

**Doing what ‘Works Best’:
Exploring the Narratives of Mothers who Work as Strippers**

Michelle Lesley Annett, B.A.

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Faculty of Graduate Studies, Brock University
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*The world is full of women
who'd tell me I should be ashamed of myself
if they had the chance. Quit dancing.
Get some self-respect
and a day job.
Right. And minimum wage,
and varicose veins, just standing
in one place for eight hours
behind a glass counter
bundled up to the neck, instead of naked as a meat sandwich.
Selling gloves, or something.
Instead of what I do sell.
You have to have talent
to peddle a thing so nebulous
and without material form.
Exploited, they'd say. Yes, any way
you cut it, but I've a choice
of how, and I'll take the money.*

– Margaret Atwood “Helen of Troy Does Counter Dancing” (1995:33)

Abstract

Despite a large body of research exploring the experiences of working mothers today, there is little literature focusing on mothers who take part in stigmatized and unconventional forms of paid labour. Taking up this line of inquiry, my MA thesis project explores both micro and macro-level understandings of the narrated experiences of four women in Canada, who are both mothers and exotic dancers, with the overarching question: ‘how do these women navigate and negotiate their socially constructed identities and practices as both mothers and sex workers?’. This thesis is informed by feminist methodologies and a broad array of literatures on social reproduction, social surveillance of mothering practices, the intensification of mothering, women working in the sex industry, and occupational stigma of exotic dancing.

My research consisted of four semi-structured phone interviews with women in Canada (all in the province of Ontario) who have (either currently or in the past) navigated both roles of mothering and stripping simultaneously. Through my interviews, I explored how the women in my study negotiated the work of social reproduction, the forms of support they had access to, and the barriers they have faced. My findings illuminate that due to limited access to affordable services in Canada, the mothers I interviewed rely on informal assistance from their key supports to provide necessary care work that the mothers could not fulfill due to the responsibilities of their paid work. Mothers also stress the necessity of managing their occupational stigma to comply with dominant ideologies of maternal caregiving by constructing personal communities and adopting techniques of secrecy and trust in order to enhance their ability to combine paid work and unpaid care. Overall my MA thesis offers insight into experiences, supports, and constraints that women face as they navigate the demands of paid labour, domestic work and unpaid caregiving in stigmatized and precarious conditions.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgments	iv
Chapter One: Introduction	1
Research Questions.....	3
Aims of this Research.....	4
Justification for my Focus on Exotic Dancing.....	4
Reflexivity & Rationale.....	6
Key Contributions.....	9
Organization of this Thesis	9
Chapter Two: Social Reproduction, Mothering and Exotic Dancing	12
<i>Theoretical Framework & Literature Review</i>	
I. Social Reproduction, Contemporary Caregiving and Mothering.....	12
i) Defining Social Reproduction.....	12
ii) Social Reproduction: Commodification, the Third Sector, and Unpaid Work.....	14
iii) Gendering of Social Reproduction: As a Waged, Unpaid, and Familial Responsibility.....	16
iv) Emotion Work as an Aspect of the Unwaged Work of Social Reproduction	20
v) Intensification and Surveillance of Mothering Practices.....	21
vi) Women’s Double Duty of Paid Work and Unpaid Care.....	24
II. Earning a Living from Exotic Dancing.....	25
i) Women’s Second-Class Status in the Canadian Paid Labour Force.....	25
ii) Sex Work and Exotic Dancing.....	26
iii) Achieving Success and the Use of Emotional Labour.....	29
iv) The Pursuit and Precariousness of Stripping.....	31
v) Stigma, Costs and Social Surveillance.....	33
III. Conclusions.....	35
Chapter Three: Methodology	37
i) Incorporation of Feminist Methodologies.....	38
ii) Use of Reflexivity and Recognition of My Social Location.....	38
iii) Establishing Connections: Recruitment and Interview Processes.....	40
iv) Analyzing the Data.....	44
v) My Experience with the REB.....	47
vi) Experiencing Stigma as a Sex Work Researcher.....	48
vii) Methodological Challenges and Potential Solutions.....	51
viii) Research Participants.....	52
ix) Figure 3.1.....	52
x) Conclusion.....	56
Chapter Four: ‘The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly’- Exploring Mothers’ Narratives of Paid and Unpaid Work	58
I. Mothering.....	58
i) The Good: Benefits of Mothering.....	58

ii) The Bad: Motherhood’s Hardships.....	62
iii) The Ugly: Motherhood’s Burdens and Costs.....	66
II. Exotic Dancing.....	67
i) The Good: Perks of Exotic Dancing.....	67
ii) The Bad: Financial Hardships Working as an Exotic Dancer.....	70
iii) The Ugly: Management and The Adverse Effects Working as a Stripper.....	74
III. Combining Mothering and Stripping.....	77
i) The Good: Perks of Being a Mother Working as a Stripper.....	77
ii) The Bad: The Difficulties Navigating Mothering and Stripping.....	80
iii) The Ugly: The Burdens of Navigating Mothering and Stripping.....	81
IV. Discussion.....	83
i) Mothering.....	83
ii) Exotic Dancing.....	85
iii) Mothering and Stripping.....	87
Conclusion.....	89
Chapter Five: ‘Making it Work’- Dealing with Stigma in Unpaid Care Work & Exotic Dancing	91
I. The Construction of Personal Communities.....	92
i) Redefining ‘Family’.....	93
ii) Establishing Positive Work Environments.....	95
iii) The Use of Secrecy.....	96
II. Conditions of Social Reproduction & Division of Parental Responsibilities.....	99
i) ‘Teaming Up’.....	99
ii) ‘Returning the Favor’.....	101
III. Discussion.....	102
i) The Construction of Personal Communities.....	102
ii) Conditions of Social Reproduction & Division of Parental Responsibilities.....	105
Conclusion.....	106
Chapter Six: Conclusions	107
Addressing my Research Question(s) and Main Findings.....	108
Limitations.....	111
Key Contributions.....	112
Implications for Future Research.....	113
References	115
Appendices	
Appendix A: Invitation to Participate Form.....	124
Appendix B: Informed Consent Form (In-Person Interview).....	126
Appendix C: Informed Consent Form (Phone/ Video-Calling Interview).....	127
Appendix D: Semi-Structured Interview Guide.....	131
Appendix E: Online Advertisement.....	134
Appendix F: Ethics Clearance Certificate.....	135
Appendix G: Ethics Modification Clearance Certificate.....	136

Chapter One: Introduction

Beer, boobs, booze and bros. Strip clubs are the epitome of ‘bro culture,’ exclusive environments in which men congregate to celebrate many of their ‘manly achievements’– from birthdays and bachelor parties, to promotions and other milestones. Existing on “the borders of ‘morally correct’ society” (Barton 2006:60) and catering to male heterosexual desires, strip clubs across North America feature performed routines of feminine hypersexuality at all hours of the night, offering patrons the opportunity to watch stage performances and purchase private lap dances. In an atmosphere aimed at satisfying patrons’ sexual desires and reinforcing dominant ideologies of hegemonic masculinity, strip clubs may be considered to resemble grown men’s version of Disneyland ‘*Where [Male, Heterosexual] Dreams Come True*’.

Although men who occupy these environments can experience some forms of stigma for doing so, the criticism they face is significantly less than the stigma experienced by the women providing the sexual entertainment (Frank 2003). For the women in my study, the hardest part of their career actually occurs outside of their workplace, in which they must “[confront] the constellation of assumptions about who they are because they work in a strip bar” (Barton 2006:73). These stereotypes, “depicting [their] sexual character as victimized martyr or conniving slut to judgments about [their] education level” (p. 73) characterize exotic dancers as “stupid, lazy, sex starved, addicted to crack, psychologically disturbed” (p. 74).¹ The stigmas associated with stripping significantly influence strippers’ personal identities, as exotic dancing is only conceptualized as an ‘acceptable’ career for “particular ‘types’ of women” (Bradley 2007:399). For instance, for those who also assume the roles of wife, girlfriend, or mother, stripping is deemed an inappropriate occupation; that is, the sexualized and stigmatized nature of

¹ In this thesis, the terms ‘exotic dancer’ and ‘stripper’ will be used interchangeably.

this paid work are socially perceived as contaminating the ‘innocence’ of their personal relationships. Further, those marked by association are also subject to experiencing a “*courtesy* stigma—contaminating [sex worker’s] associates, children, parents, and most especially, partners” (Bruckert 2012:58).² The women in this study identify strippers as sex workers, an association that is upheld in contemporary literature (Barton 2006; Bruckert 2012), which I discuss further in Chapter Two. Due to this perception, strippers are faced with managing “the negative image of their occupations” (Bradley 2007:379), the conventional norms associated with their other socially constructed roles, as well as protecting the image of those with whom they hold personal relationships.

