. They both deployed branding practices, earmarked drug money as separate from nondrug money, and, as I have shown, their refusal to provide drugs to customers on credit permitted an avoidance of physical violence and legitimized a non-violent identity that was consistent with the interactional demands of their discreet, middle class customers.

The Dominatrices and prostitutes faced many of the same challenges to identity and to their pursuit of a balance between their work and nonwork self. The dominatrices were particularly focused on control, and the question of who was in control in every moment. This became a source of tension between managers and mistresses when mistresses endeavored to control the entire house, and a very delicate dance took place in which managers were supposedly in charge but nonetheless needed to defer to the Dominas in the presence of clients. This entailed never entering a room without being invited, not even knocking on a door during a session unless it was a house-clearing emergency, always referring to the Dominatrices by title, and never issuing commands in front of a client. But there was a dissonance in this: These submissive clients were

paying, and the Dominatrices *needed* their patronage – this was a job after all. And so while the Dominatrices were focused on who was in control, and asserted themselves as so being, it was the submissive clients who were in charge of the exchange, merely permitting their Domina the identity that asserted her as the dominant party.

Although there were many more similarities than there were differences in the identity work of the Dominas and prostitutes, the latter needed to protect their work and nonwork identities *from each other* to a far greater extent than with any of the other groups here, including the Dominatrices. This difference largely came down to the illegality of prostitution in comparison to the legality of professional BDSM, and the stigma of the prostitute as either harlot or victim. As I said in Chapter One, the women in my fieldwork were neither. While these prostitutes were powerfully motivated to keep work and nonwork separate, it was also necessary that they develop bonds with coworkers that would make the job easier, a bonding that required exposing some of their nonwork identity; a huge risk. The more successful girls adeptly exposed some of their nonwork self to their coworkers in return for access to an informal knowledge pool. And they reframed and redefined items and acts that occurred in both the work and nonwork domains, but which were a source of conflict if they popped up in the wrong domain. In this they were able to maintain some demarcation between their experience of 'worksex' and 'nonworksex'.

The bookies, in comparison, didn't hide their work from friends and family, didn't rely on nicknames or aliases and therefore didn't need to balance one named identity from another. They still balanced work identity against nonwork identity, particularly in ways that balanced their relationships with customers who were also

friends, preventing those customers from using their intimate bonds to skate on a debt or to get an edge on the house with the terms of their wager. One of the main challenges for the bookies emerged from the credit arrangements they had with customers, which meant that they at times had to be debt collectors. As JoJo's gun-free policy highlights, chasing down debt is more likely to involve violence, which indeed it sometimes did for Dom, who also operated without a gun. When Dom 'snapped', as he put it, and became violent, it appeared more like failed identity work involving a failure to handle diversions from his expected script.

Lastly, in Sicily I met two general categories of Mafioso: local and nonlocal. The local Mafiosi were mostly involved in extortion and mediation, concerned with establishing total control over their territory. To a great extent they accomplished this through surveillance of everything and everyone in their orbit. These subjects worked to protect themselves from becoming being the subject of another's surveillance, and endeavored to make themselves indispensible and therefore unisolable.

The non-local Mafiosi were involved in all manner of enterprises, but I focused here on those involved in cocaine trafficking. Those I met involved in trafficking universally referred to themselves as businessmen, pointing to one of the most central aspects of the identity work that they perform in the course of accomplishing both successful transactions and a sense of order. They based their perceptions of status on the possession of skills – the more useful and unique one's skills, the higher one's status. Paolo, Rosario's 'paper trail pyromaniac' son claimed status not merely due to his being Rosario's son, but because of the indispensible skills he accrued in his legal employment. Non-local Mafiosi tended to identify by their legal profession (e.g. accountant, doctor,

lawyer), fulfilling the roles in the trafficking enterprise that were the equivalent of their roles legally (e.g. the books, medical care, shell company creation). The only way Paolo was able to balance who he thought he was with what he knew he was doing was to reframe the details of this labor.

