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Sex Work and the State in Contemporary China

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"Urban men take advantage of us both emotionally and physically" opined Min in describing her experience as a rural migrant to Dalian, a northeastern Chinese city. Like ever increasing numbers of other young Chinese women, Min moved to Dalian seeking unskilled work and found labor conditions that posed uniquely gendered risks; in Min's case, these resulted in her being raped by one of her customers when she worked as a waitress. "We cannot be too innocent [*tai chunjie*] or devoted" Min continued, "otherwise, we will be tricked, used, and abandoned. Only women who are not pure can protect themselves." Min's colleague, Guang, echoed her experiences as she described being raped three times by her male employer while working as a live-in maid for a Dalian family. Disgusted with such abusive working conditions and in search of a labor environment that could provide them with the potential for more economic security, Min and Guang eventually entered sex work at one of Dalian's burgeoning karaoke bars, many of which also function as brothels. In this environment, they could at least control and benefit from sexual encounters.

"We men are just performing here because we all know hostesses only recognize money, not us," businessman Hu explained to me over the din of music at one such karaoke bar in Dalian, "However, there are also cases where men fall in love with them and are eventually cheated by them." Just as karaoke bar hostesses Min and Guang describe their survival strategies in a system that clearly denigrates their rural origins, gender, and lack of formal education, men such as Hu that patronize their establishments clearly demonstrate an understanding of the economic motives underlying hostesses' behavior. Such seemingly discordant realities among individuals who spend a considerable amount of time together raise a series of questions about a phenomenon that has become increasingly popular in Dalian and, in turn, a focus of intensified prohibitionist activity on the part of the Chinese state.

This chapter discusses how sex workers have been adversely affected by China's abolitionist policy, which conflates all sex work with forced prostitution and results in anti-trafficking campaigns that do little to improve the living conditions of migrant women workers like Min and Guang. The argument developed in this paper is based on more than twenty months of fieldwork between 1999 and 2002 in Dalian, where my research sample included approximately two hundred bar hostesses in ten karaoke bars. During my research I worked with and became intensely involved in the lives of karaoke bar hostesses and interacted with patrons such as Hu, in order to ascertain how these individuals make sense of relationships between men and women and, indeed, between individual bodies and the state, in the ever accelerating marketization and globalization of Dalian's economy. In this chapter I examine the factors that facilitated the growth of Dalian's karaoke bar industry and the political sentiments that inform China's anti-trafficking campaigns. Such campaigns have a significant impact on hostesses in karaoke bars by depicting them alternately as victims or deviants when, in reality, the vast majority of such women resemble Min and Guang in having chosen what they perceive as the best option for social mobility from a limited menu of life choices.

The Social Meaning of Dalian's Karaoke Bar Industry

The development of karaoke bars in Dalian closely mirrors the post-1978 reforms and rapid economic growth that have made China the world's third-largest economy, and these establishments are themselves inseparable from such socioeconomic shifts. In contemporary Dalian, entrepreneurs and government officials routinely use the services and facilities offered by karaoke bars to build business networks and negotiate contracts. Anthropologists Helen Siu (1993, 1989) and Gan Wang (1999) make explicit connections between the relatively nascent cultural practices found at karaoke bars and Chinese economic reform by arguing that such establishments provide a level of civic organization that is otherwise lacking in post-Mao China. Entrepreneurs and government officials alike routinely partake of the "coordinated sequence" (*yitiaolong fuwu*) typically featured in karaoke bars and consisting of luxurious banquets, singing, and sauna massage. These institutions are not confined to the Dalian elite, however, as blue-collar urban and migrant male workers with limited wages also patronize karaoke bars, albeit low-tier ones that do not feature the same array of services.