Of all the personal relationships that could be affected by stigma, Bernadette Barton’s (2006) research indicates, “the one that causes them the most anguish is [their relationship] with their children” (p. 81). For women who juggle the roles of both mother and stripper, the fear that their children’s upbringing may be negatively impacted is an ever-present issue in their day-to-day lives. Whether it is the possibility that their child may “be teased by classmates, ostracized from peer activities, or simply feel ashamed of their mothers for stripping” (p. 81), mothers who engage in this form of paid work often worry about how their occupational stigma will impact their children’s overall well-being.

Although Barton (2006) identifies this relationship as the biggest concern for mothers working as exotic dancers, her entire book about the lives of exotic dancers dedicates less than a page to this discussion, and she does not explore how women, such as those in my study, manage the demands of their paid work and their responsibilities at home. To understand women’s

² According to Goffman (1963), *courtesy* stigma refers to the extension of the discrediting attributes to those with whom the stigmatized individual associates: “a relationship that leads the wider society to treat both individuals in some respects as one” (p. 30).

experiences of mothering and the daily practices of social reproduction while also navigating the demands of sex work, it is crucial to further examine how women navigate and negotiate the responsibilities of these two socially constructed archetypes: “the mixing of the sacred (asexual Madonna) and the profane (hypersexual Whore)” (Musial 2014:407).

Research Questions

Taking up these lines of inquiry, my MA thesis aims to explore micro and macro-level understandings of the narrated experiences of women who are both mothers and exotic dancers, with the overarching question: ‘**how do these women navigate and negotiate their socially constructed roles and practices as both mothers and sex workers?**’ In order to address this question, I chose to conduct a small qualitative research study that explored the daily routines and practices employed by women to meet the responsibilities of both roles, illuminating how these practices widen contemporary scholarly literature focusing on the experiences of working mothers today.

To adequately explore this research question and to understand the barriers and supports women face when navigating both forms of work, this study was guided by five sub-questions. These include:

- i) What are the daily practices involved in the navigation and negotiation of mothering and exotic dancing?
- ii) How do participants narrate these roles (caregiving/mothering and exotic dancing) and their impacts on each other?
- iii) What macro-level social structures and social institutions structure the ways in which participants manage paid work and domestic care work?

iv) How do they negotiate the social surveillance of these two socially constructed identities, and with what effects?

v) How does the navigation of, and between, these socially constructed roles contribute to contemporary theoretical and empirical understandings of mothering, changing conditions of care and social reproduction, and paid and unpaid work?

Aims of this Research

My thesis has three key aims. First, I aim to illuminate women's accounts of their experiences of, and navigation between, mothering and exotic dancing by exploring how they negotiate the daily work of social reproduction, the forms of support they have access to, and the barriers they face. One of the goals of this project is to give space to the narratives of the women in my study by placing their day-to-day experiences of both forms of work in the context of contemporary capitalist society, and in relation to gender and class inequalities. Second, this thesis aims to contribute to growing scholarship on working mothers by analyzing the extent to which participants' experiences of paid work and unpaid care is reflected in contemporary scholarly literature. Finally, I aim to draw attention to the need for further exploration on how mothers navigate paid work that is socially surveilled and stigmatized.

Justification for my Focus on Exotic Dancing

In the course of this research, I have often been asked '*why focus on strippers, rather than mothers navigating other forms of feminized and sexualized work?*' Although all women working within the sex work industry are stigmatized for participating in forms of employment deemed 'promiscuous' or 'deviant,' stripping offers an intriguing site of analysis for a variety of reasons. Stripping is one of the highest-paid *legal* female occupations within North America, offering women earnings that *can* surpass most pink-collar careers (Barton 2006). Furthermore,

stripping is one of the few occupations in North America where women generally earn more income than men, even where they do not have higher education credentials (Barton 2006).

The conditions of this paid work are somewhat unique because, unlike other forms of women's paid work within the sex work industry, exotic dancers are actually required to pay their employers for the privilege to work (Barton 2006). Although these fees vary depending on the club, most strippers are required to pay a fee or a combination of fees, such as a stage fee, house fee and DJ fee, in order to perform in front of the club's audience. If a dancer misses her shift, she is required to pay her employer a cancellation fee, reimbursing the club for any potential financial loss. Some clubs also require dancers to meet drink quotas to maximize the club's overall profit. When clubs fail to meet this quota, they hold dancers individually responsible for paying the balance. Consequently, despite the fact that stripping offers women the opportunity to earn an income that surpasses other forms of gendered paid work, on slower nights, some dancers may actually leave their shift with less money than they arrived with.

Strippers' unpredictable income affects their navigation of paid work and unpaid care. First, earning an unpredictable income can pose obstacles for mothers in terms of managing their finances, such as meeting payment deadlines (i.e. bills, childcare fees, etc.) as well as paying monthly rental fees. Second, the financial repercussions of leaving a shift empty-handed can impose both an emotional and financial toll on a dancer, affecting the ways in which she navigates her paid work and unpaid responsibilities at home.³ Unlike other forms of self-employed work that would impose the same challenges of earning an unpredictable income, such as working as a hair-dresser, strippers are also burdened with the stigmatization associated with their paid work.

³ This emotional toll includes, but is not limited to forfeiting time spent with their children to be at work, as well as the emotional toll "raised by constant rejection" (Barton 2006:65) at work.

Reflexivity & Rationale

To understand my position pursuing this research, it is crucial to disclose my evolving understandings of women working in the sex work industry, and how my perspective has changed over the past few years. Growing up in a devout Christian household, I was raised to characterize promiscuous behaviour as nothing short of sin – sex was for marriage; sexuality was a private matter; showing cleavage was sleazy; and wearing ‘short shorts’ was a public display of immorality. Like many, I could never wrap my head around the idea of stripping nor how someone could showcase their body to complete strangers in exchange for money. I held the common assumption that strippers were the girls who got involved with the ‘wrong crowd’, wanted to make some quick money, used their means to purchase drugs or alcohol and had little respect for themselves and their families. My previous, less informed perspective had me perceiving stripping as an antithetical to working hard, being educated, and establishing a respectable reputation. This perspective that I held was predominantly informed by the values instilled in me by my religious upbringing, as well as the ideals associated with dominant ideologies of capitalist work ethic and economic success (see Weber 2001).

Partly because of how exotic dancers are portrayed in mainstream media and pop culture, especially in movies such as *Forrest Gump* (1994), *Coyote Ugly* (2000) and *The Hangover* (2009), I was conditioned to attach stigmas to strippers’ personhood. The images presented to me through mainstream media never challenged, questioned or disproved these stigmas throughout my teenage years – instead, they reinforced stigmatized portrayals of strippers as uneducated, promiscuous, troubled and deviant women. In turn, I was taught that it was socially acceptable to stigmatize exotic dancers, and that these labels of indecency adequately characterized women working in the sex work industry.

As I grew older however, I began to develop my own opinions on promiscuity and sex work in general. When I first encountered Barton's (2006) book *Stripped* while doing my undergraduate degree, I began to realize how problematic and misconceived my understanding of women working in the sex work industry was. I had never stepped foot into a strip club, or *to my knowledge*, had never interacted with someone who supports themselves and their family through exotic dancing. As Barton (2006) puts it, strippers are just regular people and part of our everyday world – they are women “who buy tomato sauce and milk at the grocery store and grumble about traffic” (p. 88). They do not stand out or appear as ‘different’ in a large crowd of people.