My fieldwork observations revealed the identity work of individuals engaged in illicit transactions, the interactional techniques they deployed in the pursuit of order and which although not unique to the criminal world are all exacerbated in the criminal context where every encounter involves higher risk than those assumed by most of us in everyday interactions. I found that my subjects performed identity work in pursuit of a balance between often competing identities, broadly conceived of as work and nonwork. They pursued authenticity, wanting to appear credible to their audience, and to deflect the scrutiny of their critics. They were expected to perform appropriately if this authenticity was to be confirmable – occasionally I observed failures in this, however, such as when a young drug dealer trainee put on an excessively tough demeanor that he thought was appropriate for his role, not appreciating that it was off-putting to his discreet middle class customers.

In a more generalizable way, there were similarities in the identity work performed at different sites depending on the form taken by the transaction. Credit transactions were more intimate and involved existing relationships or strong references. For this reason they were unlikely in one off street level transactions, but were par for the course in the case of the bookies, and for the nonlocal Mafiosi in Sicily and their associates in the cocaine business. The interpersonal demands inherent to these credit transactions in many ways framed the identity expectations of the participants. Cash

transactions, on the other hand, were more likely to involve strangers; getting the cash up front provided a scriptedness to the interaction, freeing up the street dealers and sexworkers to attend to other details that would motivate a safe and successful exchange.

Identity and Transaction Type

There is a pivotal variation between the identity work performed in the different enterprise fieldwork sites: The distinction between cash transactions and those involving credit arrangements. The bookies and traffickers were the only groups whose transactions typically involved credit arrangements; they don't deal with complete strangers (particularly in the case of the traffickers) and consequently they are able to sustain expectations regarding the behavior of transaction partners. Without this underlying sense of calculability, credit arrangements would be more complicated, less forthcoming, and while we might expect that violence or its threat could substitute for the sort of trust revealed by credit arrangements, bringing violence in tones interactions in ways that might prevent their successful completion.

The scriptedness behind these credit arrangements provided the individuals in this study the interactional space to perform identity work that would smooth over the other details of the deal, such as negotiating price or delivery, and when everything else is controllable in this way, violence is generally unnecessary. The cash entrepreneurs – the prostitutes and Dominatrices, and the retail drug sellers – were much more likely to deal with strangers than the credit arrangement entrepreneurs were. That they transacted won strictly cash terms permitted for the gang members, for Angel and JoJo, and for the sexworkers, a sense that they would get paid for the commodity of service they had provided, without getting ripped off. They couldn't call the police to help out if

something like that occurred, and while the gang members were certainly more inclined to violence, they also knew that if they offered drugs on credit they would get ripped off, and just as they couldn't run around shooting every rival who looked at them sideways, they also couldn't start shooting at every crackhead who tried to pull a fast one by not paying their tab with their dealer. And so it was cash only. In the case of the freelance marijuana dealer, JoJo, his zero-credit rule also permitted his anti-gun stance, which he would have had to reconsider if he were in a position of chasing down debts for drugs. For the prostitutes, credit was out of the question because it was assumed that there would be a substantial problem with buyer's remorse resulting in credit card chargebacks, which they wouldn't be able to fight because the basis of the transaction was illegal. This was an occasional problem at the dungeon, but because professional BDSM is not illegal in New York City, chargebacks were less common than the brothel expected would be the case for them if they permitted credit cards. In short, getting the cash up front freed up the street dealers and the sexworkers to attend to identity work that would motivate safe and successful transactions.

And so, the type of exchange is a powerful framing device for these deals, as is the illegality. The identity work of the individuals responds to both, type and illegality, and in each case – credit and cash – we see mechanisms in place that permit the individuals to focus on aspects of the interaction that need input and to go onto a sort of identity work autopilot where there's a complete scriptedness to at least one aspect of the work demanded in the immediate interaction. These actors pursued authentic and appropriate identities to present to exchange partners and observers, the achievement of which established a perceived stability and sense of order in their everyday lives.

