"Emotional labor for models signals their unwillingness to be taken at face value. It is the counterpoint to working in an industry in which bodily capital is valued so highly."

NOT JUST A PAPER DOLL

How Models Manage Bodily
Capital and Why They Perform
Emotional Labor

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317

Modeling is a challenging occupation because employment is irregular, the physical demands are great, and competition is fierce. Success as a model requires the careful management of bodily capital and the performance of emotional labor. Drawing on participant observations and interviews with models in the Atlanta fashion industry, the authors examine how they do the former and why they do the latter. They manage their bodily capital by subjecting themselves to intense self-regulation. Models perform emotional labor to sell themselves to clients and agents, to create illusions for observers and the camera, and to find dignity in a job that is often degrading and humiliating.

Keywords: *models and modeling; emotional labor; bodily capital; fashion industry*

It's all about selling yourself.

> —Melissa, an Atlanta model, in answer to the
> question of what it takes to succeed

Modeling is an uncertain and stressful occupation. Although a handful of models achieve "superstar" status, most of them work intermittently during the course of a career that peaks in their late teens and terminates in their mid-twenties. During their brief careers, they are rejected for jobs, they are humiliated on the job, they struggle to maintain their physical appearance, and they face continual competition from younger and thinner models. It is an occupation that requires them to be passive and silent at work while paying careful attention to the management of their "bodily capital" (Wacquant 2004).

An apparent paradox of modeling, as the quotation that leads off this article indicates, is that models attach considerable importance to their performance of emotional labor (i.e., selling themselves), even though career success rests on their physical appearance. Models acknowledge that to those viewing or photographing them, they may be nothing more than "paper dolls"—pretty objects adorned with the products that others wish to sell—but they insist that to succeed as a model also takes the ability to charm agents, clients, photographers, and even, albeit indirectly, the prospective consumers of these products.

Emotional labor, as Hochschild (1983) argued more than twenty years ago, requires a worker to manage his or her own feelings to produce a desired state of mind in a customer or prospective customer. In the years since Hochschild introduced the concept, scholars have been divided in their interpretation of emotional labor. Some, including Hochschild, have seen it as a way for organizations to extend their control over workers from their bodies to their hearts and minds. Others, in contrast, have claimed that workers find emotional labor satisfying because they enjoy the sense it gives them of helping their customers or clients.

Neither of these two views of emotional labor fits the case of models, however. Models are independent contractors, not members of organizations, and they do not perform emotional labor at the direction of supervisors or employers. Models also do not interact with customers—the audience for whom their commercials and advertisements are made—so they are not comparable to other service providers whose satisfaction comes from helping their customers buy the products they represent. Nevertheless, they do find emotional labor (i.e., the management of their own feelings to create a desired facial and bodily display for those watching them) to be desirable and sometimes satisfying. Our explanation for this is that emotional labor helps them to cope with the many unpleasant aspects of modeling. Their emotional labor is a self-protection mechanism to counter the humiliation and harassment they experience at every step in the process of becoming and being a model.

In this article, we address two main questions: how models manage their physical appearance and why they perform emotional labor. We argue that models manage their bodily capital—the expectation that they be young and thin—by lying about their age and by turning their body into an object that they rigorously evaluate and monitor. We argue that they embrace emotional labor—by attempting to charm agents, clients, and photographers and by defining their work as acting—because they believe it makes it more likely that they will be hired and because it enables them to find dignity in work that mostly consists of the passive display of physical beauty.

The analysis develops in four sections. First, we consider what makes models and modeling a good site for examining issues of bodily capital and emotional labor. Second, we discuss what models do and how they find work. Third, we examine how models manage their bodily capital. Finally, we explain why they perform emotional labor.

WHY STUDY MODELS?

Modeling is a valuable occupation for sociological study for at least three reasons. First, modeling is both similar to and yet different from other occupations, such as stripping and exotic dancing, in which people make their living by displaying their bodies. Although models perform their work by wearing rather than removing their clothes, nevertheless, the bodies of models, like those of strippers, are observed, evaluated, criticized, and touched. An analysis of models' work, therefore, is a way of exploring issues that have been raised in studies of sex workers: contemporary definitions of beauty and desirability, the objectification of the body, and workers' efforts to assert their autonomy (e.g., Murphy 2003; Montemurro 2001; Ronai 1992; Wood 2000).

Second, modeling provides a good example of how workers learn how to monitor and manage their bodily capital. Wacquant (2004) uses the concept of *bodily capital* to describe the way in which boxers meticulously monitor all parts of their bodies in preparation for a fight. This includes training, conditioning, and most crucial of all in the days immediately before the bout, getting their weight down to the required weight limit. Managing bodily capital is, of course, a major concern for all athletes, although few are required to be as obsessed with weight— with some exceptions such as wrestlers, gymnasts (Johns and Johns 2000), and lightweight rowers (Chapman 1997)—as are boxers.

The attention that models bring to their weight and general physical state makes them closer to boxers than strippers. Like boxers, they are routinely measured and weighed. Models who deviate more than slightly from the ideal height (between five feet eight inches and 6 feet), physical dimensions (34–24–34 inches), and age (25 or younger) will have considerable difficulty in obtaining employment, whereas strippers do not have to meet equivalent norms of bodily conformity. Although strippers monitor their weight and are attentive to their physical appearance, they vary widely in age and appearance, which reflects in part the fact that customers' tastes are diverse (Murphy 2003; Wesely 2003). Unlike boxers and other athletes, however, models have to learn how to manage their bodily capital without coaching and away from their work sites. It is a solitary activity—every model has to learn how to do it by herself. If she fails, her agent or client will simply pick someone else for the job.