Upon reading Barton's work, I also came to the realization that these same degrading labels of deviancy are not placed on other women working in the entertainment industry, many of whom support themselves financially by sexualizing and marketing their bodies as well. Models, actresses, singers and dancers rarely face this criticism, and are typically praised for their talents and appearance. Young girls consistently look up to these women, and the media regularly advertises how ideal these women are – offering tips and techniques on how we can ‘look, feel and be just like them.’ Because of this portrayal, when these women wear ‘risqué’ clothing or participate in sexually suggestive behavior, they are generally regarded as sexy, empowering, and artistic. Their performances of eroticism are praised, and they are idealized and rewarded for being sexually and ‘tastefully’ appealing.

An interesting contemporary example of media-portrayed classifications between ‘acceptable’ and ‘unacceptable’ performances of eroticism can be found in the case of Stormy Daniels vs. Donald Trump. In Jill Filipovic's (2018) opinion piece for *The New York Times* – *Stormy Daniels, Feminist Hero* – Filipovic compares the portrayal of Daniels' character in the

media, being repulsive, undignified and deceptive, to that of the portrayal of Trump's wives:

For women, there is a significant cost to advertising sexual availability and expecting dollars be handed directly over. Women who monetize their attractiveness through conventional acting or modeling, like Mr. Trump's wives, may be seen as less deserving of their resources than a man who was, like Mr. Trump, born rich, but they are generally in the clear...It's women who cross the line from looking sexy for pay to having sex for pay, like Ms. Daniels, who face the most judgment.

As Filipovic demonstrates, there remains a dichotomy where women “can be only perfectly good or entirely bad” (2018), especially within the entertainment industry, as partly demonstrated by the divide between the types of female entertainers deemed worthy of respect. As select performances of eroticism are treated as morally and socially acceptable, sex workers continue to face slut-shaming and marginalization due to the nature of their careers, in contrast to performances of sexuality that are perceived as empowering and are idolized.

In light of this prevailing dichotomy, I became aware that not only are strippers a stigmatized group, but that their lived experiences are also generally ignored (Bruckert 2002; Barton 2006). Influenced by mainstream media narratives, strippers “are often discouraged from talking about how the experience of dancing shaped her, let alone that she enjoyed it”(Barton 2006:79) – in turn, securing the stereotypes placed upon them (Barton 2006).

Although Barton's work has inspired me to focus my MA thesis project on women working as exotic dancers, pursuing this topic was far from my original intent. Having been interested in the construction of motherhood for a number of years now (see Annett 2017), particularly literature acknowledging mothering as an undervalued and demanding responsibility, I entered graduate school with the notion that my thesis would explore the complexities associated with contemporary mothering. Interested in studying the construction, production and reproduction of motherhood, women's unpaid ‘second shift’ (Hochschild and Machung 2012) and the increasing surveillance of mothering practices, I originally planned to explore the gender

and class inequalities ever-present throughout the demands of motherhood. Instead, I decided to bridge my dual interests together by focusing on women navigating both forms of highly gendered work (mothering and stripping), and in turn, provide a unique analysis of the tensions present between this rather unexplored juxtaposition.

Key Contributions

While seeking to produce an understanding of the daily practices involved in women's navigation of stigmatized paid work and their second shift of unpaid care, one of the key contributions of this qualitative research study is enhancing an understanding of how mothers manage both forms of gendered work. That is, this research study will contribute to scholarly literatures focusing on the experiences of women who engage in both mothering and sexualized forms of paid work. In turn, I hope that this research will inform public debates and ultimately destigmatize the work of strippers in Canada, while also contributing to widening the concept of working mothers in contemporary literature.

Organization of this Thesis

This thesis is organized into six chapters, including this introduction.

“Chapter Two: Social Reproduction, Mothering and Exotic Dancing” offers a theoretical framework and review of scholarly literatures, constructed in three distinct sections. To begin, this chapter presents selected research that explores the work of social reproduction, contemporary caregiving and mothering, primarily informed by Silvia Federici (2012) in addition to Canadian scholars Bonnie Fox (2001, 2006), Kate Bezanson (2006a, 2006b), and Meg Luxton (2006a, 2006b). I present contemporary discussions focusing on women earning their living from engaging in stripping as a form of paid work, informed by the works of Barton (2006) and Bruckert (2002, 2012). As little research has been conducted on mothers earning their

living by exotic dancing, this chapter concludes with a discussion and analysis of both bodies of literature, drawing parallels between both forms of work.

“Chapter Three: Methodology” reveals the justification behind my methodological approach to conducting this research, including: the incorporation of feminist methodologies, use of reflexivity, recruitment and interview processes and stages of data analysis. Further, I reflect on my experiences pursuing this research topic, such as applying to the REB for clearance and experiencing stigma by association (Goffman 1963), demonstrating how I addressed and navigated these methodological challenges. To conclude, this chapter briefly introduces each woman who participated in this qualitative study.

“Chapter Four: The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly” takes up my qualitative study’s sub-question: *‘how do these women narrate these roles (caregiving/mothering and exotic dancing) and their impacts on each other?’* To begin, this chapter illustrates how my participants describe mothering as transformational, emotionally rewarding and gratifying work, while also drawing attention to the hardships and sacrifices associated with the gendered nature of social reproduction. Next, I explore how the women in my study identify their experiences working as exotic dancers as emotionally rewarding and empowering work that grants them financial independence, while also shedding light on the financial hardships and costs they have experienced in their paid working environments. Finally, this chapter illuminates how the women in my study describe the benefits, hardships and costs of navigating both forms of work simultaneously, concluding with a discussion highlighting the conditions and social contexts that structure their experiences of unpaid care work and the work of exotic dancing.

“Chapter Five: Making it Work” focuses on how my participants navigate and negotiate their socially constructed roles, and more specifically, how they do so while managing the

stigmatization of their paid labour. This chapter identifies the practices, strategies and community supports the mothers in my study incorporate into their daily lives in order to fulfill the demands of unpaid care work, reduce their costs due to their dual roles, and to help manage the stigmatized nature of their paid work. These practices include redefining ‘family,’ establishing healthy work environments, and adapting practices involving secrecy and trust. This chapter also explores participants’ conditions of social reproduction and division of parental responsibilities, drawing attention to how participants *team up* with their partners, co-parents, family and friends to assist in the unpaid demands of social reproduction, and *return the favor* to those who act as their key supports. To conclude, this chapter highlights the conditions, ideologies and social contexts that structure participants’ navigation of unpaid care work and stigmatized paid labour.

“Chapter Six: Conclusions” provides a summary of my research project, followed by a brief discussion of this study’s main findings. I discuss the limitations of this research, including the lack of intersectional perspectives, small sample size, and my social location as the researcher. I offer suggestions for further investigation of this research topic and my plans to expand upon this study’s focus in my PhD dissertation. This chapter is followed by the Appendices, which include supplementary material that played a critical role in conducting this qualitative study (i.e. ethics clearance, interview guide, recruitment materials).

Chapter Two: Social Reproduction, Mothering and Exotic Dancing

Theoretical Framework & Literature Review

To construct the theoretical foundation for this project, I've integrated my reading of some of the key writings on social reproduction (Fox 2001; Bezanson 2006a, 2006b; Bezanson and Luxton 2006; Luxton 2006a, 2006b; Federici 2012), social surveillance of mothers (Braedley 2006; Faircloth and Murray 2015; Henderson, Harmon and Newman 2016), the intensification of mothering (Hays 1996; Fox 2006), women working in the sex industry (Bruckert 2002; Barton 2006; Bruckert 2012) and stigma associated with particular kinds of paid work (Goffman 1963; Hannem 2012; Link and Hatzenbuehler 2016). As this project explores two separate fields of literature, unpaid care work and the work of exotic dancing, this chapter has been organized in two distinct sections to address both bodies of literature:

- i) Social Reproduction, Contemporary Caregiving and Mothering
- ii) Earning a Living from Exotic Dancing

To conclude, the last section of this chapter draws parallels between both bodies of literature, identifying similarities between both forms of work and illustrating how mothering and exotic dancing are gendered roles structured by specific socio-economic contexts that pose significant challenges to perform.

