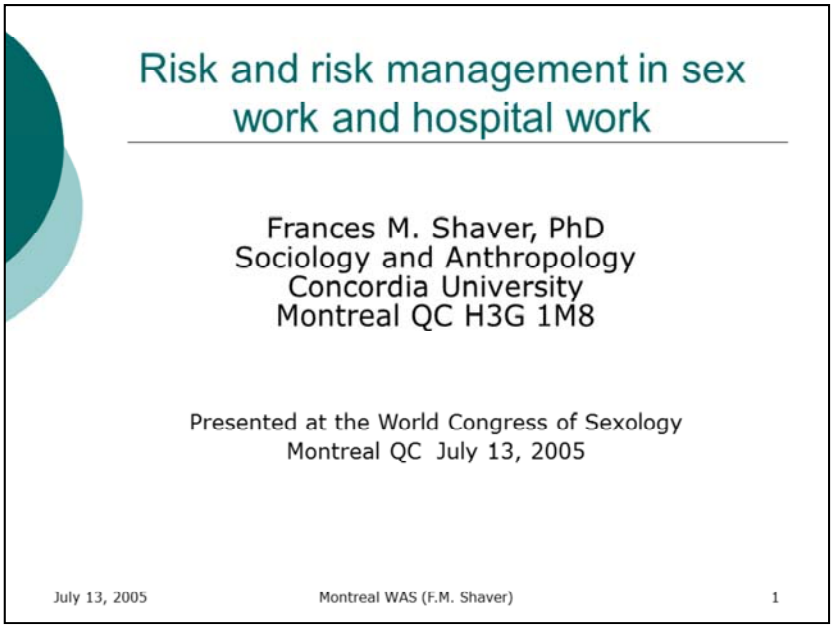
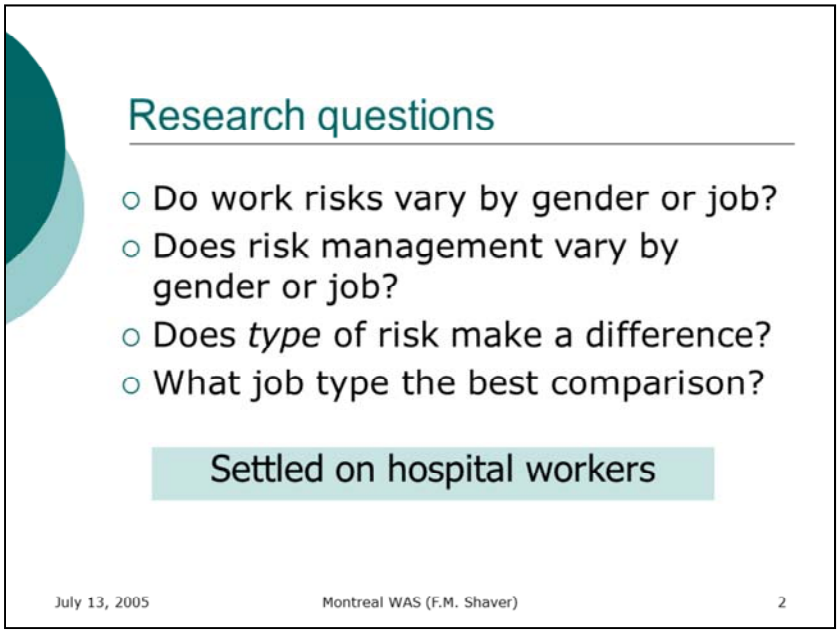


Risk and risk management in sex work and hospital work

In line with the more recent literature treating sex work as a form of interactive service work, this study locates sex work and sex workers within the occupational health and safety (OHS) literature. Using risk and its management as the unifying focus of attention, this study examines how the experiences and management practices of sex workers compare to those of hospital workers.

Based on data collected in Montreal and Toronto, the analysis involves comparisons between 60 women and men street workers and a matched set of 60 ward aides and orderlies. Hospital workers were selected as an appropriate comparison group because both involve personal interactions between workers and clients/patients; both entail intimate contact with the body and body emissions, and neither have formal educational entry requirements. In addition, the selected hospitals were adjacent to the 'strolls' and it was easy to recruit aides/orderlies working shifts similar to those of the sex workers.

The findings indicate that violence was a stressful aspect of both types of work but, hospital workers were more likely to be assaulted by their patients than were sex workers by their clients. Sex workers had more personal control over their work environment but responded differently to the risks they faced. With respect to non-violent risks: hospital workers responded in an institutional and routinized way while sex workers more often relied on personal rules and co-workers. There was greater variation in response to violent risks: the response to assault was gendered and varied by job, while gender was the key factor in determining the response to robbery. The women in both jobs assessed their work as more stressful than the men and were more prone to physical assault than men. These findings falsify many assumptions about sex work and increase our understanding of work in general and sex work in particular.



Tell a story:

I have been doing research on sex work for 20 years. Much of it involves comparisons by gender, by sector of the industry, and by geographic location. It is very evident across all sectors and locations that the risks in sex work vary by gender: women face many more than men.

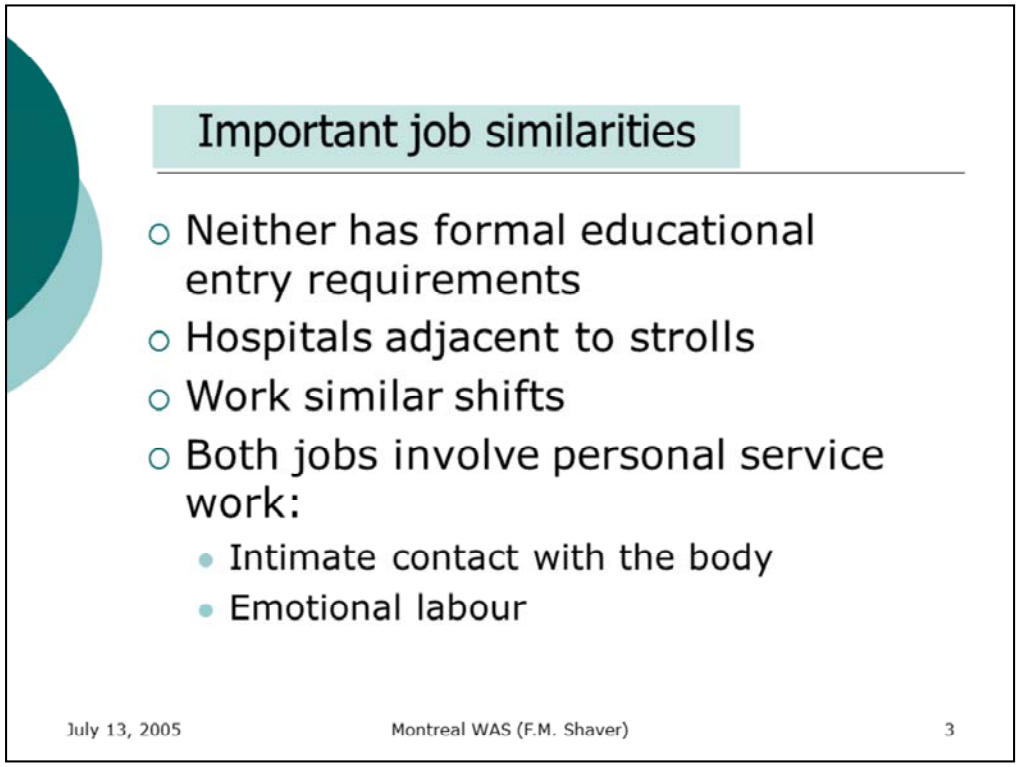
This is supported by other researchers, reflected in the media, and accepted by the general public. It is also often assumed that sex work is much more dangerous / risky than other jobs. I've always wondered if this were really the case? And if so, why?