A third reason for studying models is to illuminate an aspect of emotional labor that has received little attention in the sociological

literature—the way in which workers use it to cope with a stressful working environment. Initial analyses of emotional labor, such as Hochschild's (1983), suggested that the cost of this labor was alienation of the worker from his or her true feelings. In the years that followed publication of *The Managed Heart*, there was considerable debate about whether emotional labor was alienating or satisfying for those who carried it out (e.g., Abiala 1999; Tolich 1993; A. Wharton 1993; Wouters 1989).

Some of the researchers who argued that emotional labor was satisfying claimed that workers valued their occupations precisely because they provided the opportunity to do emotional labor. For example, C. Wharton (1996) found that female realtors liked their work's emotional labor requirements—helping customers find houses and making them feel good about their decision. Similarly, beauty therapists liked making customers feel good about themselves, according to Sharma and Black (2001). Another line of research has argued that emotional labor is enjoyable if it enables workers to get their jobs done more effectively, particularly if it enables them to control or manipulate their clients. For example, Stenross and Kleinman (1989) pointed out that detectives enthusiastically used emotional labor in their interrogation of criminal suspects because they saw these encounters as battles of wits in which they needed to gain the psychological upper hand. Conversely, detectives disliked their emotional labor with victims because they considered this to be low-status nurturing work.

Models, however, lack the opportunity either to make customers feel good or to control their clients. As we have noted, models are seldom, if ever, called upon to deal with customers directly. They do meet—and attempt to impress—agents and clients, who represent them and hire them, respectively, to increase their chances of obtaining work. But in comparison to occupations such as strippers, realtors, beauty therapists, and detectives, models' work affords them little opportunity to influence others. Instead, they are professional objects or "paper dolls"—beautiful but inanimate faces and bodies dressed up to display most favorably the products that others have invented, designed, and made.

The response of models to being objectified is to insist that when they are modeling, they are in fact acting: they are hiding their true feelings from others and creating illusions for others. They define modeling, in other words, as doing emotional labor. They do so for two

reasons. The first is to transform themselves, in their own eyes at least, from passive objects into active subjects—from those who are acted upon into those who act. The second is to maintain their dignity when faced with the constant rejection, the humiliating comments, the unrelenting pressure to maintain their weight and bodily shape, and the demands of clients for how their products should be displayed that all models experience. Hodson (2001, 3) states that in the workplace, "dignity is realized through countless small acts of resistance against abuse and an equally strong drive to take pride in one's daily work." He suggests that sabotage, work stoppages, and gossip are some of the ways in which blue-collar workers resist abuse. We argue that the emotional labor of models is their way of resisting abuse and taking pride in their work.

THE WORK OF MODELING

In this section, we discuss what models do and how the labor market for models operates. Our focus is on models in the Atlanta fashion market. Although not as active as fashion capitals like New York or Miami, Florida, Atlanta is an opportune place for an aspiring young model to begin her career. It has four main modeling agencies, three of which are branches of larger national and international agencies.

STUDYING MODELS

The first author used participation observation and interviews to collect the data for this study. Having modeled in Atlanta and abroad for four years, she had access to and familiarity with the model's occupational world. She kept daily field notes during her final semester in college working as a model, totaling an average of fifteen hours of participant observation per week during the course of four months, from May through August 2002. She also conducted fifteen semistructured interviews with female Atlanta-based models in June and July 2002. Both authors conducted independent analyses of the field notes and interviews.

Only women were selected for this study for two reasons. First, modeling provides greater opportunities for women than men—the well-known supermodels are overwhelmingly female, for example. Naomi

Wolf (1991) has pointed out that modeling is one of the very few occupations in which women routinely earn more than men. Second, a career as a model remains an enduring fantasy for girls, much as many boys may dream of becoming a professional athlete. Moreover, modeling is glorified in American culture as an exciting and prestigious career for young women, especially by popular culture outlets such as teenage fashion magazines (Massoni 2004).

Respondents ranged in age from sixteen to thirty-three years old. Eleven respondents were white, two black, and two of mixed racial backgrounds. They were asked questions about their careers, their earnings, their relationships with agents, clients, and other models, and what they liked and did not like about modeling. The interviews lasted one to two hours in length and were tape-recorded. Table 1 provides a list of the models (all names are pseudonyms), their ages, earnings, and whether they currently work in Atlanta only or in other cities as well. The researcher invited models to participate during "bookings" or jobs that they had together. Having modeled in Atlanta for several years, the researcher was well acquainted with many of the few hundred women who work fairly regularly in this city, especially if they did fashion shows. At two of these shows, while waiting backstage for hair and makeup to be done, models were asked if they were willing to be interviewed for this project. The researcher deliberately selected models with varying years of work experience to make the sample as diverse as possible.

Every model who was approached agreed to be interviewed. Although not a random sample, since this was designed as an exploratory project, these women are typical of the range of models who work regularly in one of the industry's second-tier markets. The models in this study were represented by each of the four main agencies in Atlanta: Elite, L'Agence, Click, and Arlene Wilson. Most were with Elite or L'Agence.