I. SOCIAL REPRODUCTION, CONTEMPORARY CAREGIVING AND MOTHERING

(i) Defining Social Reproduction

The concept of social reproduction is dynamic (Bezanson and Luxton 2006) and plays a prominent role in the overall structuring of, and relations within, the Canadian federal system (Cameron 2006). According to Isabella Bakker's (2007) analysis, definitions of social reproduction generally relate to three particular aspects, including; "(a) biological

reproduction... and the conditions and social constructions of motherhood; (b) the reproduction of the labour force... and (c) the reproduction and provisioning of caring needs” (p. 541). The work of social reproduction, as Bezanson (2006a) contends, refers to the daily practices dedicated to “maintaining and reproducing people and their labour[ing] power” (p. 26); these practices are highly dependent upon the incorporation of generational skills, norms and identities within the private sphere (Picchio 1992; Elson 1998; Bakker and Gill 2003; Bezanson 2006a; Cameron 2006). As performed in, and structured by, economic systems (Bezanson 2006b), the work of social reproduction requires the use of fundamental resources and provision of basic necessities, in addition to constructing and preserving the emotional, social, intellectual and cultural well-being of “individual and collective identities” (Bezanson and Luxton 2006:3).

Social reproduction is regarded as being dynamic, as these responsibilities of everyday life are met through varying combinations of efforts from individual actors and broader institutions, including “the state, the market, the family/household, and the third sector” (Bezanson and Luxton 2006:3). Providing the example of medical care, Luxton (2006b) demonstrates how multiple parties assume differing responsibilities associated with this work:

Increasingly, formal medical care relies on informal, usually family, caregivers to take care of patients, both during their hospital stay and after. The current organization of health care assumes that informal caregivers will be available and puts pressure on patients and their families and friends to reduce the responsibility of the medical system for patients. (p. 269)

Luxton’s example illuminates how state policies and regulations mediate the conditions under which the demands of social reproduction are fulfilled, particularly within capitalist societies. Such regulations play a prominent role in fulfilling this work – “structuring the inputs into, and conditions of, social reproduction” (Bezanson 2006b:176).

Determining the resources made available and practices employed in households, the state influences the means of reproducing people and their labouring power and aims to do so in

order to secure a cohesive economic and social structure (Sehgal 2005) in addition to reproducing gendered, classed and racialized hierarchies. Accordingly, not only is the work of social reproduction necessary for tending to and maintaining the well-being of members in society, it is also part of the overall preservation of capitalism and the economic system itself (Bezanson 2006a; Bezanson and Luxton 2006). As a result, the work of social reproduction is fulfilled by a combination of sectors, and is regarded as critical for both “the daily and long-term life of capitalist societies” (Luxton 2006b:263).

(ii) Social Reproduction: Commodification, the Third Sector, and Unpaid Work

The work of social reproduction in Canada is, in part, met by state services and supports, including, but not limited to, health care, education, social assistance, pensions, and housing support (Luxton 2006a). These government-funded services fundamentally aim to play “an active role in market regulation and social provisioning” (Bezanson and Luxton 2006:4). However, due to Canada’s post 1970’s adherence to a neoliberal approach to economic management, Bezanson (2006a) stresses that much of the work of social reproduction has actually shifted away from this realm of direct, state-provided services, and instead is now commodified, fulfilled by the voluntary/non-profit sector, and performed as an unpaid caregiving responsibility within families, extended families, neighbourhoods and other close social networks.⁴

As commodified services, the work of social reproduction is significantly “undervalued socially and underpaid” (Bezanson 2006b:175). These services, “increasingly ‘taken out of the home’” (Federici 2012:49) and placed on the market for a price, cater to the physical and mental

⁴ Bezanson and Luxton (2006) define neo-liberalism as a political model that “emphasizes ‘free’ markets, decreased state regulation of capital, lower direct taxes, and an approach that sees the individual, rather than the market, as blameworthy for poverty and unemployment” (p. 4).

demands associated with social reproduction, as well as the emotional, leisure, and recreational needs, to name just a few (Bezanson 2006b). In catering to these needs, these commodified domestic services have developed mass industries, helping families manage the demands of their paid and unpaid work (Federici 2012) -- ranging from “sex and nannies, boarding schools or even birthday parties for children” (Luxton 2006a:33). As a result, Federici (2012) emphasizes “more meals are now eaten out of the home, more clothes are washed in laundromats or by dry-cleaners, and more food is bought already prepared for consumption” (p. 107). Although this commodification aims to reduce the work funded by government services, access to services from the private sector (such as childcare) must be recognized as a classed privilege, dependent upon one’s capacity to pay for them, and are therefore not an accessible alternative for all Canadian families.

With the decrease of government-funded supports, an array of community and third-sector organizations have increasingly assumed a critical role in assisting individuals and families to fulfill the demands associated with social reproduction (Luxton 2006a). Luxton (2006b) demonstrates the variety of these services, from providing single-issue supports “such as food banks, rape crisis centers, or HIV/AIDS support groups” (p. 263) to moving “beyond the direct provision of services to agitate for changes to existing state and/or employer-based contributions to social reproduction” (Luxton 2006a:38). Despite these supports, the work of social reproduction, especially in capitalist societies, remains heavily dependent on the unpaid work of family and household members, primarily women (Luxton 2006b).

Although families generally assume the unpaid responsibilities associated with the work of social reproduction, it is crucial to acknowledge that other informal parties, including friends, co-workers, and neighbors, may also aid in fulfilling these demands. In her analysis of informal

care work and the unpaid responsibilities of social reproduction, Luxton (2006b) draws attention to accessibility concerns relative to Canada's dependence on unpaid work, as the reality is "not everyone has family available [or willing/able]" to help" (p. 288). For those who rely on informal and unpaid caregivers to help fulfill the work of social reproduction, the involvement of their caregivers is far more "unpredictable, inconsistent, and precarious than that prompted by kinship and family obligations" (p. 288). This shift in responsibilities to that of non-profit organizations limits families' access to necessary social reproduction supports, in which "without sufficient support, standards of living drop, the most vulnerable households typically collapse, and a crisis in social reproduction is produced" (Luxton 2006a:38).

(iii) Gendering of Social Reproduction: As a Waged, Unpaid, and Familial Responsibility

Whether the work of social reproduction is fulfilled through the voluntary/non-profit organizations or as a form of paid or unpaid work, it is crucial to acknowledge that this work is still predominately performed by women (Bezanson 2006b; Bezanson and Luxton 2006; Braedley 2006) and is characterized as being 'women's work' (Federici 2012). Acknowledging the gendered nature of this work, Bezanson (2006b) explains "while there is nothing inherent in this work that requires it to be done by women, its organization and carrying out is highly gendered" (p. 175) and remains "extensive, undervalued, and largely invisible" (p. 175). The gendered nature of social reproduction, whether achieved through paid or unpaid forms of work, thus plays a fundamental role in producing, reproducing and reinforcing unequal gendered power relations (Federici 2012). This section will explore the gendered labour of social reproduction in terms of waged, unpaid and familial work to illuminate how women's work is maintained as invisible and undervalued, which, in turn, poses issues of gender inequity that continue to prevail in Canada's labour force today.

As Waged Labour

The waged work of social reproduction varies and can include occupations such as “child care worker, teacher, pediatrician, elder care worker, gerontologist, nurse, nursing aide, doctor, counsellor, nutritionist, yoga instructor” (Folbre 2006:188). As this work “often involves the provision of services that women are expected to offer to their family members out of love and obligation” (England, Budig and Folbre 2002:457), waged workers engaging in this form of labour are often compensated “less than an amount commensurate with [the] skills and demands” (p. 457) associated with their paid responsibilities. Due to low rates of compensation and recognition of labour being performed, the waged labour of social reproduction is maintained as socially and economically undervalued work (Arat-Koç 2006; Federici 2012).

Women who engage in some waged social reproductive occupations can face a number of consequences while doing so, including job insecurity and having relatively limited opportunities for career development or advancement (McLafferty and Preston 1991; Folbre 2006; Federici 2012). Accordingly, the gendered nature of the waged work of social reproduction sustains issues of gender inequality within the labour market, reinforcing women’s inferiority within the labour market, while also upholding the undervalued work of social reproduction within the home.