This wondering led me to a number of research questions:

- Do work-risks vary by gender, by job, or perhaps even by both?
- Do risk management strategies vary by gender or job?
- Does *type* of risk make a difference?

There are not simple questions to answer. The answers are dependent on finding an appropriate comparison group.

- What job would best work as a comparison group? After going through a number of possibilities, I settled on:
  - **hospital workers: aides /orderlies**



Why choose hospital workers?

•There are **important similarities** in the two jobs

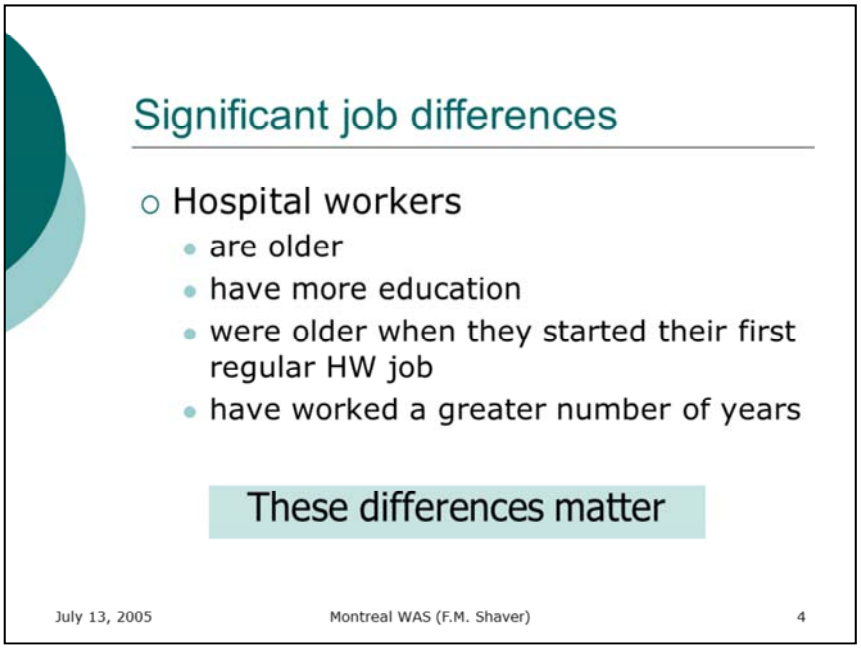
•Neither job has formal educational entry requirements

•There were Hospitals adjacent to the strolls (so working in similar geographical environments)

•Was easy to recruit HWs & SWs working similar shifts (pressures of working the late shift shared; also experienced by the research team)

•Both jobs involve personal service work:

- •Intimate contact with the client/patient's body & bodily emissions
- •Emotional labour: involving personal interactions with client/patient



However, there are **significant job differences** (measured using selected occupational characteristics):

Hospital workers:

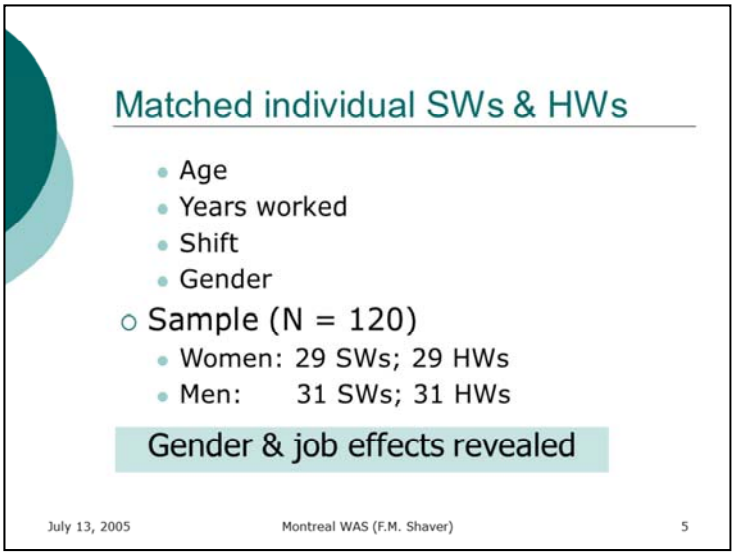
- •are older than SWs
- •have more education
- •were older when they started their first regular HW job
- •have worked a greater number of years

- •**These differences** in occupational characteristics **matter**

Age, education, and years worked probably have an important impact on one's ability to deal with and manage work-related stress

- •one's skill at managing risk likely increases with age
- •and it most certainly increases with the number of years on the job.

Thus, to facilitate the control of these effects, I **matched individual SWs and HWs on number of key characteristics**.



Matched individual SWs & HWs

- Age
- Years worked

I worked with the specific # years where possible, and with a range when exact matches were difficult.