BEING A MODEL

A model begins her career by obtaining representation with a modeling agency. There are several ways to do this. One approach for the aspiring model is to sign up for modeling schools, conventions, or competitions in the hope of meeting and impressing agency talent scouts. A second approach is to call an agency directly and to try to schedule an

Table 1.   Interviewee Characteristics

Name	Age	Years as Model	Market	Annual Earnings ($)
Amanda	17	2	Local	4,000
Amelia	26	7	National	45,000
Bre	24	6	National	20,000
Bridget	17	4	Local	4,000
Cameron	19	2	National	8,000
Elizabeth	16	2	Local	5,000
Gina	28	10	National	50,000
Heather	22	7	Local	5,000
Josie	26	10	National	35,000 - 40,000
Kelly	18	6	Local	10,000
Kim	23	5	Local	15,000
Melissa	25	8	Local	5,000 - 10,000
Tara	24	2	Local	6,000
Simone	24	7	National	53,000
Sophia	33	10	National	40,000

appointment with one of the agents. Finally, a model may be recruited into the business by an agency scout who, after spotting her in public, invites her to consider modeling. If the managers at the agency agree to represent the model, she is offered a contract. These agencies—more specifically, the "bookers" within the agencies—then arrange her "go-sees" and castings with potential clients. The agency, in turn, receives a 15 percent to 20 percent commission from the model's earnings.

A large part of any model's career is spent trying to obtain work—attending go-sees and castings. A go-see is a request from a client, such as a department store, fashion designer, or a studio that shoots for various catalogues, to see a variety of models for its upcoming jobs. A casting is an appointment to meet with a client who has asked to see particular models for an upcoming job. Castings offer a greater promise of immediate employment for a model, especially a "request casting," in which the client sees only those models under serious consideration for the job. A go-see is largely an opportunity for models to become a familiar face to clients, with the hope that this will lead to employment in the future. At a go-see or casting, the model shows her "book," or portfolio of pictures, and gives the client a composite card, which has on it a sample of her best pictures, her name, the name of her agency, and her statistics. A model's statistics include her height, dress size, bust, waist, hips, shoe size, hair color, and eye color.

Modeling is intermittent work, especially in a market such as Atlanta's. Peak season in this city is from September to December, with a second spike in demand for models in the spring months of March and April. During these periods, models may receive up to three bookings a week. In the off-season, the bookings drop to one a week or fewer for those models who do not migrate to other markets such as Miami, Dallas, and Chicago in search of employment. In Atlanta, the work itself mostly consists of low-budget catalogues, local department-store advertisements, small fashion shows, and local magazine editorials.

A model's working day depends on whether she has been hired for a photo shoot or a fashion show. For a typical photo shoot, she will pose under the direction of a photographer to display the features of clothing and products that are to be highlighted. Stylists prepare the model for the shoot—they fix her hair, apply her makeup, assemble her wardrobe, and even smooth the wrinkles in her clothes and touch up her lipstick between shots. If it is a fashion show, she will stride confidently down a runway before an audience of photographers, journalists, designers, and garment buyers. Backstage at a fashion show, dressers assist her to change clothes quickly and stylists are on hand to touch up hair and makeup.

Despite the high-profile status of modeling in American culture, most models' incomes are modest at best. According to the Occupational Outlook Handbook (U. S. Department of Labor 2002), fewer than 5,000 persons nationwide hold jobs as models and more than half of these are part-time workers. Models earned an estimated median income of $21,400 in 2002. In Atlanta, the standard hourly rate for catalogue models ranges from $100 to $150 an hour. The average annual income of the Atlanta models in this study who did not travel and were not in school was $15,000. Those who did travel to other markets earned between $40,000 and $53,000. This income is quite unpredictable. Competition from other models and fluctuations in demand for their "look" make it very difficult for models to know with any degree of certainty how much they will earn in a particular month or year. They must count on the one good job a month that will keep them afloat financially. If the job does not materialize, they have to rely on savings or what they can earn in a second job such as waiting tables.

Irregular employment is not the only financial downside to modeling. As self-employed workers, they do not get health insurance or other benefits. Some models, or their parents, may have invested

thousands of dollars in start-up costs for their careers—modeling classes, photographs, hair styling, physical trainers, and transportation—with no assurance of success.

Modeling in Atlanta is neither particularly lucrative nor particularly glamorous, but young women continue to be attracted by the prospect of becoming a model. Initially, they hope to be the one who rises above all the rest to become a star or supermodel. Almost every model interviewed for this study had once aspired to be a supermodel, booking campaigns and doing runway shows in New York, Milan, and Paris and accumulating the attendant rewards of wealth and fame. Models quickly find out, however, that they are unlikely to become supermodels. There is simply too much competition, which makes the chances of any one model separating herself from the pack exceedingly slim.

Once their careers are underway and they appreciate that superstardom is probably beyond their reach, models adopt a second criterion that allows them to view their work as financially worthwhile. They turn their attention from lifetime or annual earnings to hourly pay and, more specifically, to how easy it is to earn a relatively large paycheck for a few hours of work. Annual earnings are less important than the models' realization that the effort-rewards ratio is extraordinarily favorable to them. They can earn a great deal of money by doing a job that is not difficult and that does not require any specific skills or education.