As Unpaid Care Work

Gendered and unpaid responsibilities of care work, including “birthing and socializing the young... caring for the old, maintaining households, [and] building communities” (Fraser 2016:101) play a primary role in fulfilling the work of social reproduction, and, as it is not financially compensated, is acknowledged as performed under the guise of ‘love’ (Federici 2012). In her analysis of the gendered nature of unpaid work, Federici (2012) stresses that

because this labour is maintained as unwaged work, the struggles associated with these responsibilities also go unnoticed. Although wages often do not adequately compensate workers for the labour that they perform, the “wage at least recognizes that you are a worker, and you can bargain and struggle around and against the terms and the quantity of that wage, the terms and the quantity of that work” (p. 16) – at least, to some extent. As such, without formal compensation for this unwaged labour, which has been transformed as a naturalized attribute of a woman’s character, women fulfilling these unwaged demands are thus perceived as “nagging bitches, not as workers in struggle” (p. 16). As a result, gendered and unpaid responsibilities of social reproduction lack recognition of being an actual form of work, and in turn, are devalued within Canada’s capitalist society.

Not only are the unwaged and indispensable responsibilities of social reproduction maintained as being invisible labour; they also pose significant issues pertaining to gender inequity within the labour force. For instance, due to these unwaged and gendered responsibilities, women lack financial independence (Fraser 2016) from their partners, families, informal supports, state assistance, third sector organizations and social services. Further, the wagelessness of this work perpetuates “an increase in the gendered division of labour” (Fox 2001:388). In maintaining this divide and the wagelessness of the work of social reproduction, Federici (2012) explains “women will always confront capital and the state with less power than men, and in conditions of extreme social and economic vulnerability” (p. 110).

As a Familial Responsibility

As much of the unpaid responsibilities of social reproduction are domesticated, families assume a profound role in fulfilling the demands of this work (Fox 2006). With families acting as “products of ideologies... legal practice... and economic organization” (Fox and Luxton

2001:29), the family unit holds the responsibility of producing, protecting, socializing, raising, and caring for those within the dynamic, acting as the primary unit of social reproduction (Fox 2006). Although all family members may participate in fulfilling the demands of unpaid care work, it is mothers who primarily “appear to be the agents of social reproduction” (Reay 1998:205) within the home.

In her analysis of the responsibilities associated with motherhood, Bonnie Fox (2006) identifies the ideologies and practices of motherhood as the “foundation of social reproduction” (p. 23), and defines mothering as being a socially, historically and culturally constructed nurturing relationship. This work, which Harriet Rosenberg (2001) classifies as “motherwork,” (p. 303) plays an integral role in social reproduction, as the responsibilities of ‘mothering’ are characterized by a series of caring acts, including cooking, cleaning and caregiving (Rosenblum 2012; Glenn 2016). Positioning women as “the angel in the home” (Fraser 2016:106) or “the parent who cares enough to give up herself” (Rosenblum 2012:67), the principal responsibilities of parenting have thus become entangled within this innate image, portraying women as naturally best suited as primary caregivers. This gendered divide; “relegate[ing] people with vaginas to ‘motherhood’ and people with penises to ‘fatherhood’” (p. 67) has naturalized housework and unpaid care work as a woman’s “internal need, an aspiration” (Federici 2012: 16), in turn, maintaining the unpaid work of social reproduction a gendered responsibility.

Social reproduction, in both waged and unwaged forms, has thus been produced, reproduced and reinforced as a gendered responsibility that is also attached to existing gendered, racialized and classed inequalities within capitalism itself. In turn, the work of social reproduction, when performed as hidden labour, has granted dominance to women within the

realm of housework and unpaid care, sustaining the divide between social reproduction and economic production.

(iv) Emotion Work as an Aspect of the Unwaged Work of Social Reproduction

The work of unwaged social reproduction requires caring labour, which also includes the incorporation of emotional energy (Hays 1996; Luxton 2006; Fox 2006; Federici 2012). This emotional energy, or what Arlie Hochschild (1983) refers to as ‘emotion work’ or ‘emotion management’, is generally associated with women and involves the induction or suppression of feelings to protect the mental and emotional well-being of others. Distinguishing emotion work from ‘emotional labour,’ Hochschild identifies emotion work as including acts performed within the private realm, *without pay*, producing a form of “use value” (p. 7).⁵ For instance, in Daphne Pederson’s (2012) analysis of the differences between what constitutes ‘good mothering’ from ‘good parenting,’ she distinguishes good mothering as requiring the use of emotion work, “assuming emotional responsibility for the caregiving and safety of children, and acting as pivotal figures in family life” (230). Emotion work thus plays an essential role in fulfilling the contemporary demands and responsibilities of social reproduction and mothering, providing the capacity to “nurture, manage and befriend” (Hochschild 1983:170) those being cared for.

Although emotion management aims to secure the well-being of those being cared for, Hochschild urges that emotion work must be recognized as exacting a high cost for those performing this work. In a similar way, in her analysis on the strains experienced by caregivers participating in this form of work, Hazel Mac Rea (1998) concludes:

⁵ Hochschild (1983) defines emotional labour as “the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display; emotional labor is sold for a wage and therefore has *exchange value*” (p. 7). Therefore, by definition, the unwaged work of social reproduction does not involve the use of emotional labour.

Those who are required to perform a lot of emotion work are at risk of losing touch with their feelings. They may even feel the need to mentally detach themselves from their feelings in order to survive the emotional strain of their work. (p. 146)

Despite playing a necessary role in fulfilling the work of social reproduction and protecting the well-being of those being cared for, emotion work may also inflict an emotional toll onto those providing this care-- affecting “the degree to which we listen to feeling and sometimes our very capacity to feel” (Hochschild 1983:28). These costs are further intensified by increased expectations associated with fulfilling these responsibilities, as well as “certain social conditions” (p. 28) that increase one’s vulnerabilities. Emotional strains can thus impose detrimental effects on those participating in both the waged and unwaged work of social reproduction, such as suffering from stress, burnout, “a dimming or numbing of their inner signals” (p. 126) as well as “becom[ing] estranged from the acting itself” (p. 127).

(v) Intensification and Surveillance of Mothering Practices

Over the past two decades, unwaged responsibilities of social reproduction and mothering practices have become increasingly intensified and surveilled (Braedley 2006), holding the potential to impose detrimental effects on those who take on this work (Hays 1996; Rosenberg 2001; Douglas and Michaels 2004; Fox 2006; Blum 2007; Lee 2008; Faircloth and Murray 2015; Henderson et al. 2016).⁶ Neoliberal norms pertaining to mothering responsibilities and practices have intensified expectations regarding ‘adequate’ child-rearing, such that they “have escalated at a dizzying rate: the bar is now sky-high” (Fox 2006:236). Demanding intensive mothering practices to be “child-centered, expert-guided, emotionally absorbing, labor-intensive, and financially expensive” (Hays 1996:8), the intensification of unwaged care work holds women individually responsible for their children’s well-being and development (Hays 1996; Lee 2008),

⁶ Working-class and marginalized mothers experience forms of this surveillance in an even more extreme manner (Gillies 2006).

in turn, expecting mothers to put their “own needs ‘on hold’” (Fox 2006:247).⁷ This “all-caring, self-sacrificing” (O’Brien Hallstein 2006:97) engagement of caregiving practices upholds the expectation that “mothers are not supposed to need, nor have the right to need, social services or social funds” (Rosenberg 2001:308) in order to meet the demands of their mothering responsibilities.⁸

These intensified demands and social norms regarding adequate child-rearing have also profoundly influenced the social construction of the ‘ideal mother’ – an image that has been tied to perfectionism that assumes particular classed and other varied forms of privileges. However, Henderson et al. (2016) identify this expectation of perfectionism as detrimental to the mental health of all mothers, even those “who do not subscribe to these [intensified] ideologies” (p. 512). Contemporary expectations of mothering, which perpetuate escalated “standards of perfection” (Douglas and Michaels 2004:5) produce negative outcomes for mothers, from experiencing “increased stress and anxiety” (Henderson et al. 2016:512) to forms of “depression and reduced self-esteem” (p. 515). Accordingly, as this shift towards intensified norms of mothering subjects all mothers to experiencing “the pressure to be perfect and guilt for not living up to high mothering expectations” (p. 512), some mothers can be considered at-risk for experiencing mental health issues. These adverse effects can also be connected to a failure to fulfill ideologies of ‘ideal’ mothering, in combination with some women’s lack of access to varied resources.