"Singing-and-dancing" ballrooms (*gewu ting*) reemerged with the initiation of Chinese economic reforms in the late 1970s after being banned

for nearly thirty years. Although officially tolerated, these businesses came under severe supervision both nationally and locally, and sociologist James Farrer (2000) documents how Shanghai, a city famous for its dance halls, saw the first reappearance of Western-style ballrooms in 1979. Farrer (2000) notes that even in the relatively open environment of Shanghai, dance parties were organized by labor unions and youth leagues, and had to be endorsed by the work unit's letter of introduction.[1] The events were closely supervised by monitors whose job it was to keep men and women from dancing "too close together" (Farrer 2000:230).

In 1984 the first dance hall appeared in Dalian, featuring a band of six singers and a capacity of three hundred people.[2] It was not until 1988 that the first karaoke bar, named "Tokyo 898," was opened. Financed by a Japanese businessman and run as a Sino-Japanese joint venture, the bar's karaoke equipment was said to be imported, brand new, from Japan, which was an extravagance almost unheard of at that time in China's economic development. Following the success of "Tokyo 898," new karaoke bars mushroomed throughout the city, and quickly became the most fashionable male recreational and commercial activity. They are closely associated with Western audio and video technology, splendid exterior and interior furnishings, neon lights, high prices, and beautiful hostesses. They suit the desires of the more economically privileged to experience a "modern" form of consumption, display their vocal talents, and display power and wealth. Patronizing luxurious karaoke bars became a way of life, a modern and prestigious symbol, often only afforded by such wealthy clients as foreign travelers and sailors, government officials, and the local nouveaux riche, though, as noted, blue-collar urban men and migrant workers occasionally visit low-tier karaoke bars to imitate this lifestyle.

Through a former classmate, Xie, I was able to experience a karaoke bar scene from a patron's point of view.[3] A high-level official in Dalian, Xie frequented karaoke bars with his three friends Hu, Ren, and Jin, who had helped him to secure his official position and wealth. Hu and Ren were owners of private enterprises, and Jin was the head of a police bureau in the central district of Dalian with more than one thousand karaoke bars, hotels, restaurants, sauna salons, and nightclubs under his jurisdiction. Xie emphasized to me the importance and inherent danger of these connections, as no one can rise to power without the help of one's friends, and no one can maintain that power if one of those friends fails. Each "friend" contributes and receives in what can develop, if successfully cultivated, into a long-term exchange relationship. Each of the friends had resources to offer the others: Xie, his official

power; Hu and Ren, their economic power; and Jin, his legal and administrative power. To strengthen their ties, they often gathered in restaurants, karaoke bars, and sauna salons. The bill was always taken care of by the entrepreneurs Hu and Ren. It is this kind of alliance that becomes solidified in clients' consumption of hostesses' services in karaoke bars,[4] although karaoke bars, since their emergence, have been consistently under attack by the Chinese anti-trafficking campaigns.

The Impact of Chinese Anti-Trafficking Campaigns

On Karaoke Bars

Beginning in 1989, with the appearance of karaoke bars, the Chinese government has launched periodic nationwide antiprostitution campaigns to ensure "security and state control."[5] The campaigns are aimed at "cultural purification" and "spiritual civilization." The "erotic company" of hostesses, pornographic TV shows, seductive performances, and prostitution within karaoke bars are condemned as "cultural trash" that "destabilizes state rule and the socialist system." Restrictions stop short of an outright ban, intending, instead, to bring karaoke bars into line with state-defined socialist culture.

China's abolitionist stance deems prostitution (or third-party involvement in it) an illegal form of violence against women. Chinese antiprostitution legislation is predicated upon the belief that no woman would choose prostitution voluntarily and that prostitution strips a woman of her "natural" and legal rights. This legislation includes the First Criminal Law in 1979, the 1987 Regulations, the 1984 Criminal Law, the 1991 Decision on Strictly Forbidding the Selling and Buying of Sex, the 1991 Decision on the Severe Punishment of Criminals Who Abduct and Traffic in or Kidnap Women and Children, the 1992 Law on Protecting the Rights and Interests of Women (the Women's Law), the Revised Criminal Law of 1997, and the 1999 Entertainment Regulations.[6] Because the government holds the belief that women would not choose a profession that violates their own human rights, the purpose of these laws is to prohibit a third party from organizing prostitution, engaging in illicit relations with a prostitute, and trafficking women into prostitution.