Models themselves refer to their work as "easy money." The high hourly wage is a particularly seductive feature of the business for younger models, whose only point of comparison is what they would be doing and earning as teenagers if they were not modeling. A sixteen-year-old girl who can make $500 for a few hours' work or $1,500 in a day is obviously going to be outearning her high school peers in their part-time jobs, even though she may have spent countless hours (and a considerable amount of her parents' money) in pursuit of that single day's employment. In the models' calculus, therefore, easy money trumps regular money.

MANAGING BODILY CAPITAL

If a model works regularly, it means that she has learned to manage her bodily capital effectively. This consists of three processes. First, she

has to figure out whether she has the right "look" (i.e., whether she has the kind of body and face that appeals to agents, clients, photographers, and art directors). Second, she has to be able to take the criticism and rejection that is a constant feature of modeling, even for models who have enjoyed considerable success. Third, she must maintain her bodily capital as she gets older and heavier.

HAVING THE RIGHT LOOK

The requirements to be a model are rigidly specific and yet indefinable. At a minimum, models need to conform to general norms of conventional attractiveness, such as symmetrical features, clear skin, and healthy teeth, as well as to the modeling industry's specific requirements for height, weight, and bodily shape. Beyond these standards, however, what makes a model's appearance right for a particular advertising campaign or a particular client becomes somewhat variable. It depends on current fashion, the market that the advertiser has targeted, and the client's individual taste and preferences. Models, agents, and clients alike believe that it is small and subtle differences in models' physical appearance that lead to their being chosen by one client but not another. They refer to these differences as a model's "look."

The topic of their look comes up frequently when models discuss their careers because they know that this determines their employability. Models believe that client preferences are shaped by a combination of location and market. For example, Atlanta clients who advertise their products in catalogs will generally pick slightly older models with a "soft" look, also described as an "all-American girl" or a "girl-next-door" look. This look may be found in a white model or an African-American one, depending on the target market for the product. The large number of affluent African-American households in the greater Atlanta metropolitan area makes it a particularly good base for African-American models with a soft look. In contrast, it is not a good location for a model with an "edgy" or "strong" look—code for a model whose appearance is atypical and, therefore, difficult to categorize. New York designers select models with edgy looks when they want to launch a new style or trend in a fashion magazine.

Models understand, however, that the distinction between soft and edgy is a crude one. They realize that client preferences, even within a single market, are highly idiosyncratic, which means that they cannot

predict with any certainty whether their look will be the one a client wants or not. They do not ever fully know what is in a client's mind's eye, and they all have stories about being inexplicably chosen or rejected for particular jobs. Amelia (twenty-six years old, seven years of modeling) described the selection process as a "game of chance":

> The art directors always have a picture of what they want in their heads. They know exactly what girl they want in their mind. They've already drawn her out. And if you don't fit her in one small shape, form, way, they don't choose you. . . . So I think it's a game of chance. You just so happen to look like the person he dreamed up in his head, or one of your pictures looks like something he dreamed up in his head.

The inherent unpredictability of the match between an art director's imagination and a model's look means that luck significantly influences whether a model will be offered this particular job by that particular client. On the other hand, her height, weight, and shape determine whether she is considered for modeling jobs in general. If she does not keep her weight and shape within the industry's narrowly defined limits, she will not be given the opportunity to find out whether her look, whether pale and blonde or dark and exotic, approximates the artistic visions of designers, photographers, and advertisers. Models have to manage their bodily capital carefully to keep it within these limits.

TAKING CRITICISM

Rejection is guaranteed in the modeling industry because there are too many models chasing too few jobs. A model may travel for an hour to a casting, and spend another thirty minutes waiting in line, only for the client to glance her over and make an immediate decision that she is not right for the job. A model is rejected for any number of reasons. Her look may not be exactly what the client wants or the client may consider her nose too big or her bust too small. She may be too tall or her hair may be too dark or too short. Most damning of all, she may be dismissed as too fat. She may never even know why she was rejected, but will be left to wonder, as many respondents did, "What did I do wrong?" Whatever the reason, models must harden themselves to a barrage of rejections, as Amelia (twenty-six, seven years of modeling) explained:

I mean, you hear a hundred "no's" before you hear a "yes" with everything. So you know, everyone thinks that we have these huge egos and, in reality, it's probably quite the opposite.

Rejection is common to a number of occupations, particularly those that require occupants to persuade others to buy their products or service. Studies of life insurance salespeople (Oakes 1990), auto salespeople (Lawson 2000), and headhunters (Finlay and Coverdill 2002) have confirmed that the attempt to sell something to someone fails far more often than it succeeds. Compounding models' sense of failure, however, is the criticism, often detailed and explicit, that frequently accompanies these rejections. One occupational hazard of modeling is that everyone—clients, agents, hairstylists, photographers, makeup artists, and designers—feels entitled to make brutally pointed comments about models' physical deficiencies. Another is that this rejection is taken very personally because it challenges a model's conception of her own beauty. Disparaging remarks that could be construed as sexual harassment in most other job settings are taken as a given in the model's daily routine.

The most common criticism that models hear is that they are overweight. Of course, the average model, at five feet eleven inches and 117 pounds, is underweight relative to the average American woman who is five feet four inches and weighs 140 pounds (Smolak 1996). Yet even the thinnest of models in our sample constantly fretted about their body weight, which is consistent with Brenner and Cunningham's (1992) study of female fashion models.