Recall that already selected for;

- Similar shifts
- Gender

Retained a sample of 120 workers:

Among the women: 29 SWs; 29 HWs

Among the men: 31 SWs; 31 HWs

Using a matched sample means that:

- **Gender and job effects are revealed (uncovered).**



My objectives today are threefold:

- Focus on different types of risk (and on the differences between perceived work risk and experienced work risk)

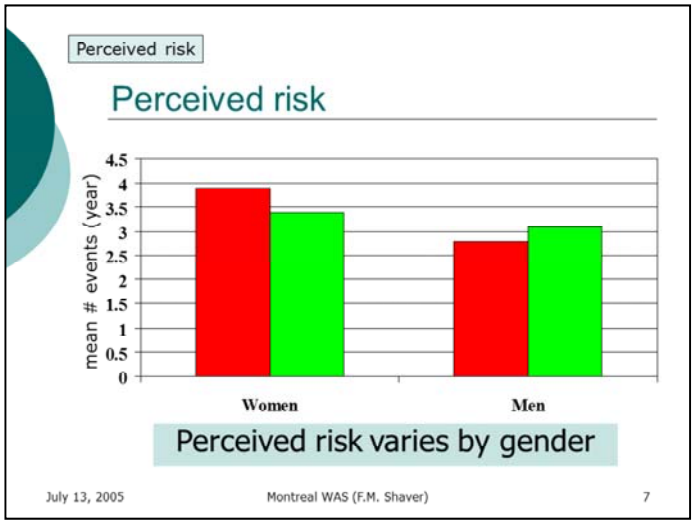
  Perceived work risk

  Experienced work risk
- Identify management styles

  Management perceived risk

  Management of experienced risk
- Highlight directions for research and policy

I will use the data from my field work with street-based sex workers and hospital workers conducted in Montreal and Toronto (1993-1994).



Perceived RISK : We developed an index based on events in the work-place environment causing excess worry or stress (work demands, poor relations with others, infection/disease, accident/injury, sexual & other harassment, discrimination etc) .

This slide sums up their degree of excess stress & worry (over a year).

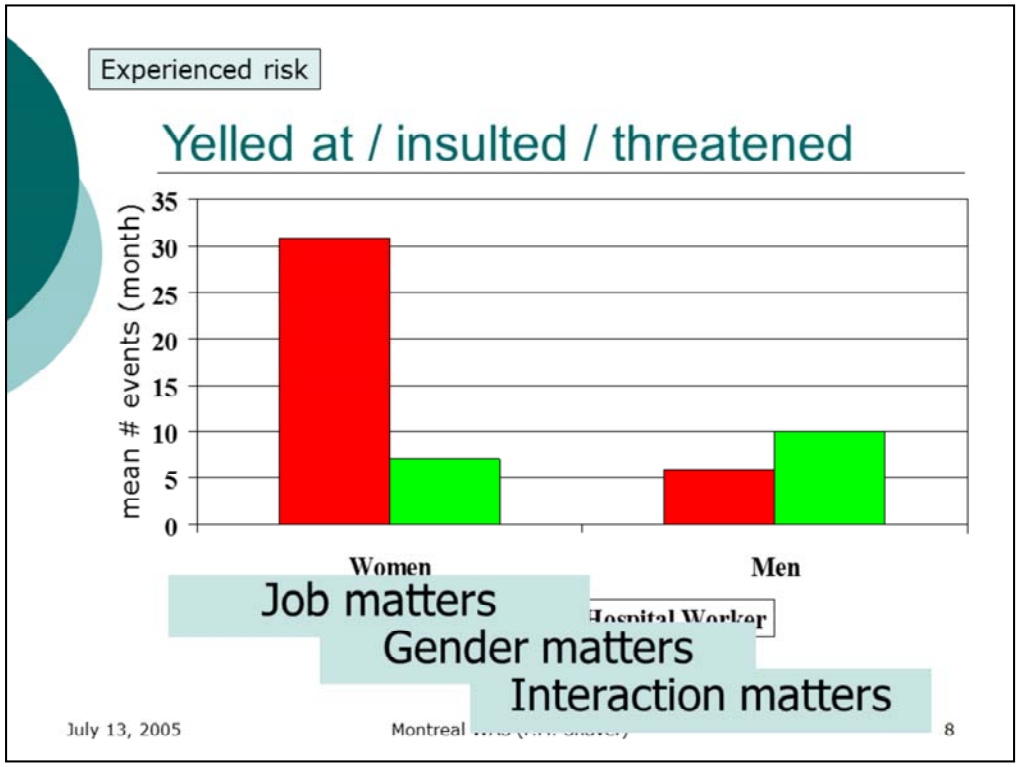
First we looked at the job effect (SW = red; HW =green / women on left; men on right):

- Among women: a slight job difference but it is not significant
- Among men: again, a slight difference but it is not significant

However, when we **looked at the gender effect** on its own *(by comparing the two red bars and the two green bars)* we got significant differences:

•Perceived risk varies by gender

- Women (regardless of the job they hold) worry more than men about the risks & stress of the job.



Experienced risk: **yelled at / insulted / threatened**

We examined two kinds of risk : non-violent risks (unclear instructions, yelling & insults, sexual harassment) as well as more violent risks (robbery, physical assault, sexual assault).

This slide shows the mean # of times workers were yelled at, insulted, or threatened over the "past" month. **We'll start with the job effect**:

•Among women: SWs are more at risk

•Among men: HWs are more at risk

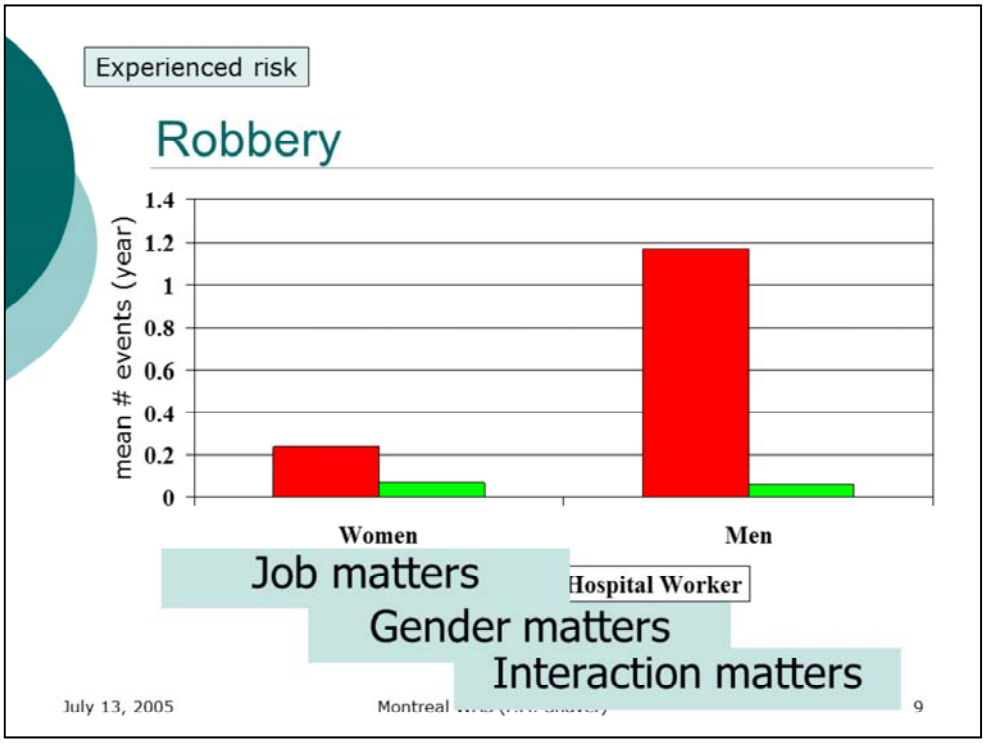
•These job differences are significant — **Job matters**