The "erotic service" (*seqing peishi*) offered in karaoke bars is deemed counter to China's "socialist spiritual civilization."[7] The exchange of sexual services for money is an "ugly social phenomenon" associated with capitalism and should be wiped out to maintain a healthy socialist cultural environment and "civilized consumption." The main responsibility for administering

state policy regarding karaoke bars is divided between the Bureau of Culture (BC) and the Public Security Bureau (PSB). These two agencies, respectively, represent the government's dual strategy of soft and hard administrative measures. The BC is responsible for ensuring that karaoke bars are managed according to socialist standards of civility and morality through a variety of administrative and regulatory measures. For instance, the BC maintains detailed records of bars' business location, name, proprietor, exterior and interior design, audio and video machines, and other information. Strict approval procedures were introduced to reduce the number of karaoke bars. In addition, the BC organized monthly classes on state policy and law that bar owners are required to attend. Those achieving high test scores are awarded a plaque denoting the establishment a "Civilized Karaoke Bar" that can be displayed inside their bars. The BC also mandated that karaoke bars should display "Chinese" and socialist characteristics, including, for example, mainland Mandarin music, "healthy and inspiring" revolutionary songs, Chinese-style wallpaper, Chinese paintings, Chinese-style bar names, and Chinese food and snacks. Lurking beneath these regulations is a palpable sense of crisis induced by the idea that Western influences have begun to erode Chinese culture. As a BC official explained to me:

> The imported Western culture in China is like an aircraft carrier—high quality, durable, and powerful. Chinese culture, however, resembles a small sampan, only able to float a hundred miles. We need to develop a singing-and-dancing business with Chinese characteristics to attack the foreign cultural market in China.

The PSB acts as an "Iron Great Wall" (*gangtie changcheng*), providing the muscle behind state policy. The main vehicle for PSB intervention is the antipornography campaign (*saohuang dafei*), itself a part of a wider comprehensive attack on social deviance known as "crackdowns" (*yanda;* literally, to strike severely). These campaigns run for three-month spurts and are repeated three times a year, strategically centering on important holidays such as National Day and Army Day as well as other events. Crackdowns target a potpourri of social ills, ranging from unlicensed video-game arcades (said to corrupt the minds of the youth) to undocumented rural migrants (said to disrupt urban management).

The PSB employs a complex system of raids to attack karaoke bars, which it describes, notably, as "guerrilla warfare" (*da youji*) in reference to the heroic efforts of the communist revolutionaries against the Japanese invaders

and nationalists. There are several types of raids, including regular raids and shock raids, timed raids and random raids, systematic raids and block raids, daytime raids and night raids. PSB units and individuals that perform well, determined by the number of hostesses arrested and the amount of fines levied, receive high honors and cash bonuses from their municipal government.

Local Officials and Bar Owners

The complex interactions between hostesses and their patrons and state agents reflect a gap between the "theory" of policy and the "practice" of enforcement. State policy is distorted, even derailed, by the self-seeking behavior of local officials, particularly because karaoke bars are an important source of extralegal income. As one PSB official candidly remarked, "Karaoke bars and hostesses are our sources of livelihood. We basically cannot live without them." Because these officials have the arbitrary power to arrest and fine the hostesses, the latter are extremely apprehensive when they are chosen by an official, as they know that they must obey the his demands.

Officials extract economic benefits from karaoke bars through bribes and fines, but local officials' exploitation of hostesses is not limited to economic benefits. PSB officials maintain a group of "spy hostesses" (*xiaojie jianxi*) who report on the conditions of the bar and also act as these officials' personal harem. In exchange for their services, hostesses gain immunity from police sanctions. Hostesses, in turn, allow corrupt officials to get rich, contribute to regional economic development, and advance officials' political careers. Further, while local officials manipulate state policy to exploit bar owners and hostesses for their personal gain, bar owners also improvise creative maneuvers to counter local officials.

