Examining the Geographies of Asian Immigrant Female Sex Work in Los Angeles and New York City

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• All errors and omissions remain our responsibility
Sex work in Los Angeles and New York City has increasingly moved from the streets into indoor venues, such as massage parlors, hotels and bars, and private residences – because of:

- Heightened enforcement of anti-prostitution ordinances
  - made highly visible sex work more difficult
- The internet
  - made finding sex workers and the venues in which they work easier
Background

• Female sex workers are at high risk for sexually transmitted infections, such as HIV, and vulnerable to violence and exploitation:
  • coercion from clients, financial incentives and condom use policies at venues.

• A substantial portion of female sex workers are Asian immigrants:
  • paying off migration debts
  • ensuring subsistence when lacking other employment alternatives
Research Questions

• What role do Asian immigrant massage parlors play in cities’ informal economies?
• How does massage parlor work facilitate or impede Asian immigrant women’s economic empowerment?
• To what degree are the women at high risk for HIV, other STDs and other health problems?
Research Questions

• How does the regulatory environment affect patterns of massage parlor establishment and industry practices?
• How can an understanding of spatial patterns of massage parlor establishment and network ties between massage parlors inform the development of systems-level HIV education and risk-reduction interventions?
Methods

• Identified popular websites for rating massage parlors and massage parlor workers

• Selected one site for preliminary analysis (rubmaps.com)

• Extracted data concerning massage parlor workers and venues:
  – Limited data collection to include massage parlors that had user reviews within a one year period: 8/11/12 to 8/11/13
  – Used the following filters to search for venues: Chinese, Korean, Asian
  – Site organized its data by a list of regions and cities within US: data were extracted from all regions/cities identified within LA County and the 5 boroughs of NYC
**Brooklyn erotic massage parlors with reviews found 124**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Payment</th>
<th>Review Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Shi Zhou Bodywork</td>
<td>718-859-1689</td>
<td>$50/HR</td>
<td>Chinese massage</td>
<td>Visa, Other</td>
<td>Newest Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 Above Spa</td>
<td>718-676-7171</td>
<td>$60/HR</td>
<td>Korean massage</td>
<td>Cash Only</td>
<td>4 days ago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Best Asian Massage</td>
<td>917-775-1023 &amp; 347-206-2937</td>
<td>$55/HR</td>
<td>Asian massage</td>
<td>Cash Only</td>
<td>1 week ago</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Massage Parlors**

- **1 Above Spa**
  - Location: Brooklyn, NY, 11230
  - Phone: 1891 Coney Island Ave
  - Reviews: 20
  - Price: $60/HR
  - Type: Korean massage
  - Payment: Cash Only
  - Review Date: 4 days ago

- **Best Asian Massage**
  - Location: Brooklyn, NY, 11214
  - Phone: 8614 18th Ave
  - Reviews: 15
  - Price: $55/HR
  - Type: Asian massage
  - Payment: Cash Only
  - Review Date: 1 week ago

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**Brooklyn Erotic Massage Near Brooklyn**

- **Manhattan**
  - Massage Parlors: 34
- **New York City**
  - Massage Parlors: 345
- **Middle Village**
  - Massage Parlors: 3
- **Sunnyside**
  - Massage Parlors: 3
- **Maspeth**
  - Massage Parlors: 2
- **Ridgewood**
  - Massage Parlors: 7
- **Long Island City**
  - Massage Parlors: 12
- **Woodside**
  - Massage Parlors: 3
- **Staten Island**
  - Massage Parlors: 15
- **Jackson Heights**
  - Massage Parlors: 2
Oasis Spa in Brooklyn, New York

18 reviews

Masseuse Style:
Asian

Hours of Operation:
10am - 1am

Cards Accepted:
Cash Only

Table Shower: Yes
Sauna: No
Jacuzzi: No
Semi-Truck Parking: No
60 min: $50

Address:
286 Flatbush Ave
Brooklyn, New York 11201

Phone Number:
718-666-6117

Distance to this massage parlor center: 16 miles

Other locations

Brooklyn massage parlors:
Jannas Plays
Blue Sky Spa
Crystal Clear Spa
Heaven Town
Moonlight Spa
Chinese Massage
Cherry Spa
Beauty Connection Day Spa
Spa 76
Sunshine Hot Stone Massage
City Style
Spa 74
Royal Day Spa
Kammie Spa 86
Ja Mei Bodywork
Russian Style Massage
Health Spa
Lucky Korean Bodywork
Sunny Jade
Rosa Spa

All Brooklyn massage parlors -Select-
**Sweaterpuppies**

**MP Review**
- **Visit Date**: March 2014
- **Rating**: 3 stars
- **Private Location**: X
- **Time of visit**: Afternoon
- **Recommend**: Yes
- **Parlor type**: Store Front
- **Paid to House**: $60

**Massage Parlor Details:**
It's clean inside, girls seems to be nice.

**Provider's name: Yumi**

**Provider Details:**
- **Eye color**: Brown
- **Build**: Thin
- **Hair color**: Black
- **Rate Ass**: Nice & Round
- **Ethnicity**: Asian
- **Hair Length**: Shoulder Length
- **Kitty**: ?
- **Age**: 36-40
- **Breast Size**: B
- **Tattoos**: X
- **Height**: 5'0"-5'5"
- **Implants**: X

**Services:**
- **Service Rating**: 3 stars
- **Finger The Pussy**: X
- **FS**: X
- **Ass-Play?**: √
- **Kissing**: X
- **Breast-Play?**: X
- **Handjob**: √
- **Tipping Issue?**: X
- **Blowjob**: X
- **Massage Rating**: 5 stars
- **Extra Tip**: $40

**More Details:**
From the outside this place looks chatty, but the inside is an oasis. Yumi was the one available for me. There was another girl there, Yumi said her name was Lisa. The girls here are taught well by the mamasan. She really tried to make me feel at ease, didn't have any negative sales approch and the customer service is top notch. All done with a pretty good massage. They did get something right.
Methods - Limitations

• While the site provided a unique opportunity to identify and map the locations of venue-based sex work, there are several limitations:
  – All data are posted by website members and are not confirmed in terms of actual female sex worker characteristics
  – Female sex workers identified on the sites almost always use fictitious names, so it is unclear whether ratings of workers with different names are actually different women
Methods

- Sample for mapping
  - Los Angeles (LA) County:
    - 397 Chinese, Korean or Asian massage parlor venues (441 identified)
    - 1297 female Asian workers (Chinese, Korean, or Asian)
  - New York City (NYC):
    - 413 massage parlor venues (475 identified)
    - 1238 female Asian workers (Chinese, Korean, or Asian)

- Chinese, Korean and Asian massage parlor venues made up:
  - 84% of venues in LA County
  - 90% of venues in NYC

- Maps created using ArcGIS software
LA County: venue locations

Legend
- MASSAGE PARLORS - LAC

LAC Census 2010
ASIAN_PCT
- 0.000000 - 7.300000
- 7.300001 - 17.100000
- 17.100001 - 31.900000
- 31.900001 - 52.700000
- 52.700001 - 87.900000
LA County: sex workers by venue
NYC: venue locations
NYC: sex workers by venue
NYC: sex workers by venue
Next Steps

• Interviews with 60 women in LA and 60 women in NYC

• Interviews will cover:
  • initiation into sex work
  • massage parlor practices
  • experiences with law enforcement
  • health risks
Next Steps

- Interviews with government officials and sex worker advocacy and support organizations
- Development of systems-level HIV prevention strategies that take advantage of spatial clustering of massage parlors and network ties between them
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