When we **look at the gender effect** on its own *(by comparing the two red bars and then the two green bars)* we get significant differences. Thus,

•Gender matters

It was the Women SWs & and the Men HWs who were most subjected to yelling & insults. The fact that women SWs and men HWs share a susceptibility to yelling, insults & threats was also significant. Thus, the

•Interaction matters



Experienced risk: **robbery**

Here we are looking at the mean number of times workers were robbed (over a year). **Again, we start with the job effect:**

•Among women: SWs are more at risk

•It is the same for men: SWs are more at risk than HWs

•These job differences are significant — **job matters** robbery is a much bigger part of the sex works' environment

When we **look at the gender effect** on its own *(by comparing the two red bars and then the two green bars)* we get significant differences. Thus,

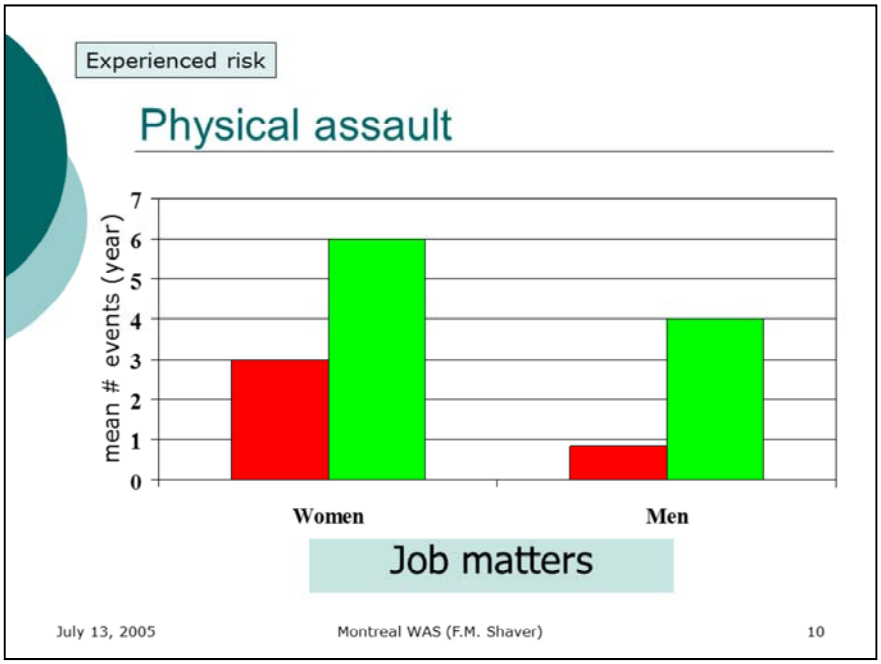
•Gender matters

Men SWs are more likely than women SWs to experience this risk

The gender difference is not evident among HWs

The fact that there is a gender difference in one job and not the other is also significant. Thus, the

•Interaction matters



Experienced risk: **physical assault** (pushed, slapped, struck, choked etc)

Here we are looking at the mean # of times workers are pushed, slapped, struck, choked etc. over a year. **Look at the job effect first:**

•Among women: HWs are more at risk

•This is also the case among men: HWs are more at risk

•These job differences are significant thus — **job matters**

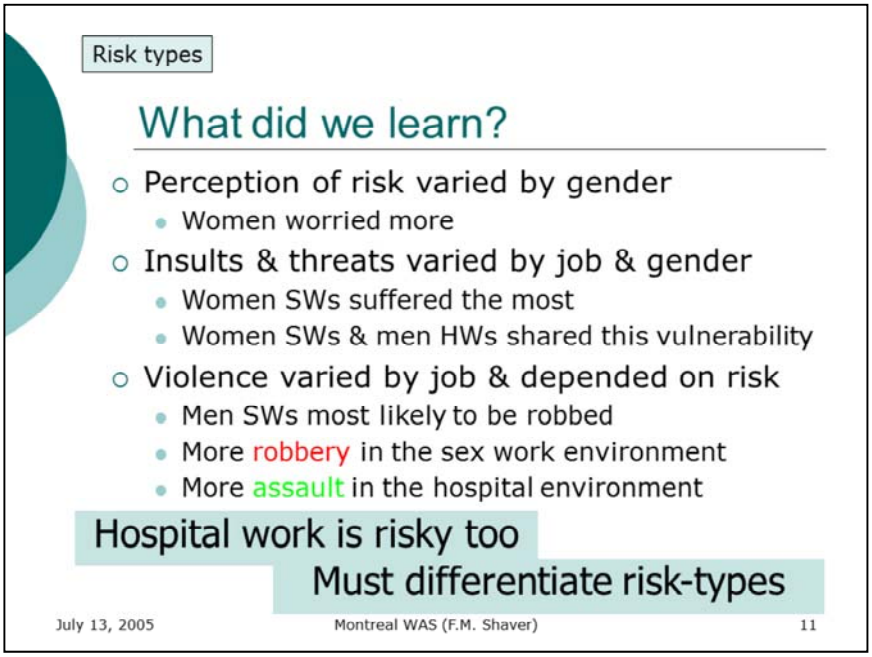
When we **look at the gender effect** on its own *(by comparing the two red bars and then the two green bars)* we see similar differences.

•The women seem to be seem to more at risk than their male counterparts

•However, the gender differences apparent here are **not** significant. For the most part this is due to the wide variation between individuals (i.e., large standard deviations).

•In this case, it is only the job that matters and physical assault is a bigger part of the hospital work environment than the sex work environment.

(Note: Differences with respect to sexual assault (rape) were too small to be significant.)



What did we learned about risk?