According to one city official, 1995 marked a change in relations between hostesses and bar owners from the contract system to an exploitative system. Before the police crackdown in 1995, hostesses were hired by the hundreds on contracts with bar bosses. According to the contract, hostesses received fees from the customers for their services. Bar owners also awarded them a percentage of the customers' bills. To explain the change that came about in 1995, we must go back to the early 1980s.

With the rise in popularity of karaoke bars in Dalian, a red light district sprang up in the center of the Zhongshan district. At some time around the end of the 1980s and in the early 1990s, a number of karaoke bars were opened on Stalin Road. By all indications, the scope of business was considerable. Every night hostesses, by the hundreds, scoured the city's seaport for

tourists and brought them back to the bars to engage them in sexual activities. During this period both bars and hostesses prospered.

One morning in 1994, a foreigner was seen running out of the area in only his underwear.[8] A group of Chinese men followed him, shouting curses and flourishing clubs. It was said that the foreigner could not afford the tab for the previous night's sexual encounter. Managing to escape with his life, the foreigner subsequently brought charges against the bar's proprietor for exploiting him. The matter quickly escalated into an international conflict between the two affected embassies. The incident even made front-page headlines in the *Hong Kong Gazette* (*Ta Kung Pao*) in an article titled, "Dalian Red Light District on Stalin Road." Fearing that the scandal would taint the image of the socialist regime, the CCP Central Committee immediately ordered that the area be cleaned up. Having to overcome tremendous difficulties in breaking up patron-client ties between local officials and bar owners, the police finally cracked down in 1995.[9] To erase public memory of the incident, the name of the street was changed from Stalin Road to People's Road.

Ever since this extreme police crackdown disrupted the system that had been in place, bar hostesses and owners have been under the strict control of local government. Bar owners no longer view themselves as dependent on the hostesses; instead, they see themselves as the hostesses' saviors because they provide them secure housing and jobs. Since 1995, owners require hostesses to hand over 10 percent of their fees.

In the particular upscale karaoke bar where I conducted my research during the antiprostitution campaign, the bar owner extracted additional profits from the hostesses by charging more for their uniforms than they were actually worth. He also seized this chance to record every hostesses' biological data.[10] He asked the hostesses to give him their duplicate hometown IDs and their Dalian temporary residence cards (TRCs), and urged those who had not yet purchased or renewed their TRC to do so quickly. He claimed that he would compile a book with a record of their pictures, names, and photocopied TRCs, through which hostesses would be transformed into formal employees working as waitresses. He also effectively controlled their mobility and behavior. Prior to the crackdown, hostesses were brought to any karaoke room for selection, but afterward they were grouped in tens and assigned to different sections of the bar, with ten karaoke rooms in each section. Instead of standing together in the entrance hall, they now gathered at their designated section, waiting to be chosen. Every hostess was required to wear the uniform dress bearing a name card, in a color that matched her particular section. Hostesses had to report to the directors (the madams) if they were

going outside the bar (*chutai*: to offer sexual services in hotels) with clients. They were ordered to arrive at the bar at precisely 7:30 pm every evening and not to leave until 12 am unless they went out with clients. Hostesses arriving late or leaving early were fined 600 yuan (U.S.$75). If they wanted a leave of absence or a night off, the director had to give his permission, which, as a matter of principle, was never granted. Bar owners also demanded that hostesses be trained and disciplined in how they walked, spoke, and sang. All these new demands, controls, and restrictions on hostesses emerged at this moment of conflict between bar owners and officials. Bar owners ensured the prosperity of their businesses by manipulating hostesses and maneuvering ways around state policy.