Order

Order is, of course, something that is experienced, and a number of things contribute to feeling a sense of order in one's life. In the context of the individuals and groups here, things such as trustworthiness and their access to the tools of violence are the most salient and central. But how do people interact in their work and nonwork life such that they can relationally establish the groundwork for a sense of what I refer to under the general heading of 'order'? There is the sense that the more something feels like work the more likely it is to be perceived of as work; feeling like work makes it work. This is as applicable in the criminal context as in the non-criminal context. This is an important aspect to the ways in which these individuals, many of whom would have done what they do on the side; for example, the Dominatrices were mostly 'lifestyle' and their work in the dungeon was in many ways simply a case of them being fortunate to have the opportunity to do what they love as their labor, no different from artists or athletes who are able to earn a living wage from their passions. And in the same way, they experience heavy overlap of what constitutes 'work' and 'nonwork'. In a less extreme way, Dom would run a book on the side if he didn't run a wireroom – he would be the guy running the office football, basketball, and baseball pools. His sense of self is deeply bound up in the identity of 'bookie', in the same way that they dominatrices sense of self is deeply bound up in the role of 'Domina'.

Where we know or are able to learn a lot about others, particularly those things that they prefer we don't know, regardless of whether the social system relies on open identities or practices anonymity, informal forms of regulation such as this incident are broadly effective, and consistent with community norms in this environment. We see similar processes on the Internet, where reputation effects and informal regulation is

more powerful than the formal approach of either the organization or the State. The fact that Deep Web marketplaces for illegal drugs and weapons function effectively by using the same processes as eBay and Amazon speaks volumes about just how mundane illicit markets really are in their day to day operation and in the performance of exchange: The illicit online purchase of methamphetamine or C4 explosives is today performed in a manner that is no different from the online purchase of used books or discount computer parts. Anonymous wasn't about to visit and punish every user they identified, that is not their role. But they did name and shame, and then left the legal punishments – which they found to be appropriate for these crimes – to the State, and this was widely praised as having been the right thing to do.

As this thesis has shown, the keys to personal and professional success for the subjects in these enterprises involved identity work in pursuit of order, finding the balance: controlling and accruing information and knowledge, protecting or curating what was disseminated about oneself, and establishing authenticity in the context of a specific transaction and moment. These things were for the most part accomplished by developing and using skills and interactional techniques, all of which validated status, reputation, and projected and perceived identities. And when done successfully, these interactional efforts provided social and professional guarantees that enabled the sense of calculability and social order desired by criminals and non-criminals alike.

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[1] As Mowf told me, "Every day we just go fucking look for people to rob. Anyone with anything valuable. Like, I'm serious, businessmen, …, somebody walking around like he thinks he's tough, he's got on a big chain, snatch him up, run [*laughs*]. Shit used to get crazy, running down 42nd, yo, just bad, running from cops, sirens going, shit used to be scary, but you felt so good when you got away. You be like, "Yes! Now let me look at all my treasures" [*laughs*]. I always kept moving, I was too scared, I didn't want to be sitting there seeing the cop's feet go by and turn back around. Hell nah. It's like, nah, I'm outta here. I would, like, totally switch up, just melt right into the environment, take everything off, if I had a hat, a scarf, whatever, just stuff everything in my bag and be the chubby kid with the cute smile. I was fucking innocent looking. It was like, yeah, we just robbed this fucking lady like two blocks away. Anyone, delivery guys, anybody. Those [delivery guys] were always good targets: money *and* food!"