Kim (twenty-three, five years of modeling) mentioned she had put on ten pounds while living in Germany. She had gone there to work but had received few modeling jobs, so she had spent the time hanging out with friends—"I drank, I ate bread, I ate cheese." She described what happened when she returned to Atlanta:

I had a shoot the day after I came back. I went into the agency two days after that shoot. First thing I hear is, "Kim, uh, Sammy, the photographer, called. He said your ass is too big. You need to lose weight." I just burst into tears. . . . I couldn't deal with that. And then I called them back and I was like, "I'm sorry. I understand that I, I know that I gained weight. I'm very aware of that. That just, I just took that really to heart." And they were like, "you can't take this to heart, this is a business. You just need to understand. Ten pounds gone, you're working again."

Sophia (thirty-three, ten years of modeling) has a number of stories about the scrutiny to which her eating and weight have been subjected. In Milan, a booker told her not to eat fruit:

> "No fruit! People in concentration camps didn't have fruit." I swear to you. That's I think one of my all-time favorite quotes that someone in the business said to me, that people in concentration camps don't have fruit. I was like, "Well, I didn't know that I was in a concentration camp."

In New York, she had an agent who would conduct unannounced "weigh-ins" at the agency. She would take each model into the bathroom where she would weigh her and measure her waist.

Another way that models are humiliated about their weight is by being asked to try on clothes that are too small. Models have to fit into clothing, ranging from size zero to size eight, to book their jobs. Fitting into the clothes is generally not a problem in catalogue shoots because these usually come in the larger sizes (i.e., six to eight) and can be pinned on the models if the fit is not perfect. Runway shows, on the other hand, often present a challenge because these clothes have to be worn properly and because they come in far smaller sizes. As Simone (twenty-four, seven years of modeling) observed

> For runway jobs . . . they come in with their sample sizes that have been made on these really ultra skinny girls in New York, and in order to book the show you have to be able to fit in the clothes and look good in them.

If a model does not fit into them, she risks summary public dismissal from the show to the accompaniment of disparaging comments about her being "too big." Even if she is not fired, the designer's attempts to alter the clothes to fit her are likely to cause considerable embarrassment.

Fitting into clothes is an inherent problem in modeling because of the age-body relationship. Most models begin their careers when they are young, barely out of their teens in some cases, an age at which they still retain much of the shape of their skinny, prepubescent bodies. As they age, their bodies develop their mature shape and no longer fit into small sample sizes. Kelly (eighteen, six years of modeling) explained that her agents and clients had

always known me as little size zero, fourteen-year-old, cute little girl, and all of a sudden, I was getting some curves on me and they didn't know what to do. They thought it was because I was getting fat and really it was just because I was growing up.

These models only have to look around them to see their competition—younger and thinner models who do fit into the tiny clothes. Heather (twenty-two, seven years of modeling) said,

I know that I used to be fifteen, sixteen, and I used to be skinny-minny and I used to be the fresh face. And I'm not anymore.

Models are rejected so frequently and so quickly that it is easy for them to become disheartened, especially if they are newcomers to the business. It is hard for new models to get used to a system in which clients make instant and seemingly arbitrary decisions about which models they do want and which ones they do not want.

A model has to be able to handle rejection to succeed. First, she must accept it without becoming too discouraged. This means not taking it "personally." Although rejection is in fact deeply personal, models try to remind themselves that it is just their external appearance that is being turned down. Cameron (nineteen, two years of modeling) explained that she had to tell herself to accept rejection without considering herself a failure:

It probably isn't just because of you. . . . You're gorgeous, but they might want a different look, and I'm not the right look right now. So you have got to say to yourself, it's not you.

As Cameron's comments suggest, models also develop self-protective rationalizations for why they were rejected. Most commonly, the explanation is bad luck or bad timing: a client wants a particular "look" that a model simply does not have. For Josie (twenty-six, ten years of modeling), this means that she is not "your average blonde bombshell." Instead, with sharp cheekbones, piercing blue eyes, and dark, choppy hair, Josie describes her look as "strong and edgy." Heather (twenty-two, seven years of modeling) said that when a client chose another model in preference to her, she simply blamed it on bad luck:

I would just think, basically I wasn't the girl right now and they wanted
something else. . . . My luck is out right now and there's nothing I can do
about it. I wouldn't take it personally.

The second way in which models handle rejection is by working on
their external appearance. Even though they believe that luck and tim-
ing shape careers, they are not fatalists. Instead, they spend consider-
able time and effort on managing their bodies to increase their chances
of employment.

TAMING THE BODY

Agencies and clients prefer models who are young and thin. If a
model can conceal her true age and keep her weight down, she is more
likely to book jobs. Both, with some effort, are possible. Models, of
course, cannot literally prevent themselves from getting older, but they
can and do lie about their age. When the first author met with agents in
New York, her Atlanta agency instructed her to bump her age down
from nineteen to eighteen. She lied to bookers, clients, photographers,
and even to other models if they asked her age. Josie, who is twenty-six,
claims to be twenty-two, and she says she has altered her date of birth in
her passport to conceal her true age from agents when she works
abroad.

Although age is a disqualifying factor for models, it can be circum-
vented, particularly if a model looks younger than she really is (this is
what enables models older than twenty-five to continue working).
More difficult to hide and more damaging to a model's career is weight
gain. Models fear the effects of time on their figures. Simone (twenty-
four, seven years of modeling) does sit-ups because she feels that her
stomach is "starting to get a little bigger than it used to be." The weight
gain that accompanies aging is a threat to the livelihoods of even the
youngest and thinnest models—changes to their bodies may be slower
than is normal for someone of their age, but they are inevitable.
Amanda (seventeen, two years of modeling) has gone from a size zero
to a size four during the period she has been modeling. Despite having
thirty-four-inch hips and a perfectly flat stomach, younger models
make her feel insecure about her body:

> You'll go to a job when there will be a younger girl who is like thirteen or fourteen or something and is really tiny and I'm like, "Oh, man, maybe I need to be skinnier."

