



Health Assessment of San Francisco Exotic Dancers

Naomi Akers MPH, Internship Summer 2006 Dept. of Health Education

Intro: In the last 2 years, the San Francisco Commission on the Status of Women (COSW) has been hearing testimony from former and current dancers about the working conditions in strip clubs. There has been a tremendous amount of disagreement between former and current dancers about the working conditions of strip clubs. While the majority of current dancers state conditions in the strip clubs are fine, some former dancers say that risk for sexual assault, HIV/STI transmission, illegal stage fees imposed by strip clubs and coerced prostitution are primary health concerns for dancers.

Purpose: Assess what aspects of dancers working conditions do they perceive to be health risks and health benefits.

Key questions:

1. What are dancers priority health concerns?
2. Which labor conditions affect those health concerns?
3. Which groups and agencies do dancers think act in their best interest?

Recruitment: convenience and snowball sampling. Recruitment activities were conducted at 16 strip clubs in San Francisco. **Inclusion criteria:** woman identified, having worked in the last three years. Thirteen (13) dancers were eligible and participated in the assessment. **Survey Instrument:** structured interview, w/3 semi-structured questions & 1 qualitative question. **Incentives:** "Burt's Bees Kits" (\$10). **Limitations:** Recruitment limited to certain hours/days; some clubs did not allow access to the dancers dressing rooms to pass out flyers or conduct interviews, many dancers missed. Sample size small, not randomly recruited or selected. Findings are not generalizable.

Results: Majority of dancers did not think risk of HIV/STI transmission, fear of sexual assault or private booths are a work related health risk. Nearly 50% reported stage fees are or might be a work related health risks. Lack of healthcare, the shoes that dancers wear, standing on their feet all day, the number of shifts dancers work a week, not making enough money, cleanliness & location of the club, customer harassment, and being treated badly by other people because of what they do were reported as work related health risk by the majority of sample.

Aspects of work that dancers think are risks to their health or well-being N=13	Yes	No	Maybe or Sometimes
Second hand cigarette smoke	5	1	6
Customer drug or alcohol use	3	6	3
Not enough support from other dancers	4	5	3
Not enough support from management	2	8	3
Customer Abuse/Assault	3	6	3
Customer Harassment	9	2	2
Not enough security or protection from customers	2	7	4
Abuse from other staff	2	9	1
Harassment from other staff	2	10	1
The number of hours that you work a night	5	7	1
The number of days a week that you work	7	5	1
The money that you make, not enough	8	4	
The money that you make, too much		12	1
The shoes that you have to wear	9	3	1
Standing on your feet	8	2	3
Location of club	7	4	2
People treating you badly because of what you do	7	2	4
Afraid of catching HIV/STIs	2	9	1
Limited or restricted access to condoms	1	8	
Afraid of sexual assault	3	7	3
Personal drug or alcohol use	4	7	1
Private booths/rooms	1	9	3
Being an independent contractor	4	4	2
Being an employee/not an independent contractor		6	
Stage fee or fines	6	5	
Cleanliness/sanitation of club	7	3	3
Lack of Healthcare	11	1	
Being robbed by clients, other dancers or others	6	4	2

"If prostitution were decriminalized I feel I would be in a safer condition to make money. Guys ask me to meet them outside of the club and I could say no and not make money. I haven't said yes so far cause if anything bad happened I would feel like it was my fault and I wouldn't be able to talk about it with anyone." (Dancer #13).

"I personally feel like there is no way to organize, women don't have any say, we're so replaceable. The things women have done to organize led to worse circumstance, like stage fees. It's a job to stick to your self and realize someone else is calling all the shots. Which is really ironic cause if it were not for the women these doors wouldn't open" (Dancer #2).

What they did not like:

"I don't like that I'm competing with prostitution in the club. I want very limited contact and other people will give full service for little money" (Dancer #7).

What they did like:

"Certain amount of independence in that it's easy to get a job anywhere. Sometimes it was fun and sometimes I would make money. The workout, good exercise" (Dancer #1).

Aspects of the work that dancers like

N=13	Yes	No	Other Dancers	Yes	No
Flexible Hours	13		Other Dancers	10	3
Fun	10	3	Good exercise	11	2
Part of a community	7	6	Like Dancing/performing	11	2
Best employment options	4	9	Independent Contractor*	8	2
Make good money	12	1	Private Booths/Rooms	7	6
Helping people	6	7	Wage Employee*	4	
Financial Freedom	12	1	Easy to get employment	9	4
Personally rewarding	10	3	Lap dancing	4	8
Challenging	7	6	Poll dancing	10	3
Being my own boss	11	2	Stage shows	9	4
Customers	5	8	Fantasy aspect	9	4
My manager	7	6	Other		

1. Kay, K. (1999). Naked but Uneven: Sex and Labor Conflict in San Francisco's Adult Entertainment Theatres. *Sexuality and Culture*, 3(1), 39-67.

2. Steinberg, D. (2004, September 8-14). *Lap Victory*. *SF Weekly*, pp. 19, 23-27.

3. Exotic Dancers Alliance, 1997, 1998a, 1998b, *Newsletter*, #9, #8, & #10.

4. Garcia, K. (2006, June 27). Will San Francisco pull back the veil on its strip clubs? *The San Francisco Examiner*, p. 5.

5. Entertainment Commission. (2006). Commission Meeting Minutes, August 4, 2006. <http://www.sfdph.org/dnrc/entertainment/docs/060804.pdf>

Top 3 health needs or services N=13