[2] See, for example, Ashforth et al., 2000; Bowles and McGinn, 2008; Tracy and Trethewey, 2005

[3] cf. Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999: 413-4, 428

[4] Gambetta 1993; Glenny 2008; Saviano 2006; Paoli 2003; Zaitch 2002

[5] Naylor 2009: 241. See also, Reuter, 2009

[6] Arlacchi 1986, 1993

[7] Arlacchi 1986; Zaitch 2002; Gambetta 1988b; Reuter 1983; von Lampe & Johansen 2003 Leeson & Rogers 2010: 325-7

[8] Arendt 1970; Paoli 2003; Glenny 2008; Morselli 2005

[9] Judge Giovanni Falcone, in interview, excerpted in the 2005 film adaptation (dir. Marco Turco) of Alexander Stille's book *Excellent Cadavers* (1995). Falcone is quoted around the 9:30 mark

[10] Reuter 1983: 137

[11] Paoli 2003; Gambetta 1993; Varese 2006; Titeca 2009; Anderson 1994; Eisner 2009; Collins 2008

[12] "Oprah Interviews Jay-Z - October 2009 Issue of O Magazine - Oprah.com."

[13] "Lil Wayne Tattoos | Pictures & Descriptions." http://thalilwayne.com/info/lil-wayne-tattoos/

[14] After photographs of him as a corrections officer surfaced online, Ross said: "I never tried to hide my past. I put my name inside my CDs. My company has my [Social Security number]. I could've put a company name…I done been up and I done been down and that's what makes me what I am. I never ratted on a nigga. I never prosecuted a nigga. I never locked up a nigga, that's first and foremost. I always felt that me being the nigga that I am, I never owed a nigga an explanation. When I'm making my music and I'm talking about blow, it's because I did it. When I say that I'm rich off cocaine, it's because I did it. Those are the street principals that apply." *Don Diva Magazine*, October 2008.

[15] "Jersey's True-Life Tony Soprano: Meet the DeCavalcante Crime Family" June 2013

[16] For example, the YouTube series *Blue* (2013), National Geographic Channel's *Sex For Sale: American Escort* (2012), and the ITV (UK) primetime series, *Secret Diary of a Call Girl* (2007-11) which was based on the bestselling confessional novels of Brooke

Magnanti (2005, 2006), written under the pseudonym 'Belle de Jour', in which Magnanti details the experience of working as a call girl in London from 2003-2004 to subsidize her expenses while completing her doctorate in forensic science.

[17] For example: The Zumba case, Eliot Spitzer, Presidential security detail in Colombia

[18] 'Airing Rihanna's Video at 11.25am Was Wrong – as Was Glib BDSM Dismissal' *The Guardian*, May 11 2011. See also BRIT Awards, 2011; Billboard Awards, 2011.

[19] Ianni & Ianni 1972; Pistone & Woodley 1987; Shaw 1938, 1939; Thrasher [1927] 1963; Whyte 1955

[20] Paoli 2004; Vigil 2002; Brotherton & Barrios 2004; Tilly 2005; Blok [1974] 1988; Arlacchi 1986; Glenny 2008; Salter 2002; Landa 2002; Klockars 1974; Clinard 1968; Sutherland and Cressey 1974; Maurer 1955; Sutherland 1937

[21] Gambetta 1988, 1993

[22] Gambetta 1993, 1994; Smith & Varese 2001; Zaitch 2002; Paoli 2002

[23] See also: Brocklehurst, 2001; Burke, 1991; Giddens, 1991

[24] See also: Markus & Wurf, 1987; Shamir, 1992

[25] See also, Ibarra and Petriglieri, 2010: 10; Sveningsson and Alvesson 2003

[26] cf., Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999: 428; Saunders, 1981

[27] cf. Roberts, 2005: 696

[28] See Merton 1968: 370; Cooley 1902; Berger & Luckmann 1966; Zimmerman 1971

[29] Mollering 2006: 359

[30] Goffman 1967: 12

[31] Goffman 1967: 113-114

[32] Politeness, as Gumperz (1987) asserts in his foreword to Brown and Levinson (1987) "is basic to the production of social order, and a precondition of human cooperation" (Gumperz 1987: xiii). As Brown and Levinson explain, positive politeness maneuvers minimize potential threats to face by conveying reassurance and mutual respect (1987: 5, 59-60); negative politeness maneuvers communicate deference and deferential respect (1987: 18, 59-60).