⁷ Sharon Hays (1996) contends that the fulfillment of these intensified expectations “requires not only large quantities of money but also... copious amounts of physical, moral, mental, and emotional energy” (p. 4). Despite the fact that the ideology of intensive mothering requires middle-class resources to fulfill, all women are subject to this ideology, regardless of their race or class.

⁸ As women are held individually responsible for tending to the demands of housework and unpaid care, Harriet Rosenberg (2001) indicates that mothers’ reliance upon state supports is often regarded as a “frill” (p. 308).

Social Surveillance

Illuminating how the private responsibilities of motherhood have transformed into “matter[s] of public scrutiny and intervention” (Lee 2008:468), Douglas and Michaels (2004) contend the intensification of mothering practices have also been subjected to increasing social surveillance. In defining social surveillance, Marwick (2012) highlights that unlike state surveillance, “social surveillance takes place between individuals, rather than organization entities and individuals” (p. 379). This surveillance can occur in varied forms, including face-to-face as well as via social media, “distinguished from traditional surveillance along three axes (power, hierarchy, and reciprocity)” (p. 378). The increased social surveillance of mothering practices is regarded as actively exposing mothers to various forms of ‘mommy blame’ – holding mothers accountable for their children’s lack of well-being, success and good behaviour (Blum 2007; Faircloth and Murray 2015). Social surveillance of mothering practices, which produces pressures to achieve moral ‘gold-standards’ of parenting, thus positions mothers’ overall well-being as being at-risk, heightening mothers’ exposure to the detrimental effects associated with the unwaged and intensified demands of care work (Henderson et al. 2016).

Glenn (2016) also identifies the racial division of mothering practices as reproducing inequalities like class hierarchies – permitting “white, middle-class women to enjoy the benefits and status of being mothers, and elevat[ing] them to the position of ‘mother-managers’” (p. 7). As women in varying classes, races and social conditions “experience the ideology of intensive mothering differently” (Taylor 2011:901), their experiences of surveillance, mommy-blame and guilt varies as well (Sutherland 2010; Taylor 2011). Focusing on the experiences of low-income, Black single mothers, Elliot, Powell and Brenton’s (2015) research demonstrates social surveillance that coincides with intensified child-rearing expectation, “increas[ing] their burdens,

stresses, and hardships” (p. 367) as with this intensified ideology, “*mothers* are [subject] to blame” (p. 367). Accordingly, the ideology of intensive mothering and social surveillance of mothering practices must be regarded as imposing, upholding and reproducing classed and racial inequalities – as intensified mothering practices are not compatible with constraints placed on working-class and racialized mothers (Sutherland 2010; Elliot et al. 2015).

vi) Women’s Double Duty of Paid Work and Unpaid Care

The intensification and increasing surveillance of mothering practices arose “at a time of profound change in the economy” (Fox 2006:236), including the slow decline of the hegemonic ideal of single earner families, from the mid-1980’s to present day (Cameron 2006). Despite mothers increasing participation in the paid labour force, however, Pedulla and Thébaud (2015) contend that this shift “has not been matched with a corresponding increase in men’s share of unpaid household work” (p. 116). With the expectation for mothers to participate in the paid labour market in addition to fulfilling the intensified and unpaid care practices at home, women are thus faced with dual responsibilities – coming home from their paid employment to meet the demands associated with their “‘second shift’ at home” (Hochschild and Machung 2012:4). Due to these dual responsibilities, Budig, Misra and Boeckmann (2012) contend that across many countries, including Canada, women, are ultimately penalized when they attempt to combine motherhood with employment, thus reinforcing women’s second-class status throughout the paid labour force. These ‘motherhood penalties’ acts as a primary “source of inequality among women and between women and men” (p. 165) – imposing forms of discrimination that limits their opportunities of being hired, assuming full-time paid working positions, earning a pay raise, receiving promotions and gaining more authoritative positions within their workplace.

With lack of state-funded supports and *affordable* childcare services (MacDonald and Friendly 2019; Prentice and White 2019), the responsibilities of domestic work and child care act as a woman's second job, subjecting her to the demands and burdens of this double-duty. As a result, women's dual responsibilities actively penalize their ability to advance and achieve economic success within the paid labour force since their unwaged responsibilities at home act as a means of sustaining a gendered divide in both employment and wages.

II. EARNING A LIVING FROM EXOTIC DANCING

(i) Women's Second-Class Status in the Canadian Paid Labour Force

Issues of gender inequality in Canada's paid labour market can easily be identified through recognizing one prominent factor: the gender wage gap (Fraser 1994; Federici 2012; Finnie, Childs, Pavlic and Jevtovic 2014; Moyser 2017). Despite progress that has been made over recent decades, Canada's gendered wage gap continues – remaining at 0.87 with women earning just \$26.11 per hour in 2015, in comparison to men's average hourly wage of \$29.86 (Moyser 2017). In exploring this divide, Melissa Moyser demonstrates that men out-earned women in almost every occupational group, including jobs traditionally perceived as 'pink-collar occupations,' reflecting larger cultural and social values of male "privilege and tokenism" (p. 30). Finnie et al.'s (2014) study also identified gendered differences in the annual income of Ontario university graduates, concluding that male graduates earn on average \$10,000 more than female graduates within the first year of completing their degree, which over time, widened the gap with around a \$20,000 difference in annual earnings. The ongoing nature of this gendered wage gap illustrates the continuation of sex-discrimination within the paid labour force.

As women's unpaid work within the home remains hidden, the gender wage gap is linked to the devaluation of social reproduction (Fraser 1994; Federici 2012). Since employers are fully

aware that women “are used to work[ing] for nothing, and... that they can get [women] at a low price” (Federici 2012:34), men continue to assume superior positions within the workforce, while women typically participate in low-paying and feminine forms of work (Budig et al. 2012). This wageless labour, performed in the private realm, is what Federici (2012) identifies as “the primary cause of [women’s] weakness in the wage labor market” (p. 34) – naturalizing the idea that women do not need nor deserve compensation for the domestic work that they perform. Consequently, the unpaid work of social reproduction is intrinsically linked to women’s paid labour as societal perceptions towards women’s unwaged care work in the home is reflected through the paid labour market, preserving Canada’s gendered pay gap and making the engagement in unconventional and atypical forms of paid work an attractive option for many women to pursue.

(ii) Sex Work and Exotic Dancing

Although the gender wage gap dominates most occupational fields, there is one particular area within the labour market in which women’s earnings are generally higher in comparison to men’s – particular segments of the sex work industry (Barton 2006). When coining the term ‘sex work’ in 1978, Carol Leigh did so with the purpose of “chang[ing] the focus from women being ‘used’ to women who work in a profession” (Barton 2006:168). Recognizing sex work as a form of labour, Shawna Ferris (2015) defines sex work as including the business of sexual services, exchanging these services for financial remuneration or other forms of compensation (xvii). This work is “limited not to the act of ‘sex’, but also to various forms of direct and indirect sexual activities” (Kingston and Sanders 2010:3). Although this rather vague term “has long been subject to intense political struggles over its definition” (Hardy 2010:167), sex work has become more inclusive, incorporating a wider range of precarious occupations “from the street prostitute

or escort to the phone sex ‘actress,’ stripper, or porn star... all of which involve some degree of interaction between customer and sex worker” (Escoffier 2007:174).