•Perception of risk varied by gender: women worried more

•Experience with insults & threats varied by job and gender

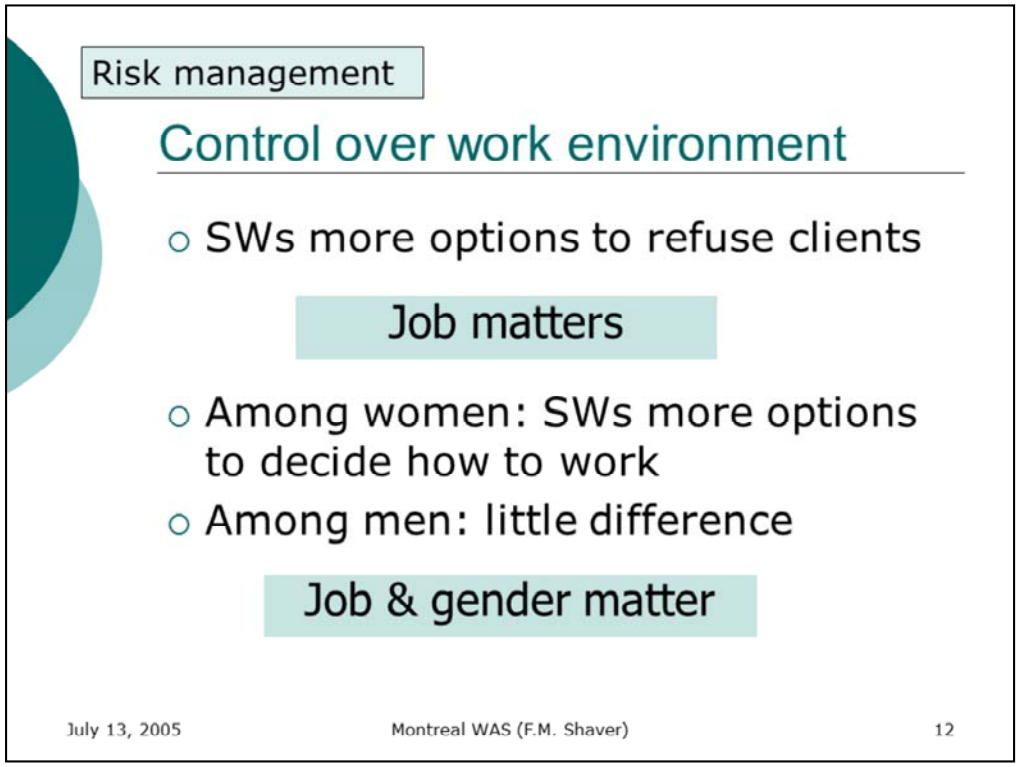
- •Women SWs suffered the most
- •But, women SWs and men HWs shared this vulnerability

•Experience with violence varied by job and depended on the risk-type

- •Men SWs were the most likely to be robbed
- •Robbery a more significant factor in the sex work environment
- •Assault a more significant factor in the hospital environment.

•Hospital work is risky too

•Given the differences, it is important to differentiate risk-types (i.e., between perceived and experienced risks.



Risk management styles: We looked at styles of risk management and identified two different contexts.

The first had to do with **Control over the work environment**. This concerns one's ability to handle anticipated or perceived risks before they happen. We used two indicators:

1. One's willingness to refuse a client / patient:

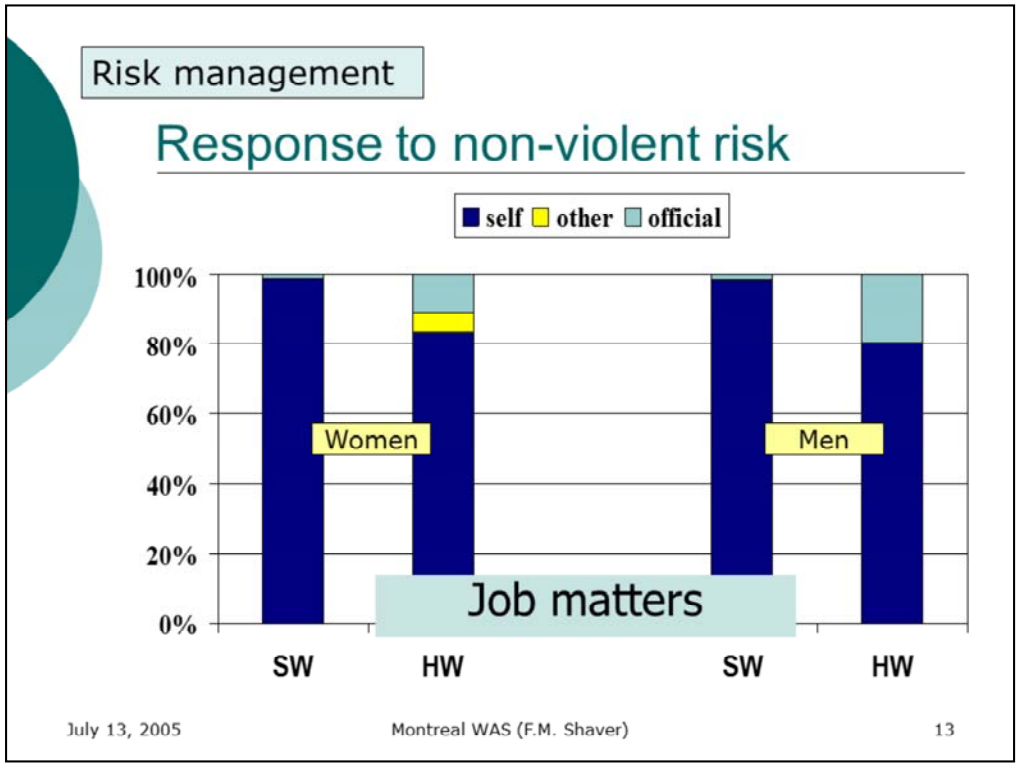
- SWs had more options to refuse clients than HWs (92% vs. 53%)

The job matters

2. One's freedom to decide how to do work

- Among women:: SWs felt they had more freedom than HWs to decide **how** to do their work in order to avoid risks (86% vs. 38%)
- Among men: there was no significant difference (77% vs. 67%)

In this case job & gender interact



Risk Management styles: We looked at styles of risk management and identified two different contexts.

The second context for risk management concerned the actions taken in Response to job risks. I was interested in whether they relied on Self / Other / Official.