Hostesses and Their Aspirations

Local implementation of the state's antiprostitution policy has failed to reach the proposed objective of eliminating prostitution and has only aggravated hostesses' working conditions. Police raids of karaoke bars make hostesses legally and socially vulnerable. Were clients to disclose the women's sexual services to the police, the women would be subject to humiliation, arrest, fines, and incarceration. Because of this potentially horrific outcome, hostesses do not disclose their true identity, which then makes it easier for men to be violent toward them or even commit murder. It was reported that in Shenyang alone more than one hundred hostesses were murdered in 1999 ("Sanpei xiaojie de Falu Baohu Wenti" 2002). In Dalian, hostesses' bodies were found murdered on the street, but the police could not identify them (Sun 2003). When I accompanied my hostess friend Wu to her hometown, I asked her mother if she worried about Wu's safety in Dalian. Her mother's face sank with distress and torment, and she kept silent for a long time before gaining the strength to respond:

> I did not hear from her for three months. She did not call me. I did not have her phone number . . . I really thought she was murdered. You know, it's so common in Dalian. I always heard the news about hostesses' dead bodies found there. I believed Wu was one of them. I was worried sick. I got so sick that I couldn't get up. I thought I was never going to see her again.

In the upscale bar where I conducted research, the main task of the security guards in green pseudo-military uniforms was to keep the hostesses from

leaving before midnight, ensure that clients tip the hostesses, and maintain bar security. Occasionally a team of security guards would rush upstairs like soldiers to quell fights in the karaoke rooms. The suppression of disturbances itself always involved violence and blood. Unarmed or armed (with beer bottles, knives, and glasses) fights between drunken clients and between clients and hostesses were daily occurrences. At times hostesses came downstairs crying from their injuries: their legs, arms, and breasts black and blue from clients' hard pinches. Some hostesses chose to endure the abuse, but others quit and consequently received no tips for the time they had put in. Those who clenched their teeth to see it through with big bright smiles would hold back their tears and complaints for later, when they sent off the clients and returned to the crowd of idle hostesses.

The low-class bar called Romance Dream is located in the crime-plagued red light district. The staff includes three multifunctional staff members (madams/doormen/janitors), two bar managers, approximately twenty-seven hostesses, and a barkeep/security guard (*kan changzi de*). As with the high- and medium-level bars, blood ties link the bar proprietor and management into a relatively cohesive group. Each bar on this street has to hire a thug as the barkeep. This person must be a good fighter, otherwise, the bar would be forced to close down because of the harassment of gangsters and thugs roaming the streets. During my research in the bar, I witnessed numerous bloody fights between the barkeeper, a man named Bing, and bar waiters and gangsters, clients, and passers-by. I saw Bing and waiters throw heavy stones and chairs at clients and at the heads of some passers-by until blood streamed down their faces. The bar owner told me that Bing, after having killed and severely injured many men in previous fights, was once sentenced to death. The bar owner spent a great deal of money to finally get Bing out of prison before hiring him as the bar guard. Bing's mere presence in the bar kept many gangsters and thugs away. According to the owner, if Bing were not in the bar, it would definitely be a disaster: all the hostesses would flee in fear, and everything would be plundered by gangsters. She entrusted my safety to Bing and the bar managers.

Gangsters and other bar owners, all local, often came to visit. Upon seeing pretty hostesses, they would drag them upstairs and rape them. When they saw less attractive hostesses, they slapped their faces and beat them up. The hostesses, of course, were extremely apprehensive about some of the toughest gangsters and thugs and would run as fast as they could to escape them. I once fled along with the hostesses. We escaped by climbing onto the overpass built over the bars, losing our shoes and cutting our feet in the process, a very

unpleasant experience indeed. Most of the bar hostesses have been raped one or more times by gangsters. Twice the gangsters came in and started to pull me into a karaoke room. Luckily Bing and the bar managers stopped them, saying: "She is not a hostess here. She is my friend." That assurance saved me from imminent danger but the fear lingered.

To protect themselves, almost all the hostesses were connected with one or two street gangsters. When a gangster came in, a hostess who was linked with him or a thug in his group would not have to escape. My friend Wu did not like the bouncer of a neighboring bar, a thug, but he favored her strongly. To gain his protection from other gangsters, she had to develop a relationship with him. She told me,

> In my home town, nobody dares to touch me because I have a wide network of friends. It's so different here. Here I don't have anyone. No one cares if I am bullied. He is a thug, and he is local. I have to be good to him. I need someone to turn to when I encounter trouble on this street.