[33] For example: Ianni, Francis. 1972; Vigil, James Diego. 1988; Gambetta, Diego. 1993; Zaitch, Damien. 2002; Paoli, Letizia. 2003; Hagedorn, John. 2009; Gambetta, Diego. 2011; Varese, Federico. 2011. For an exceptional ethnography of the non-criminal world of professional BDSM, see Lindemann, Danielle. 2012.

[34] As Polsky (1969: 115-16) instructs, 'There is no getting away from…the study of career criminals au natural in the field, the study of such criminals as they normally go about their work and play, the study of 'uncaught' criminals, and the study of others who in the past have been caught but are not caught at the time you study them. Obviously we can no longer afford the convenient fiction that in studying criminals in their natural habitat, we would discover nothing really important that could not be discovered from criminals behind bars.'

[35] Professional BDSM is legal in New York City, and none of these women were breaking the law by being dominatrices. However, the law has strict boundaries, which declare an act illegal when it involves penetration or the exchange of bodily fluids. It also prohibits erotic manipulation of any sort – a dominatrix cannot masturbate a client. But

this also means that it is illegal for clients who book 'goddess worship' sessions to go down on their mistress, or play with her in other ways that constitute erotic manipulation. Similarly, and more common, it is illegal to conduct any dungeon sessions involving a golden shower, prostate work, strap-on or a dildo. All of these sessions happen; golden showers and strap on sessions are ubiquitous.

[36] See Falcone on the normalcy of the average Mafioso, as quoted in Stille's film *Excellent Cadavers* (2005) and in Cottino (2009).

[37] Beunza and Stark 2002; Ho, 2011

[38] Through-and-through was the term EMTs and Paramedics used to denote a gunshot wound in which there were both entry and exit wounds.

[39] *LOCATE REFERENCE!*

[40] NYC.gov; US Census data.

[41] The 9-Trey Bloods – the original New York City Bloods gang – were founded in Riker's Island in 1993. Ten years later many members had influenced local children – including their own, creating a new cohort of active participants in the drug trade. Although they are mostly consolidated in the New York Tristate area and broader Northeast and Central Atlantic states, 9-Trey now extends throughout the country, with many large and profitable sets in Virginia, the Carolinas and Georgia.

[42] 'We are dealing with a group of people whose distribution of morality, should it be statistically shown along a curve, would prove to be normal. At the two extremes, the really bad guys…and the really good guys… Near the middle of the curve, we find the majority … persons who are neither very bad nor very good' (Cottino, 2009: 7)

[43] Arendt 1970; Paoli 2003; Glenny 2008

[44] This can be thought of in terms of Akerloff work on 'lemons', wherein there exists both a quality heterogeneity and information asymmetry in the retail drug trade. Branding resolves the issue of quality heterogeneity *and* much of the problem of information asymmetry, and causes the market to turn more pivotally on reputation. See Akerloff (1970).

[45] The pills stamped with the car manufacturers logo or a logo of a dove in flight, respectively

[46] Names indicative of lethal potency, such as D.O.A., Poison, and Body Bag, are especially popular.

[47] See, *The New York Times*, May 27 1994 'U.S. Says 17 Ran Murder Gang That Ran Heroin Sales in Bronx'. *The New York Times* April 10 1995 'Accounts of Calculated Cruelty in a Bronx Gang'.

[48] CITE NYC LAW HERE

[49] See, Burke, Monte. "Inside Dope." *Forbes.com*, March 26, 2007. http://www.forbes.com/forbes/2007/0326/078.html. See also USDOJ: US Attorney's Office - Eastern District of New York, 12/7/2005

[50] The Cartoon Network was only busted when a disgruntled former employee sent a letter to law enforcement, in which the entire operation, its organizational structure and business practices were fully documented. Ibid.