Faced with the twin threats of demography and younger rivals, models go to considerable lengths to maintain their size and weight. Some monitor themselves and what they eat very closely. Kelly (eighteen, six years of modeling) keeps a tape measure on her kitchen table, which she uses daily to check her waist and thighs. She is working with a personal trainer to reduce her hips to thirty-six inches, as instructed by her agents. Since the age of fourteen, Elizabeth (sixteen, two years of modeling) has been trying to lose weight. She had even tried the Slim Fast diet ("That about killed me!" she said) but now counts her caloric intake to make sure she does not exceed 1,200 calories in a day. Amelia (twenty-six, seven years of modeling), after first declaring her aversion to dieting, admitted that she would diet during the fall bathing-suit season:

> I'm just like every other girl and I want to drop three pounds before the show. I'm only eating salad for a week because, you know, I want to fit in that swimsuit.

In addition to dieting, models exercise rigorously and lift weights.

The effect of these pressures has been to make models the permanent overseers of their own bodies who continually compare themselves to an industry standard that becomes increasingly difficult for them to maintain. Furthermore, models have to do this on their own, unlike boxers who are monitored by trainers to ensure that they are managing their bodily capital correctly (Wacquant 2004). At most, a model might be told by an agent to keep her hips down to a certain size or to lose a few pounds, but little, if any, guidance is provided as to how to do this. Instead, models must internalize the expectations of agents, clients, and designers to become the harshest critics of their own bodies. It is striking how readily they disparage their own physical appearance by comparing it to what they consider to be normal—the ideal of the perfect thin body. This self-objectification leads them to one conclusion: they are abnormal or deviant because they are not thin enough.

It first occurred to Kelly (eighteen, six years of modeling) that her body was deviant when she was in Milan:

> Going to a casting and seeing these tiny, little girls who are a size zero and they are like fifteen . . . but they are just so skinny and they're going, "Oh, I am fat, I have to lose weight." . . . So it just makes me feel like a cow.

Heather (twenty-two, seven years of modeling) said that castings caused her considerable self-doubt because of the comparisons she drew between herself and her younger rivals:

> I feel like I'm the biggest girl there. You know, you walk in there and it's like these itty, bitty girls walking around like toothpicks.

Finally, Cameron (nineteen, two years of modeling), who is five-feet ten-and-a-half inches tall and 112 pounds, feels like she will never be thin enough, despite having lost 33 pounds since beginning her modeling career:

> No matter how skinny you are, you always think you can be skinnier, and there's other people that are going to be skinnier than you. And I don't know, you always worry about your legs are too big, your arms are too flabby, your gut is too flabby. . . . You are all the time looking at your body and criticizing yourself. You always think that you have to be perfect or more perfect than the next girl that comes along. . . . You walk into a casting with a hundred beautiful girls and you kind of say to yourself, "I look like shit compared to these beautiful girls."

Strippers and exotic dancers are also conscious of how they compare to others in their occupations, but their efforts are directed toward transforming their bodies through technology in addition to taming them. For example, Wesely argues that the various body technologies that strippers use to make themselves attractive to customers—including breast implants, dying of their hair, nose jobs, chin surgery, and liposuction—represent an attempt to "further the doll-like image of the female body while hiding the realities of biology" (2003, 654). The available technology is too crude, however, to transform models' bodies into a physical state that would meet the stringent facial and bodily standards of the fashion industry (aside from the near impossibility of making

someone taller). Models depend on their genetic predisposition to tall-ness and thinness, which is then cultivated and maintained through exercise and dieting.

DOING EMOTIONAL LABOR

Turning her body into an object to be criticized and worked on is one way in which a model can increase her chances of getting a job. Another is by using her personality or charm to woo agents and clients—to engage in emotional labor. Wooing agents and clients is not the only reason for their emotional labor, however. They also do it because the work of modeling requires the creation of illusions and because emo-tional labor allows them to resist the stereotype of being just a pretty face and a slim body.

WINNING CLIENTS: TURNING ON THE CHARM

Models engage in "strategic friendliness" (Pierce 1995) toward agents, bookers, clients, and photographers. Pierce defines strategic friendliness as a form of emotional manipulation of another person, using friendliness, politeness, and tact, to achieve a desired outcome (1995, 72). In the case of models, this behavior takes a couple of forms. One is the deference that they display toward those who control access to castings and jobs—agents, bookers, and clients—to secure employ-ment. Deference can mean "schmoozing" and "sucking up" with her agents, as Bre (twenty-four, six years of modeling) explained:

> You have to say, really politely, "look, son-of-a-bitch, I want some work." And you have to go in and smile all the time and hug them and kiss them.