When Wu was harassed by someone in a different gangster group or by drunken clients, she would call the bouncer for help. On several occasions he led a few gangsters into the bar to beat up the drunken client at Wu's request. Wu also started a relationship with a bar owner in the city. She told me that these were the key people she turned to when she needed help. Like Wu, other hostesses were connected with a bar owner, a bouncer, or a skilled street fighter. They frequently joked, "We hostesses are relatives of the underworld."

Despite their uneasy relationship with criminal elements, many rural migrant women quickly find that hostessing provides a lucrative income, independence, and self-esteem. Because of the dearth of jobs in the private sector, rural women have limited employment opportunities in the city. As migrants, they often lack the social connections essential for finding a job in the already over-saturated urban labor market. Their ability to find work is further hindered by a discriminatory government policy that denies migrants equal status with urban residents. Among the jobs that are available to rural women, most are in low-paid, labor-intensive industries. Under these circumstances, hostessing is a highly attractive employment option. Hostessing also holds out the allure of earning high incomes over a brief period of time. Hostesses typically entertain a customer for one to two hours and earn an average tip of 200 to 400 yuan (U.S.$25–$50), at least the equivalent of, but often more than, other rural migrants' monthly wage and almost half the average monthly wage of an urban worker. In addition, working as

a hostess provides rural women access to a wide network of influential male figures in the city's business and political sectors. Hostessing requires a minimal upfront investment. Newly arrived hostesses typically borrow money from other hostesses or friends to purchase the clothing and accessories worn while servicing clients. Because of the high profitability of hostessing, the borrower can typically settle her debt with the earnings from one or two sessions with clients. Thus rural women who lack economic resources can nonetheless enter the workforce as hostesses.

Migrating to countries such as Japan and Singapore to conduct sex work is a dream for many hostesses. During my research, three hostesses managed to travel to Japan and Singapore as sex workers, and they were the models for many other hostesses. Each of these three hostesses had to pay out 20,000 yuan (U.S.$2,500) and pass the interview before being permitted to go through the visa process. After having worked in Japan and Singapore for a year, they returned to Dalian and expressed their ambition to return to these countries and continue working as sex workers.

Karaoke bars, as flourishing new cultural spaces in the city, are places where rural migrant women can achieve a certain degree of self-esteem by being accepted and desired by the urban men who choose them as companions for the night. The karaoke bar is also where these women can find secondary socialization by mingling with urban clients, where they feel "urban and cosmopolitan," both culturally and socially. Yet hostesses' experience of rape and abandonment in the city teaches them not to be duped by men's romantic words and to embrace independence through hostessing. They commented, "Dalian men try to cheat both our bodies and our emotions. Without spending a cent, they get what they want from us."

Han worked as a hairdresser in the city. She lived with an urban man for three years in his home. During this time, she suffered from all kinds of physical and verbal abuse from his aunt and mother. For instance, they accused her of stealing their jewelry and associated her "thieving habits" with her "inferior" rural background. Han made every effort to endure all this inhumane treatment. Her urban boyfriend, however, also worried that her rural family would become a bottomless pit, eventually draining all his money, and so he abruptly abandoned her, saying, "Our social status just doesn't match." Devastated, she believed that she would never find happiness unless she became the social and economic equal of the urbanites. She started working as a hostess. Five years later she was very successful: she possessed two household registrations—one urban and one rural; she purchased two houses, one in her hometown for her parents and one in Dalian for her

siblings; she supported her two younger sisters and a brother through school; and she paid for the weddings of her four older brothers and sisters. She is now married to the financial director of a prestigious hotel chain.