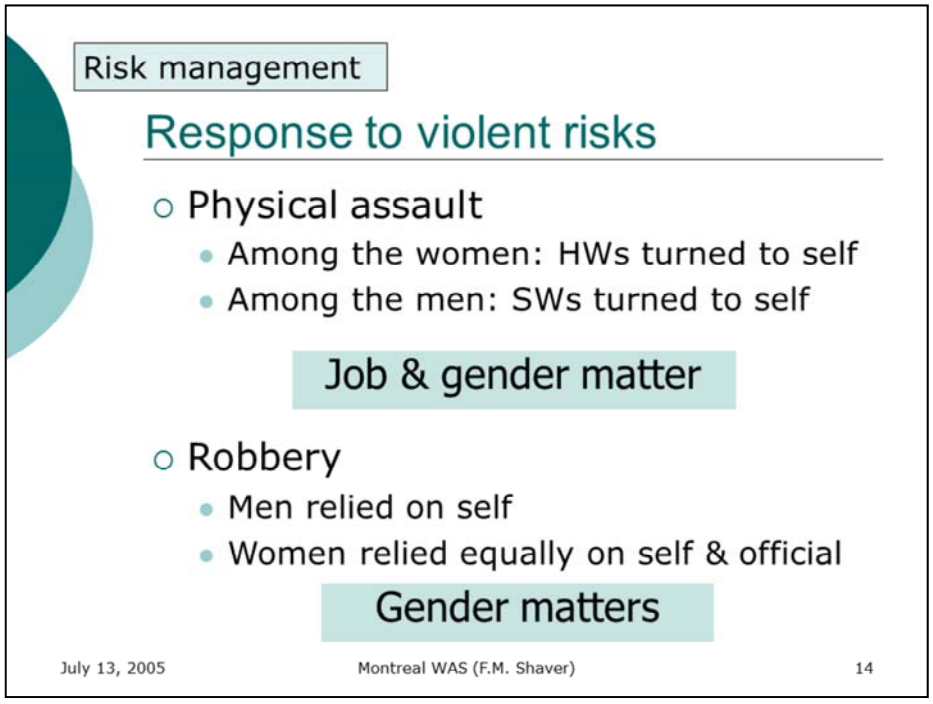
Response to non-violent risk (index)

This slide shows how workers responded to non-violent risks (unclear instructions, yelling/insults, sexual harassment).

•First we compared the extent to which they relied on themselves *(the dark blue bars)* : whether we look at women (on the left), or men (on the right), SWs were more likely to rely on self

•Comparing the other responses *(the yellow & the light blue bars)* shows that HWs were more likely to rely on official routes.

• **In this case The Job matters**



Risk management styles: We looked at styles of risk management and identified two different contexts. [The second context for risk management concerned the actions taken in Response to job risks. I was interested in whether they relied on Self / Other / Official.]

I don't have time to show the figures so will just give you the results for the way two violent situations are managed.

1. Physical assault

Among the women: HWs turned to self

Among the men: SWs turned to self

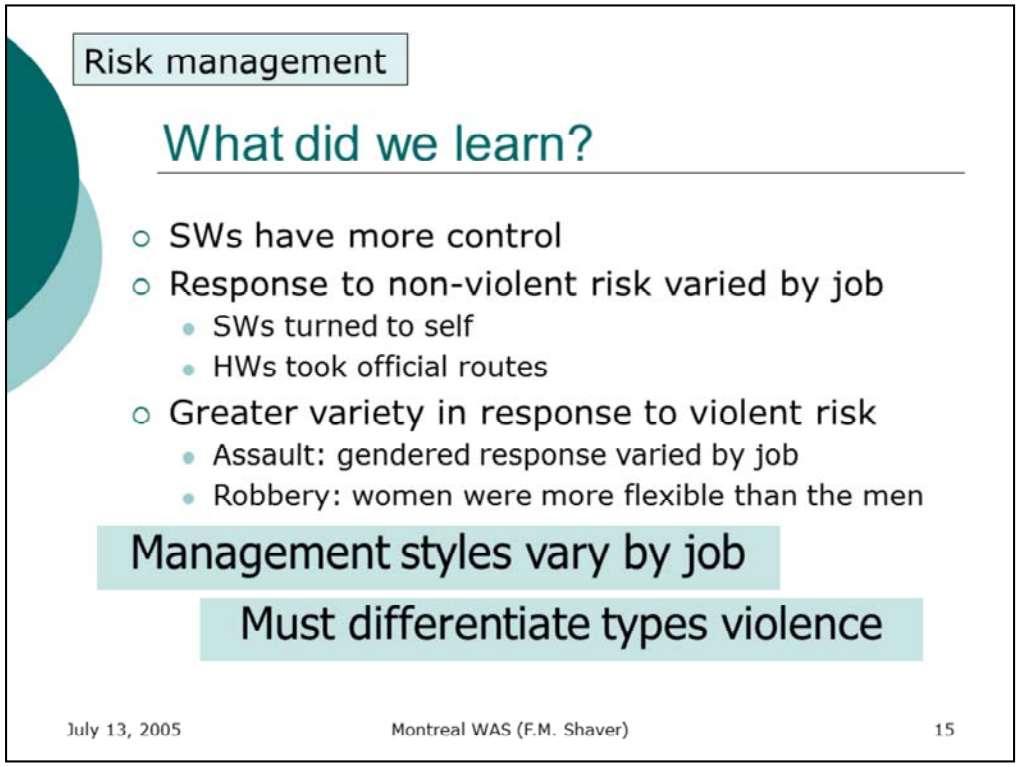
Job & gender matter

2. Robbery

Men relied on self

Women relied equally on self & official

In this case only **Gender matters**



What did we learn?

