The Relationship Between Female Escort Advertised Fees and Violence/Legal Issues
Albert J. Schrimp & James D. Griffith
Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania

Introduction
Prostitution, defined as the exchange of money for sexual acts, has been described as one of societies oldest professions (Overall, 1994). Most of the literature on prostitution has been conducted in countries where these amorous activities are legal, such as Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia. In the United States, prostitution is only legal in 10 rural counties in Nevada. Thus, this population of individuals is not commonly studied in the United States due to the lack of accessibility to these sex workers.

Throughout the literature, there are two distinct categories of sex workers which include street prostitutes and escorts. Street prostitutes offer their services out in the open (i.e. on the street) and are thought to make-up 10 to 20 percent of those who sell sex in the United States (Lucas, 2005; Overall, 1994). The current research focuses on the second and larger group of sex workers known as escorts. Escorts often offer their services through online websites. Online escorts are often thought to be of higher class and more selective with their clientele than street prostitutes, and with the advent of the internet, the solicitation of these escort services has become more prevalent than street prostitutes (Castle & Lee, 2008; Jeffreys, 2010).

On websites, escorts advertise themselves by posting nude and semi-nude pictures of themselves, their physical attributes, descriptions of the services they offer, and the cost of their services. Online escorts are more likely than street prostitutes to offer the “Girl Friend Experience”, which entails unrushed encounters and escort-type services (e.g. dinner, date, conversation) rather than offering services such as anal sex, sadism and masochism, bondage and discipline, and other fetish activities. To avoid legal implications, many escorts portray their services as selling time or companionship rather than sex.

The amount escorts charge for their services can be related to a variety of factors including the risks associated with their occupation. In addition to pressures from local law enforcement, there is also the possibility of a dangerous situation that could be harmful to the escort. Many women are cautious of putting themselves into violent situations, but this threat is even more salient for those women who are involved in sex work. Sex workers fear violence from pimps and police, but a major source of violence comes from the clients of sex workers (Thukral et al., 2005). Sex workers have reported using many means to keep themselves safe, and most active sex workers (92%) implement some form of safety precaution in the event of a violent situation (Thukral, Ditmore, & Murphy, 2005). The present study sought to examine the relationship between fees charged for sexual services by female escorts and legal and violence pressures.

Method
All advertisements on an international escort website (only females advertising) was downloaded and sorted by country and all those from the United States were extracted. A total of 1,675 advertisements were examined and they were further coded by the state. Other relevant data included two different fees (in-call and out-call) which were standardized to the rate for one hour
in USD. Legal disclaimers and screening was operationalized and subsequently coded as present or not in the advertisement. In addition, for each state the the 10-year arrest rates for prostitution, violent crimes, rapes and sexual offenses was obtained along with each state’s maximum fine/jail time for prostitution arrests. The state arrest/offense data was matched to each advertisement by the state in which they advertised.

**Results**

The results found that in-call fees were positively associated with arrest rates and prison sentences, but negatively correlated with the level of violence. Out-call fees were positively correlated with arrest rates, prison sentences, and screening techniques. Linear regressions analyses found links between arrest rates and fines on in-call prices, and arrest rates and screening on outcall prices.

**Discussion**

The results showed several interesting patterns. As expected, higher fees were associated with states with higher arrest rates and longer prison sentences for prostitution. The explanation for this is straightforward as higher risk is associated with higher fees. In addition, the use of screening was associated with higher fees with is also in line with a similar explanation. One unexpected finding was that higher levels of violence was associated with lower advertised fees for sexual services. This finding was counterintuitive and further exploration of that is warranted. This study offers an examination of an ageless profession from the context of risk factors associated with fees charged of engaging in this mostly illegal activity in the United States.