Another hostess, Hong, broke up with her client boyfriend when he failed to offer her the amount of money she expected. She commented:

> I myself can earn 100,000 yuan [U.S.$12,500] a month from hostessing. To exchange this for his several thousand yuan—so little money—I have to obey everything he says. Who will do that? He thinks I am fresh from the countryside, so I can easily be cheated. With so little money, he wants me to be his second wife and control me as his possession by tying my arms and legs. That's impossible. I want to earn money for myself and spend it happily as I want. There is no way for me to spend his little money at the price of abiding by whatever he has to say.

If rural origin and cultural inferiority is the root of the hierarchical relationship between rural migrant women and urban men, then hostessing offers an opportunity to escape subordination. As paid work, hostessing represents an act of defiance against the urban men who freely exploit the women's bodies and emotions. At the bar, men have to pay a high price to hostesses even to approach them. This transaction transformed the situation that existed when migrant women were available to men as free dinner at the men's whim.

Hostessing allows women to gain an economic profit and therefore independence from men. In the monetary transaction, hostesses attain a certain equality with the urban men by taking advantage of the men's resources. Having financial resources at their disposal brings the women power and confidence. Many hostesses who are married or are kept as second wives sneak out of the house to work. Setting up their own separate account allows them to spend their own money at will and secretly support their natal families. The economic power gained by hostessing earned Han and Hong a great degree of independence and equality in social and gender status within their biological families and their relationships with urban partners.

Conclusion

This chapter points out the discrepancy between policy and practice in Chinese anti-trafficking discourse. The anti-trafficking policy is manipulated and usurped by local officials against the interests of hostesses, leading to a violent working environment. Far from the state rhetoric of forced pros-

titution and the need for rehabilitation, hostesses are agents who actively choose hostessing as an expedient route to achieving a certain degree of social mobility. I argue that the anti-trafficking discourse of forced prostitution ignores the larger context within which force is used, that is, the global inequities of capital and labor that rob women of viable options and force them into sweatshop labor or lucrative sex work.

NOTES

1. A place of employment in Maoist China was called a "work unit" (*danwei*). The term refers to a place of employment during the socialist economy with state-owned enterprises. Each work unit provided its employees with housing, child care, schools, clinics, shops, services, and other subsidies.

2. Reconstructing the history of karaoke bars in Dalian proved to be exceedingly difficult. A combination of official denial and embarrassment has ensured that no publicly open records were kept on the subject, and the same attitude undoubtedly dissuaded any interested parties from prying. Therefore, to piece together the story, I had to rely entirely on the oral accounts of government officials in different divisions of the municipal Bureau of Culture.

3. For more information on hostesses' social networks, see Zheng 2009a. For more on HIV/AIDS transmission, see Zheng 2009b.

4. For more information on clients' alliances, see Zheng 2009a, 2006.

5. The phrase "security and state control" has been the overarching political language disseminated throughout China. Because of this political language's pervasiveness, interviewees would repeat these words as part of the steadfast belief that China's economy would not accelerate unless Chinese leaders maintained state control and political stability.

6. Antiprostitution legislation became a priority in China following the 1978-initiated market reforms which prompted unprecedented feminized rural-to-urban migration as well as increased numbers of karaoke bars and other entertainment industries.

7. Consonant with the 1978 economic reforms, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) began a campaign to build a "socialist spiritual civilization" that included specific social and political values and morality to offset emerging negative social aspects such as consumerism, nihilism, and hedonism. Deng Xiaoping first proposed this concept in 1980, and the subsequent political regimes continued the campaign. The "socialist spiritual civilization" was intended to create a superior set of moral codes (including discipline and hard work) and political consciousness without caving in to the influences of Western bourgeois lifestyles.

8. That the person involved was not Chinese is significant, as the disclosure of the red light district to the outside world embodied national shame and political disgrace. China wanted to present an ethically moral and economically developed image to the outside world, not the tarnished image of rampant prostitution.

9. This information was gained from my interviews with political officials in the municipal government.

10. Rural migrants, to remain legal in cities, are required to pay a certain fee each month to purchase a temporary resident card. These resident permits are related to the household registration system initiated in 1958 that outlawed rural migration through the management of resource distribution, thereby establishing a two-tier urban-rural caste system in the society.