[51] If it doesn't kill them, chances are that the levamisole will cause other undesirable effects, including blocking the production of white blood cells, and causing an immune reaction that attacks blood vessels, resulting rotting lesions on the skin of users. For information on this, see Muirhead and Eide (2011).

[52] Upwards of $100/gram

[53] The term "girl" is how prostitutes at this brothel referred to each other, and how others I met also referenced women in similar establishments. Because this is their preferred term, and since this chapter is about their understandings and definitions, I defer to their language without investigating its use further.

[54] These rules did not, however, extend to the owner, Walter. Walter was very rarely present, maybe visiting once every few weeks when he was in town – he was regularly out of town, however, allegedly "recruiting" new girls in Russia and Eastern Europe. The girls and managers at the brothel made jokes about this, and were most likely not far from the truth in their assumption that these recruiting trips were more sex-tourism than real recruitment. When Walter was in town he would let the manager know an hour or so in advance that he was planning on visiting his brothel and to make sure the girls were ready. This meant checking to see which girls had the least amount of hair on their bodies – Walter had an aversion to bodily hair – and making sure that the room on the first floor was kept available, and that at least two girls were available. Some days this involved calling extra girls in to work. The girls did not enjoy Walter's visits. On every occasion he would insist on receiving oral sex from as many girls as were available, and also having intercourse with some of them. Walter refused to use condoms and the girls were rightfully concerned that this, combined with his sex-tourism and his known use of prostitutes across the city, could expose them to disease. Consequently, girls would come up with any excuse to not be put in the room with Walter: oral surgery, wisdom tooth extraction, root canals, strep throat, chlamydia, and HPV outbreaks were all popular excuses.

[55] "fifty bucks for refusing to wear them, twenty for wearing ones that are past it"

[56] This concern for the image that was presented to neighbors, and the role this concern played in the maintenance of order, was not unique to Walter's but was a theme repeated to me by employees of other similar caliber brothels and escort services. At a downtown escort service with an office in a luxury residential building just off Wall Street, a shift manager, Jessie, explained: "… they come in singly, or in twos, never groups. They gotta look like they belong around here, well turned out, not always in suits but the most relaxed we will accept is the sort of business casual that they could wear to meet a client at Goldman without getting funny looks. The doormen here, obviously they know what we do, they see everything, and some of the neighbors probably too. It isn't the best kept secret in the world, but we don't need to rub it in anyone's faces."

[57] This is in contrast to what was expected in the world of the BDSM dungeon, where new dominatrices often struggled to attract business because of a perceived lack of skills.

[58] Friends, family, landlords, etc

[59] After Lauren quit, it emerged that she was more experienced as a prostitute than she had claimed. The rumors of her working in Miami and Los Angeles appeared to be true,

and a few months after she left she was reportedly seen by a client of this brothel in a brothel in San Jose, California.

[60] The Mae West room was so called after the actress, who grew up in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, the between-buildings view in the distance from this room, and who wrote about the sex business and was arrested for indecency in 1927 for her Broadway show *Sex*, in which she played a prostitute.

[61] Dominatrices are more likely to be open about their work because it is not illegal and they do not face the same 'sex worker' stigma faced by prostitutes and escorts and were less likely to face this challenge.

[62] Pachirat (2011)

[63] Pop culture, such as the film *Pretty Woman*, and academic literature have shown the relationship sex workers have with the act of kissing. This is the basis for the categorization 'GFE' or 'Girlfriend Experience' found in classified ads promoting and looking for a prostitute who will kiss her client.

[64] Rovzar, Chris. "Did You Know New York Has a Dungeon Alley?" *New York Magazine*, October 6, 2008.

[65] Similar to the brothel in Chapter 4

[66] Much of Calico's 'mentoring' was grounded in a past career in child psychology. Calico had a psychology Ph.D. and had operated her own private practice before the health of a family member forced her to spend more time at home.