It can mean bringing her agents gifts, like the bottles of wine Kelly (eighteen, six years of modeling) brought back from modeling in Milan. It can mean a model's following her agent's advice about her appearance; this includes not only, as always, weight and shape, but also clothes, makeup, and hairstyle. Finally, it can mean joking and flat-tering clients, just as sales workers do (e.g., Dorsey 1994; Leidner 1993; Wood 2000). Gina (twenty-eight, ten years of modeling), who is

one of the most successful models in our sample, described how she adapted her behavior to her client's personality:

> You have to be really outgoing when you see the clients. If the client has requested to see you, then you already know that they like your pictures. They just want to see what your personality is like, if they are like going to mix with you, if you are going to be a good representation to them. Whenever I go in, I try to be really, really outgoing or, if the client is kind of like laid-back, like try to match whatever their personality is. And that seems to be working so far.

Josie (twenty-eight, ten years of modeling) said that she felt that to book a job, she needed "to bullshit a little." When asked to explain what she meant by this, she said,

> You know, like having a chat or making a joke or using a little bit of my sense of humor to, like I said, feel out the client or the personalities.

A number of models explicitly compared themselves to sales workers. Melissa (twenty-five, eight years of modeling) said that when she did a show she always tried to talk to the designer: "It's all about selling yourself." Tara (twenty-four, two years of modeling) said that going to castings and go-sees was like selling products door to door: "it is almost like being a salesperson but you are marketing yourself." She added that no matter how frustrated she might be about being rejected or about any other difficulties she might be experiencing, she had to put on a bright, cheerful face each time she walked into a go-see.

Models employ a second type of strategic friendliness once they are on the job. They are enthusiastic and affable—displaying what they refer to as "personality" or "energy"—to make clients, photographers, and others with whom they are working feel at ease. This is similar to the way in which flight attendants allay the concerns of airline passengers (Hochschild 1983), trial lawyers ingratiate themselves with witnesses (Pierce 1995), waitresses solicit tips from diners (Paules 1996), and personal trainers motivate clients to work out (Maguire 2001).

Although on-the-job friendliness might appear to have little to do with success or failure in modeling, in contrast to the other occupations identified above, models insist that it is in fact crucial. First, it makes clients want to hire them and photographers want to shoot them—no

one likes to work with a "dud." Heather (twenty-two, seven years of modeling) pointed out that some of the castings resemble "cattle calls," so a model has to find some way of standing out. Her advice was to be personable:

> Have a personality, go in there and don't just be a model, don't just be a face, you know.

Second, friendliness translates into better work. Models believe that personality or energy, even if it is faked, will be revealed in their performance. Amelia (twenty-six, seven years of modeling) said,

> If you have energy, you can give that energy to the camera. That makes good pictures.

CREATING ILLUSIONS: FAKING IT

The performance that models give on the job involves more than just being friendly to everyone. Models have to act, that is, express in their faces and bodies the feelings that the client and photographer want to associate with the particular product that is being modeled). These feelings may be quite different from a model's true feelings, particularly if the acting requires her to assume a difficult or uncomfortable position.

Models frequently experience physical discomfort at work. One reason for it is that they are expected to pose in awkward positions or wear clothes that are unsuited to the weather, such as modeling bathing suits when the temperature is close to freezing. Another reason for discomfort is that models may be told not to sit down so as to avoid wrinkling the clothes, which means that they may have to stand for the entire day. Discomfort may also result from a model's having to squeeze into clothes that do not fit properly or from having to change rapidly from one outfit to another, with little or no privacy and a dresser constantly tugging at her clothes and body.

No matter how uncomfortable a model may be, it is crucial for the job (and her career) that she accept the discomfort and mask her true feelings—at least while she is working. Her face should reflect the illusion the client and photographer want to create, not what the model is actually enduring or thinking. As Amelia (twenty-six, seven years of modeling) said,

> We grin and bear it, and we're on our feet for fifteen hours, doing a shoot in an uncomfortable position, and you learn to just focus on other things, and think about the picture and also think about getting hired again.

Josie (twenty-six, ten years of modeling) similarly emphasized the link between a model's performance of emotional labor and her career. She described how she consciously reminded herself to put on a good show:

> Okay, it's thirty degrees outside and I'm here in a bikini and it hurts all over my body, but I've got to get fucking paid.

This kind of acting is also found among waitresses (Paules 1996) and strippers (Murphy 2003), where it is used both to please customers and to manipulate them into providing more generous tips.

Models, like waitresses and strippers, put on a performance so that they will get paid—in their case, the rewards come if they make good photographs and get rehired. But they do it for more than material reasons—it is a personally satisfying form of emotional labor. The satisfaction comes from their sense of being active in a job in which passivity is expected and from being able to create a level of dignity for themselves in a work environment in which they are often degraded. We consider each of these points in turn.

Models reject objectification—constantly being measured, scrutinized, and evaluated—by defining their work as acting. By emphasizing the importance of performance, models are in effect asserting that their true merit lies in their theatrical talent. For example, they suggest that when they put on clothes and walk on a runway, it is the equivalent of an actor taking a role on the stage. They use terms like "adrenaline," "high energy," and a "drug" to describe their feelings about their performance. Like actors on a stage, models know that when they are on a runway or in front of a camera, they are the center of attention—they are the stars of the show. Josie (twenty-six, ten years of modeling) observed,

> Getting to play dress up and look completely different every time you do a show or every time you do a shoot . . . is so much fun, it can be really, really wonderful. You are the center of attention, of course, there you are, on stage, everybody is watching you. So, yeah, just the attention and that's pretty much it.