‘Stripping,’ also referred to as ‘exotic dancing,’ is a legal form of sex work (Bruckert 2002; Deshotels and Forsyth 2006; Hardy and Sanders 2015) in which women can earn up to thousands of dollars more per night (Burana 2001; DeMarco 2002; Escoffier 2007). In distinguishing exotic dancing from other forms of sex work, Katherine Frank (2007) conceptualizes stripping as “a form of adult entertainment involving varying states of nudity, physical contact, and constellations of erotic and personal services such as talk, fantasy, and companionship” (p. 502). This entertainment can be performed on stages in clubs, or sold as private dances to clients, and involves a complex set of demands, including “arousing men, coping with abuse and contempt, deflecting and neutralizing potentially dangerous situations... meanwhile, extracting as much money from [clients] as [they] possibly can” (Barton 2006:70). As a result, not only is stripping perceived as being a dangerous occupation for women, it must also be recognized as a difficult and draining career, in a highly competitive, physically demanding, and emotionally exhausting work environment (Fogel and Quinlan 2011).

Conceptualizing the Strip Club: For the Patron and for the Dancers

Depending on whether one is a patron or a dancer, strip clubs can appear as very different environments (Barton 2006). For the patron, the strip club acts as a male space – culturally reproduced by the expectation that female dancers must serve their male clients, “catering to his physical or sexual desires” (Bruckert 2002:39). Within these environments, female nudity is often perceived as the minimum necessity “for most patrons to be satisfied with their experience” (Wesely 2003:484), however, patrons also commonly expect that sexual contact will be a commodity for purchase. Despite the fact that the maleness of this space is upheld by the

presence of erotic labour and highly sexualized entertainment, the majority of the clubs within North America also aim to strengthen, construct and protect the maleness of this environment through other means – including prohibiting women from entering without being escorted by a male counterpart (Barton 2006). In doing so, these clubs are able to uphold the maleness of these environments, as well as prevent “the presence in the audience of wives, girlfriends, co-workers, or neighbors observing the spectacle... [from] potentially disrupt[ing] this fantasy” (Frank 2003:4). For the patron then, strip clubs are environments that regulate female sexuality in order to maintain and enhance the male client’s overall experience, ensuring that the “‘bad girls’ are inside and ‘good girls’ are [kept] outside” (p. 4).

As a working environment, however, strip clubs can appear radically different. Unlike most places of employment, strip clubs in Canada are regarded as unique, as they are not only highly regulated (Barton 2006), but also involve the regulation of morality (Bruckert 2002). Turning morality into a federal matter, the criminal justice system legitimizes stigmas associated with stripping, implementing laws and regulations that aim to “confine strip clubs and dancers” (Couto 2006:47) from “corrupting the general public” (p. 47). As a means of protecting the well-being of their business, strip clubs enforce “what acts are prohibited and permitted” (Barton 2006:11), imposing monetary fines or dismissal on dancers for any infractions of these regulations. Accordingly, “relationships between employers and strippers can be very exploitative” (Fogel and Quinlan 2011:53) because complying with an employer’s regulations is essential for a dancer to secure her economic success. For the dancer, the strip club acts as a highly regulated, monitored, and competitive working environment.

(iii) Achieving Success and the Use of Emotional Labour

In addition to abiding by federal laws and rules put forth by club management, a stripper's success is dependent upon a combination of other factors, including, but not limited to her appearance (Bruckert 2002; Barton 2006), fulfilling clients' needs/ desires (Barton 2006), and the incorporation of emotional labour (Bruckert 2002; Deshotels and Forsyth 2006). As these factors play a critical role in an exotic dancers' success, this section examines the ways in which women manage their appearance and performance to enhance their income, demonstrating the investments women make and the various forms of labour they perform in order to meet the demands of their career.

Appearance

Since the strip club is essentially a large "buyer's market... [where] the consumer has the 'right' to buy whatever 'product' he prefers" (Barton 2006:12), clients' sexual preferences play a contributing role in which dancers they tip and request private dances from. Having their physical attributes "constantly on display—being evaluated, rejected, or admired" (p. 12), dancers' investment in their appearance, ranging from their clothing choices, hair, make-up, and even cosmetic surgeries, affects how much money they earn. In recognizing the impacts a dancer's appearance has on her overall success, Bruckert (2002) defines this investment as 'unacknowledged labour,' and more importantly, a necessary investment for women in this industry. Although dancers are capable of making physical changes to secure their financial remuneration, factors that also dictate a dancer's income include their height, age and race are beyond their control (Barton 2006). Accordingly, a dancer's appearance acts as a distinguishing characteristic that dictates whether they earn "more or less money on a given night" (p. 13).

Fulfilling Client's Needs and Emotional Labour

Strippers' recognition of their client's needs and desires also influences their financial success, similar to that of other sales workers (Bruckert 2002; Barton 2006). Whereas a sales worker is responsible for approaching customers and sparking their interest in purchasing a product, strippers must entice patrons to purchase a private dance from them, as "tips are often small and rarely add up to much money... [so] the bulk of their money is made dancing one on one with a client" (p. 16). In attracting these clients, dancers spend time circling around the club, starting friendly conversations and drinking/eating with patrons. To ensure that they go home with as much money as possible, strippers must 'read' the patrons who they are interacting with, and judge if the amount of time they are spending with each and every customer is financially worthwhile. In addition, if they have sold a private dance to a client, dancers must also read what their client is interested in sexually, utilizing this information to enhance their earnings. Therefore, an understanding of who each client is, what their intentions are and what they enjoy most allows exotic dancers to secure their economic success.

Emotional labour plays a central role in securing a dancer's economic success, allowing her to fulfill the desires of her clients by producing "a self that is able to be (virtually simultaneously) assertive and coy but always pleasing and interested" (Bruckert 2002:87). Emotional labour, as described by Deshotels and Forsyth (2006), is at the very core of exotic dancing, requiring dancers to perform "a cluster of activities designed to stimulate the sexual fantasies of patrons for financial remuneration" (p. 226), including, but not limited to "verbal ploys to imply sexual or erotic availability" (p. 226). As stripping, like other forms of sex work, perpetuates the notion that "a woman's worth in the world is tied to how beautiful and desirable she is" (Barton 2006:65) dancers must also incorporate forms of emotional labour to "dissociate

from the full personal implications of that knowledge” (p. 65). The use of emotional labour, or what Hochschild (1983) refers to as ‘deep acting,’ thus requires strippers to manage their own feelings to protect their emotional well-being (Bruckert 2002), in addition to producing a commodification of feeling for their clients (Deshotel and Forsyth 2006) to secure their income and the profit accumulated by the club itself. In summary, varying factors, including the maintenance of appearance, acknowledgement of clients’ desires and emotional labour, go into fulfilling the demands of exotic dancing. They also influence an exotic dancer’s financial success in a highly competitive and demanding occupation.

(iv) The Pursuit and Precariousness of Stripping

As stripping is a risky, stigmatized, physically and emotionally demanding career, women working in the sex work industry are commonly asked the question: ‘why’d you choose to pursue work in this field?’ (Barton 2006). Although stripping remains socially taboo, women’s motivations are generally linked to both the flexibility of hours and financial benefits that stripping offers (Hardy 2010; Fogel and Quinlan 2011) in comparison to other gendered forms of paid work (Bruckert 2002). As Barton (2006) states:

Many women begin dancing after struggling to support themselves through more conventional means and after exhausting other employment options. Finding work that supports oneself without a bachelor’s degree—and, unfortunately, sometimes with one—is increasingly difficult in the twenty-first century... [as] the number of jobs that pay a living wage is decreasing. (p. 25)

Consequently, a woman’s choice to participate in the sex work industry is largely influenced by the labour market and the lack of opportunities available for women to earn a sustainable living (Fogel and Quinlan 2011; Hannem and Tigchelaar 2016).