[67] Cf. Chapter 4 where I discuss the various tricks and techniques used on customers to ease the workload on the girls.

[68] The term 'pain' is awkward here. It should go without saying that the acts performed were such that they would create painful sensations, but those on the receiving end of these sensations do not necessarily conceive of them in the same way as other non-masochists might conceive of their own sensation of pain in the midst of being whipped or having electric shocks administered to their genitals. The sensation of what non-masochists refer to as 'pain' is present, but is experienced as pleasure.

[69] Forced bisexuality. This was where a heterosexual client would request that the Mistress bring in a dominant or switchable male slave for the session, who would take a dominant role and 'force' the client to perform homosexual acts.

[70] Rashbaum, William K. "Body Found in Car Is Said to Be Mob Figure's." *The New York Times*, December 1, 2005, http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/01/nyregion/01body.html.

[71] *State of New Jersey Commission of Investigation* 'The Changing Face of Organized Crime in New Jersey: A Status Report' May 2004

[72] Methods of recovery from this type of situation are closely examined by Beunza and Stark 2002

[73] $5,000

[74] Zelizer (2010: 238)

[75] Named after the alleged ringleader, Henry Burroughs. “Police Bust New York-based Sportsbook - 05-06-2004.” Accessed April 23, 2013. http://www.covers.com/articles/articles.aspx?TID=43&theArt=23811.

[76] http://www.nyc.gov/html/doi/downloads/pdf/colomboindictpr.pdf

[77] http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/nation/2005-10-01-ou-blast_x.htm

[78] Magasenu is not the town’s real name. Although I believe I have thoroughly disguised identities in this book, because this is a small town, I have changed the name to protect my subjects.

[79] In Italian: panino con la milza.

[80]For example: http://livesicilia.it/2012/10/19/parla-la-moglie-di-sturiale-enzo-santapaola-comandava_199582/

[81] *Cosca* is the name for Mafia family, pl. *cosche*/*coschi.* The word is used more commonly to describe the tightly wrapped leaves found where the stem and the bud meet in plants such as thistles or artichokes. It is repurposed in reference to Mafia groups in allusion to the tightly bound and exclusionary nature of such groups.

[82] Equally, however, it may be a culturally ingrained tendency to non verbal communication and interpretation, in an island whose local dialects (all seven of them) are the result of a lengthy history of tensions with the Italian mainland, and centuries of colonization and boundary making between north Africa, the southern med and Balkans, and western and northern Europe. Regardless, effective observation depends on how concerned others may be that they are being observed, and is limited to what people are willing to show. In Cosa Nostra and the ‘ndrangheta, everyone assumes they are constantly being observed, and most don’t want to show anything that could get them arrested, so trying to glean knowledge from observation alone becomes more complicated. There is also the possibility that the observed party is practicing to deceive, in the knowledge that he is being observed.

[83] The individual concern and group concern is identical – redundancy can be equally applicable on each level, to the group / family, or to the group / enterprise, as both individuals and groups can be pushed out or set up for arrest. In addition, groups can be killed en masse, such as happened in the case of the pentiti Tomasso Buscetta

[84] Massimo Ciancimino, the son of former Palermo Mayor Vito Ciancimino, alleges that "jailed Italian mafia boss Bernardo Provenzano betrayed the 'boss of bosses' Salvatore 'Toto' Riina by revealing his hiding place to police in 1993" … "It was Provenzano who indicated the exact area where Toto Riina was then arrested," Ciancimino said. According to a reconstruction by investigators, this fact would link Provenzano to the treaty that Ciancimino claims that the Italian state made with the Sicilian mafia or Cosa Nostra after the brutal murders of the antimafia judges Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino in Sicily in 1992. See, Adnkronos Nov 5, 2009: ‘Italy: Top Mafia Fugitive ‘Betrayed’ by Boss’ http://www1.adnkronos.com/AKI/English/Security/?id=3.0.3955391781