•SWs have more control over their work environment

•Response to non-violent risk (the index) varied by job

SWs turned to self

HWs took official routes

•Greater variety in response to violent risk

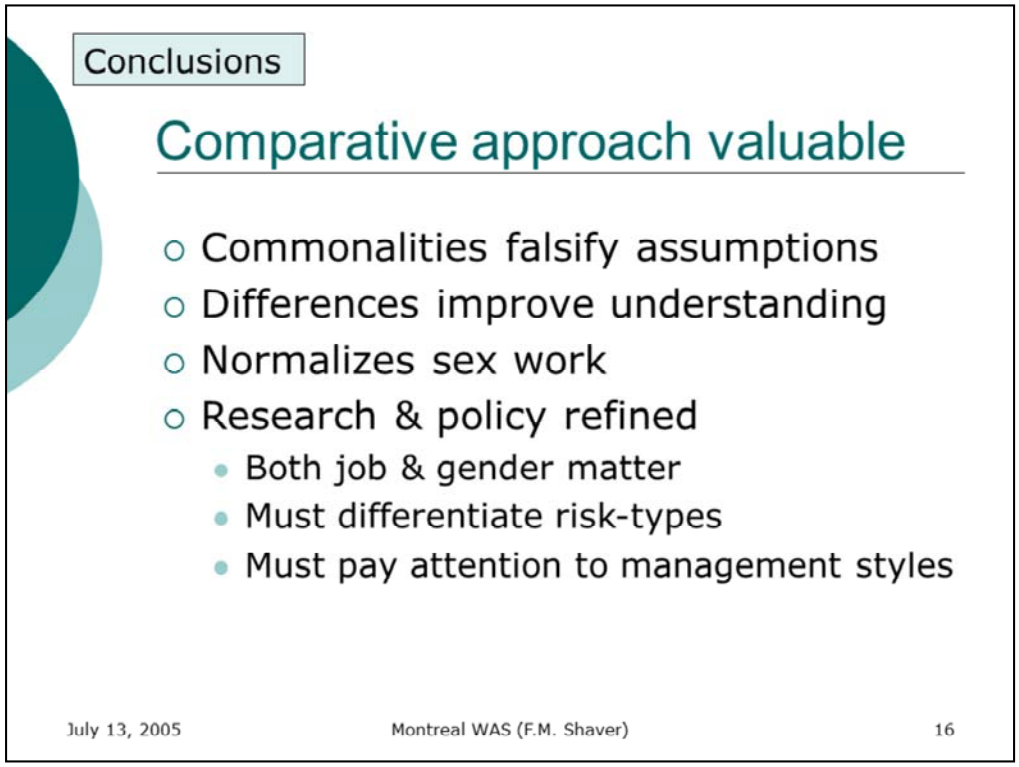
When assaulted: no significant job differences BUT did find a gendered response depending upon the job:

among women: HWs turned to self

among men: SWs more likely to turn to self

When robbed: women in both jobs were more flexible than the men

•**Must different between non-violent & violent risks** because they are managed differently in the different environments.



•**Conclusions : SW-HW comparison is valuable**

•Commonalities falsify popular perceptions

- •Can't assume SW more dangerous than other work (HWs more at risk for physical assault than SWs)

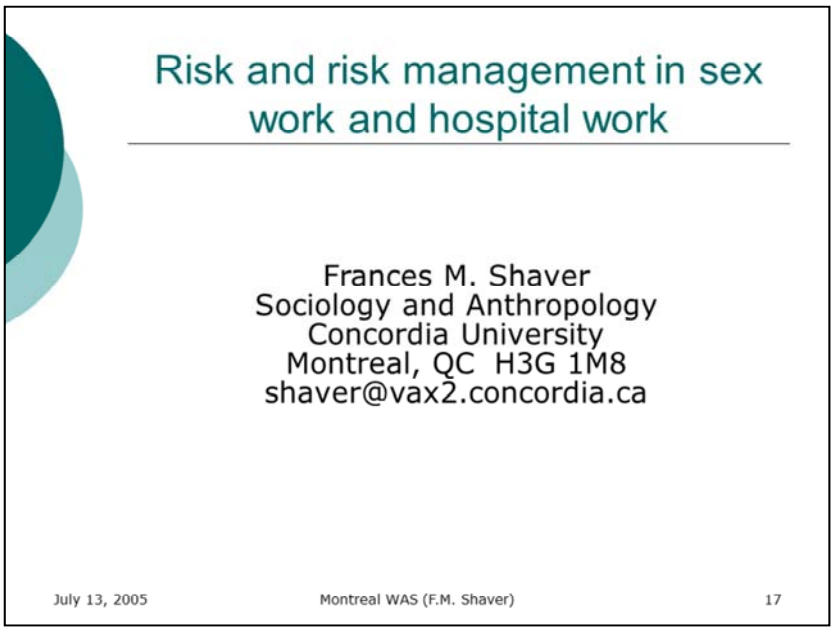
•Differences improve our understanding about work inm general as well as about SW & HW

•The differences & commonalities serve to Normalizes sex work

•Research & policy can be refined. We know that:

- •Job & gender both matter
- •Must differentiate risk-types

  (perceived & experienced / non-violent & violent)
- •Must pay attention to management styles when developing policy



Selected Readings

Ford, K.-A. (1998a). Evaluating Prostitution as a Human Service Occupation. In J. E. Elias, V.L. Bullough, V. Elias, & G. Brewer (Eds.), *Prostitution: On Whores, Hustlers, and Johns* (pp. 420-434). Amherst, NY: Prometheus Press.

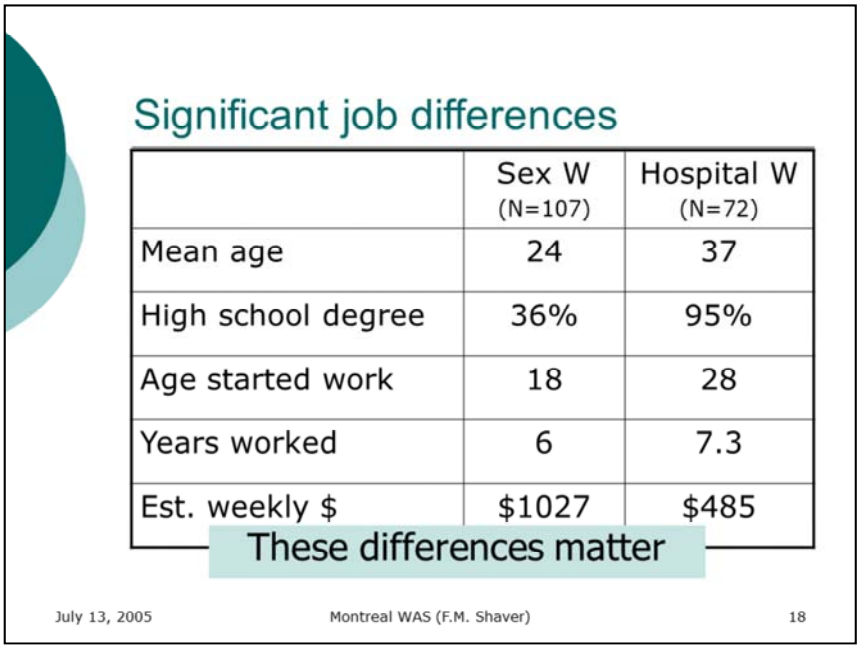
Ford, K.-A. (1998b). Risky Business: The Negotiation and Management of Work Related Risk by Patient-Attendants and Prostitutes. *Unpublished Masters Thesis* Concordia University, Montreal

Messing, K. (1991). *Occupational Safety and Health Concerns of Canadian Women—A Background Paper*. Ottawa: Labour Canada.

Shaver, F. M. (1996). Prostitution: On the dark side of the service industry. In T. Fleming (Ed.) *Post Critical Criminology (*pp. 42-55*).* Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice Hall.