Similarly, Amelia (twenty-six, seven years of modeling) said,

> Modeling gives me a certain satisfaction that is like no other. I mean, you get this adrenaline rush when you're on a runway, it's an amazing feeling. Just like being on a stage. You're performing, and you're able to put on this mask and this performance and it gives you a great adrenaline rush.

Cameron (nineteen, two years of modeling) echoed Josie's and Amelia's comments:

> You have to kind of go into character. I mean, modeling is like acting, you know, you kind of like, you are putting on a show, putting on the clothes and do whatever you have to do to make whatever you are doing look good.

Kim (twenty-three, five years of modeling) talked about the pleasure that being photographed could bring:

> Sometimes you just get tired of that world, that pretty world that you're supposed to be involved in. It's not so pretty, and you're just like, "Urrrgh!" But then when you're having a great day, and you're on this awesome shoot with this awesome photographer and hair stylist and you're all having fun, and you're making beautiful pictures. You're just like, "This does not get any better." You know, I'm so lucky to be able to do this.

Models enthusiastically perform the emotional labor involved in acting because it allows them to claim a share of the spotlight from the clothes that are the ultimate object of attention. It is enjoyable. Doing emotional labor is not only pleasant, however. It provides dignity as well, by reminding them that they are more than just paper dolls to be dressed up or objects to be weighed and measured. It allows them to define modeling as a job that takes effort, energy, and intelligence, as Amelia (twenty-six, seven years of modeling) explained:

> Everybody thinks that we're just paper dolls, you know, and that's unfortunate because there's a lot of girls that I've met throughout the years that are very bright. They have college degrees or don't have college degrees, but they chose a path that may have been a little "offbeat" according to

the real world, but you know, there's vast opportunities in modeling just as there is in any other field. And it is a job, and it is hard work, as you know, but it's not this glamour thing that everybody perceives it be. . . . I think that in order to be successful at it you have to have a really good head on your shoulders. As much as these people think that we don't have brains, in order to make it you have to. Because if you can't take the mental anguish of hearing these things about you on the outside, you can't take them on the inside. Like I said, when you're being told and bashed that you're too fat, you don't fit in these clothes—you know, there are people in the business that are not so wonderful. And, you know, you have to have a good head on your shoulders to be able to just keep going and keep working at it.

Amelia's comments suggest that a model who remains outwardly composed in the face of criticism and rejection is performing emotional labor also. She is engaging in a face-saving "cultural performance," to use a term employed by Sass (2000) and Williams (2003), the effect of which is to maintain her pride and strengthen her resolve to continue working.

The significance of models' emotional labor, therefore, is that it realizes twin goals: the manipulation of others and the assertion of their own worth. Previous studies of emotional labor have largely focused on the relationship between emotional labor and the control of employees and clients (e.g., Hochschild 1983; Leidner 1993; Pierce 1995). Models are similarly manipulative, but they also use emotional labor to establish that they are doing meaningful work. Emotional labor for models is the counterpoint to working in an industry in which bodily capital is valued so highly. It signals their unwillingness to be taken at face value alone.

CONCLUSIONS

Emotional labor, although most commonly associated with sales and service-providing jobs, it is by no means limited to them (Mann 1999). We have shown that models, ostensibly hired just for their appearance, in fact perform a substantial amount of emotional labor. The emotional labor of models differs, however, in at least three significant respects from that of other workers.

First, as we have noted, models might be expected to have little need to do emotional labor because their selection into the occupation depends so heavily on their bodily capital. In their case, this assumption is unwarranted—they have to manage their bodily capital and do emotional labor to be successful. Second, models have to learn how to perform emotional labor and manage bodily capital without being explicitly told how to do either of these. Their emotional labor is not scripted or in other ways performed under the authority of managers or supervisors; similarly, models receive little guidance in managing their bodily capital, in contrast to athletes, who usually do this under the supervision of trainers and a coaching staff. Third, models do emotional labor for two purposes: to manipulate others and to resist objectification. Models, often demeaned by those who hire them as brainless beauties whose only talent is for making the products of others look good, welcome emotional labor because it allows them to feel that they are performers whose work requires effort and has value.

We conclude with three suggestions for future studies of models and modeling. First, the process of becoming a model requires further analysis. Learning how to be a model is a topic of considerable sociological interest because, as in the case of other occupations in which people are self-employed or are independent contractors, it mostly takes place outside formal organizations. Much of it involves observation and imitation of other models. The high level of competition for jobs, however, means that those that they have to learn from—their fellow models—are also their rivals for jobs, which makes any sharing of information or cooperation less likely than in settings where workers are colleagues. It would be valuable to explore how models negotiate cooperation in such a competitive setting.

Second, we would like to know more about how models perform. We have discussed the excitement that models feel when on the runway or in front of the camera; a future study—and one that would continue the theme of models as actors—could explore precisely how they communicate to observers the impressions they want to convey. This could also include how models interact with photographers, art directors, and clients to explore how decisions are made as to how models should present themselves.

Third, this study did not include male models. Recent changes in masculine culture (e.g., the phenomenon of the well-dressed and bodily sensitive "metrosexual") are likely to increase work opportunities for

male models. We would expect male models to be stereotyped as objects in the way that female models have been. Will this result in male models doing emotional labor? Traditionally, women are more likely than men to do emotional labor, so it is possible that male models will focus largely on the management of their bodily capital and pay little attention to doing emotional labor. The question then is the extent to which emotional labor in modeling is driven by the demands of the job alone or is the result of a combination of job demands and a gendered response to those demands by female models.

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