[85] REF

[86] Stille, 1996

[87] This information can be surreptitiously observed, such as by watching the goings on in a town over time, or can be based on public relations performances such as that of the tarantella ritual in the Calabrian town of San Luca. Similarly, religious festivals are often used as a backdrop that some claim as ancient ritual, but others assert uses religion merely to stake such a claim. They argue that the real purpose of the religious ceremony or festival as backdrop is nothing to do with religion but is a way of flexing the group's muscles in a very public arena, asserting power and territorial claims, without turning to violence in order to achieve this. One such example is the festival of the Virgin Mary in San Luca. This region is the center of 'ndrangheta territory for the San Luca 'ndrine. Annually in September, this three day feast, which attracts pilgrims from all continents, huge bus tours trek to this tiny mountain village in the most southern point of Italy to celebrate the virgin Mary. On the third day, the tiny, 16th C town erupts in street parties, at which the Tarantella is danced. The first tarantella, danced in the center of the celebrations, the first person in the center of the circle was traditionally the 'ndrangheta boss of bosses until the following year. For reference to the 'ndrangheta association of this ritual, see 'Vendetta on the Rhine: A Mafia Wake-Up Call', Spiegel Online International, August 20, 2007. http://archive.today/7nnt6

[88] Extended out we can also consider what everyone knows about those they don't know in person, what you know about your friends' friends for example, who do not know you know anything at all, but who may suspect you have interest in such knowledge. This is a knowledge that is largely observational, and especially so in a social group where gossip is rampant. For more on this, see: Coles, 2001; Chattoe & Hamill 2005.

[89] Essentially, asking for their blessing at the same time as thanking them for their kindness

[90] 'Basta' translates as 'enough'

[91] Most market time was spent in the cities of Trapani, Marsala, Catania, and Palermo

[92] Pizzu is a monthly private tax levied on almost every business by the prevailing mafia family in most Sicilian towns and cities. It has been described by Gambetta (1993) as an extortion that masquerades as protection when those people pay to protect themselves against the same ones who are collecting the pizzu. It is rare that businesses turn down demands to pay the pizzu, businesses such as supermarket chains pay tens of thousands Euros monthly. One of the ways in which the anti-mafia movement has gained traction in the last 15 years is through the anti-pizzu movement that however has barely moved out of the major cities.

[93] For example, Provenzano was able to travel to Marseilles for prostate surgery while on Interpol's most wanted list; years hiding in farmhouse just outside Corleone. Johnston, Bruce. 'Mafia Boss Flees Sicily to Have Prostate Surgery in France - Telegraph." 27 February 2005.
http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/italy/1484524/Mafia-boss-flees-Sicily-to-have-prostate-surgery-in-France.html

[94] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salvatore_Cuffaro

[95] 'Mattanza', *trans.* 'slaughter'

[96] The three islands of the Egadis are Favignana, Levanzo, and Marettimo.

[97] The last mattanza was held on Favignana in 2007, but it had been several years since it was a large annual event.

[98] For analysis on the end of the cartel era see, for example, McDermott 2013. '20 Years After Pablo: The Evolution of Colombia's Drug Trade.' http://www.insightcrime.org/news-analysis/20-years-after-pablo-the-evolution-of-colombias-drug-trade

[99] For a good basic summary of what the Deep Web is, see Paganini 2012

[100] Mead, 2014

[101] Wikipedia provides a good definition and longer explanation of doxxing here: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doxing

[102] OPDARKNET. '#OpDarknet Major Release & Timeline' Oct 18, 2011. Archived on Pastebin at http://pastebin.com/T1LHnzEW

[103] Gallagher, 2011.

[104] OPDARKNET. '#OpDarknet Major Release & Timeline' Oct 18, 2011. Archived on Pastebin at http://pastebin.com/T1LHnzEW

[105] Neal, 2013