Shaver, F.M. 2005. "Sex Work Research: Methodological and Ethical Challenges." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* Vol XX (X), 2005:1-24.

STAR (2005) Safety, Security and the Well-being of Sex Workers. Sex Trade Advocacy and Research (STAR): Universities of Windsor and Concordia. (Available on the STAR website: www.uwindsor.ca/star).



There are **significant job differences** (measured using selected occupational characteristics):

Hospital workers:

- are older
- have more education
- were older when they started their first regular HW job
- have worked a greater number of years

In addition:

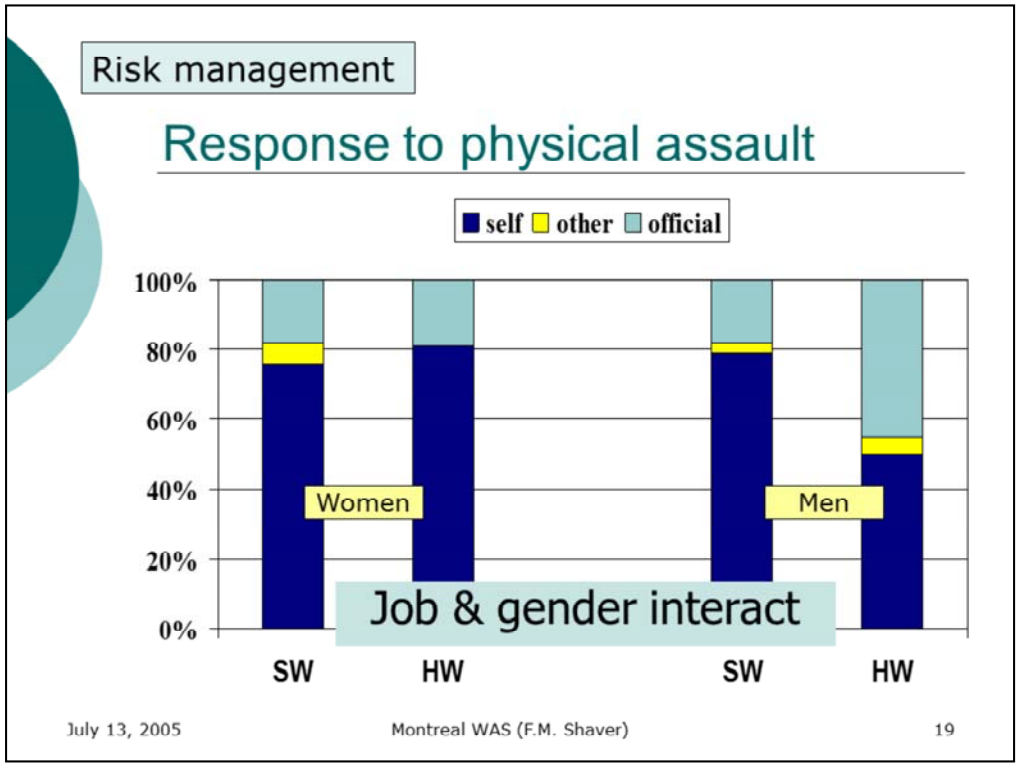
- Sex work provides a much higher salary

- **These differences** in occupational characteristics **matter**

Age, education, and years worked probably have an important impact on one's ability to deal with and manage work-related stress

- one's skill at managing risk likely increases with age
- and it most certainly increases with the number of years on the job.

Thus, to facilitate the control of these effects, I **matched individual SWs and HWs on number of key characteristics**.



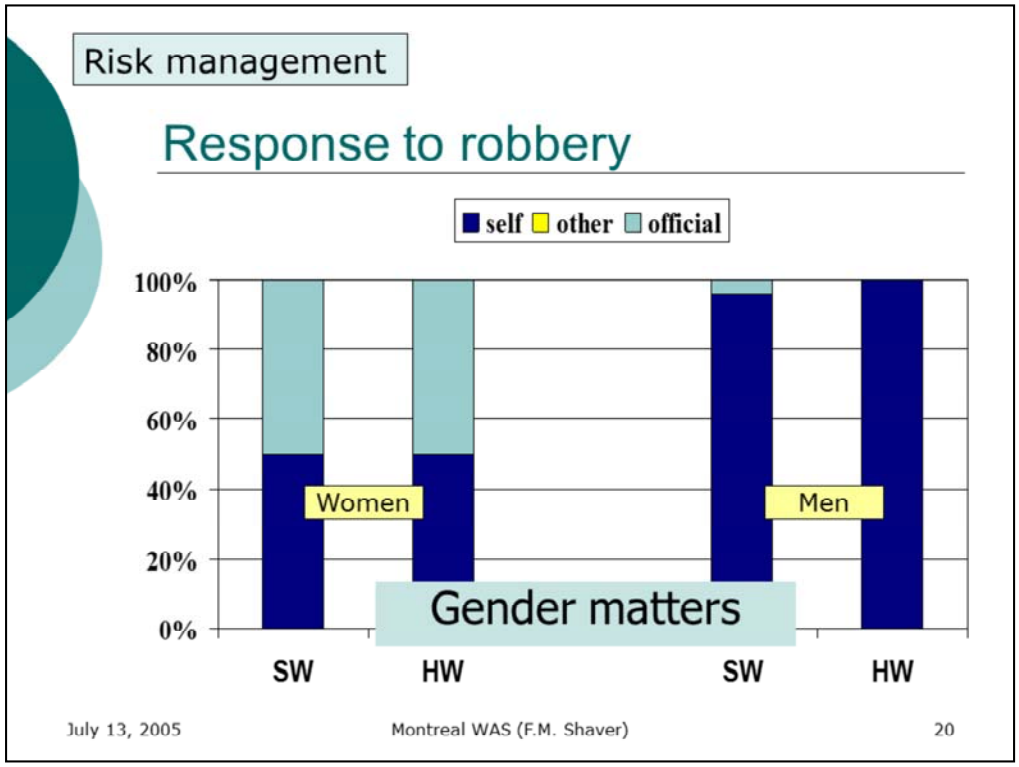
Risk Management: physical assault

This slide shows how workers managed (responded to) physical assault.

•First we compared the extent to which they relied on themselves *(the dark blue bars)* :

- Among the women: HWs were more likely to turn to self
- Among the men: SWs were more likely to turn to self
- Other differences (while interesting) were not significant

•In this case Job and gender interact



Risk Management: robbery

This slide shows how workers responded when robbed.

•Men (more than women) relied on themselves almost entirely.

•Women were more flexible: they used the official route equally as often as the personal route.

•In this case gender matters