In recognizing that women’s decision to pursue exotic dancing is likely “fuelled by their frustration within a labour climate that provides unappealing options for women” (Fogel and Quinlan 2011:52; see also Bruckert 2012), it is crucial to recognize that the very nature of the

contemporary female strip trade “is situated within, and characterized by... precarious labour conditions” (Fogel and Quinlan 2011:51).⁹ As most strippers are self-employed, stripping is a form of work “that operates outside of standard labour practices” (Bruckert 2002:106) and continues to be profoundly influenced by the precarious conditions of the labour market itself (Fogel and Quinlan 2011). Receiving no benefits (e.g. healthcare, sick days, maternity leave and parental leave, unless they pay premiums to EI to access extended benefits under the *Fairness for the Self-Employed Act* (Department of Justice Canada 2012)) or opportunities for career advancement (Bruckert 2002), dancers are exposed to a number of precarious conditions, including but not limited to: “an unsteady income for strippers, an unclear employee/employer relationship, no benefits or compensation, an individualistic and competitive work environment, and physically and emotionally demanding work” (Fogel and Quinlan 2011:55).¹⁰ Therefore, although becoming an exotic dancer may appear to be an attractive option for women, both in terms of finances and flexibility, it also results in precarious conditions under which strippers’ work does not grant them robust measures of security – often exacting mental, physical and financial costs that are generally associated with other forms of precarious employment.

⁹ In broadly defining precarious work, Cranford, Vosko and Zukewich (2003) classify precarious labour as riddled with job insecurity, instability and limited protections-- “plac[ing] emphasis on the quality of employment” (p. 455). Exposing workers to forms of social and economic vulnerability (Rodgers and Rodgers 1989; Strauss 2018), precarious work is regarded as “uncertain, unpredictable, and risky from the point of view of the worker” (Kalleberg 2009:2), benefitting those employing the precarious labourers, and granting precarious workers comparatively limited bargaining power in the paid labour market (Cranford et al. 2003).

¹⁰ Although self-employed mothers and fathers now have the option of accessing extended coverage by opting to pay these premiums (Department of Justice Canada 2012), it is crucial to recognize that it remains difficult to make steady contributions when their earnings are unpredictable and precarious. Additionally, accessing maternity and parental benefits under this act can pose challenges for many, as “mothers/fathers outside of Québec must have registered one year previously, and qualify if they have reduced the amount of time devoted to their business by more than 40 per cent because of childbirth/caring, paid contributions to the regime, and earned at least CAD\$ 7121 (in 2018) from self-employment in the reference period of the previous 52 weeks” (Doucet, Lero, McKay and Tremblay 2019:94).

(v) Stigma, Costs and Social Surveillance

In addition to the costs experienced by exotic dancers due to the precarious conditions of this form of paid work, the stigmatization of exotic dancing can also produce various hardships for women who earn their living working as strippers. Reducing individuals “from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one” (Goffman 1963:3), stigma functions to discredit attributes, impacting the stigmatized other’s ability to receive acceptance from ‘the normal’—those who are *perceived* as complying with societal and cultural norms.¹¹

Stigma plays an “under recognized role” (Link and Hatzenbuehler 2016:653) in producing inequalities throughout society by significantly disadvantaging and hindering stigmatized individuals in accessing fundamental resources. Characterizing an individual as “mattering less” (p. 653), stigmatized bodies experience varied forms of social exclusion and discrimination – making state and social resources, including “housing, education, jobs, and the opportunity to live a healthy life” (p. 654) less accessible to them. In recognizing these repercussions associated with stigmatization, Stacey Hannem (2012) contends those who possess a blemish of morality or character face “the greatest impact in terms of levels of discrimination and acceptance” (p. 18), as these stigmas become attached to an individual’s personhood. Blemishes of one’s moral character can thus act as a fundamental cause of social, economic, legal, gender (Bruckert 2002; 2012), workplace, and health inequalities (Benoit et al. 2018; Benoit et al.2019) – positioning stigmatized bodies within the margins of society.

Being in a “stigma-laden profession” (Barton 2006:74), strippers are often characterized by a cluster of stereotypes, depicting them as ‘diseased,’ and ‘morally contaminated’ women (Bruckert 2012). Producing serious repercussions on their personal and professional lives

¹¹ Here I stress perception, as stigma does not rely solely on the attribute itself but the recognition of this attribute as being ‘normal’ or undesirable (Goffman 1963).

(Barton 2006), the stigmas associated with stripping act as unavoidable attributes – discrediting their perceived moral and personal character. Unable to “leave [these stigmas] at the office, put [them] on the back burner, or take a vacation from [them]” (Barton 2006:74), the stigmas of stripping extends beyond the strip club, acting as a ‘master label’ that characterizes who they are as individuals in all areas of their daily life (Bruckert 2012). As provocatively expressed by Lara Catharine Morrow (2012), all strippers endure varied degrees of stigma, as “stigma is the pole upon which the stripper dances” (p. 357).

When exploring the stigmatization of exotic dancing, Bruckert’s (2002) research found that “working as a stripper becomes being a stripper, an identity marker with very real implications [,] ... shaping the worker’s experience of the wider world” (p. 128). The stigmas of exotic dancing are thus reflected back on to the dancers themselves (Barton 2006), characterizing exotic dancers as risky, promiscuous and untrustworthy women. Due to this portrayal, strippers often experience various forms of discrimination in different aspects of their lives; from attempting to apply for housing and new employment, to even, in the United States, accessing health care resources (Barton 2006). For those who also participate in other forms of paid work, many fear that such discrimination will lead to the termination of their employment, “should someone find out” (p. 80) about their involvement in the sex work industry.

The nature of exotic dancing also exacts a toll on women assuming work in this field. Although strippers often experience various forms of positive reinforcement through the compliments they receive and money their sexualized bodies earn, Barton (2006) contends that the nature of this career causes strippers to become “increasingly cynical, jaded, and ill as time passe[s], both with the actual work and with the motivations of men” (p. 109). With strip clubs existing in “the borders of ‘morally correct’ society” (p. 60), many patrons have the perception

that “normal rules of social etiquette do not apply” (p. 60), subjecting dancers to various forms of verbal abuse, constant rejection and sexual harassment. Further, Barton’s research found “the more the stripper is treated poorly, the more she learns to expect such treatment; the more she believes she deserves it; the harder it is for her to create positive changes in her life” (p. 90). Accordingly, the nature of exotic dancing has ramifications for women’s mental well-being (Bruckert 2002). Thus, although some contemporary feminists contend that stripping is an empowering form of paid work, the stigmatization and nature of exotic dancing produces adverse effects on the lives of strippers, as “there is nothing empowering about the stigmas [exotic] dancers shoulder” (Barton 2006:74).

III. CONCLUSIONS

Although the roles of mothering and exotic dancing are described in two separate and parallel bodies of literature with little connection between them, there are in fact similarities present in both forms of work. For instance, both mothering and stripping are forms of gendered labour, even if not socially recognized as forms of ‘work’ (Bromwich and DeJong, 2015). Further, both mothering and stripping undergo a significant amount of social surveillance, in which ideal performances of each respective role expects women to be physically, emotionally and mentally invested in fulfilling their gendered responsibilities.

Bromwich and Dejong (2015) identify the work of mothering and sex work as being common roles, as both forms of work are structured by socio-economic contexts that impose challenges on the women fulfilling the demands of their respective roles. For instance, a mother’s ‘choice’ to engage in particular practices of social reproduction is largely influenced by the labour market, structuring the conditions in which a mother is able to fulfill the demands of this work (Bezanson 2006b; Bakker 2007; Glenn 2016). Capital acts as a means of power

(Bakker 2007; Fraser 2016), dictating the options that mothers have for obtaining help or assistance with domestic work (Bezanson 2006b; Federici 2012). Consequently, mothers are often unable to reduce their unpaid responsibilities, such as childcare and domestic tasks, resulting in more personal and economic costs to fulfill the demands of their 'mothering' role.

Strippers' choice to engage in a stigmatized form of paid work is also influenced by the labour market (Fogel and Quinlan 2011), structuring the conditions impacting women's ability to earn a sustainable income even where they do not have high educational levels (Barton 2006; Fogel and Quinlan 2011). As the gender wage gap continues to prevail and reproduce gender inequalities throughout the labour force, there remains a lack of opportunities available for women to earn a suitable income, making the work of exotic dancing an appealing option for some (Bruckert 2002; Barton 2006; Hardy 2010; Fogel and Quinlan 2011). This choice, structured by macro-level contexts, subjects women to adverse effects and repercussions of stigmatization for engaging in 'deviant' labour (Barton 2006). These structures, which will be further analyzed throughout this study's analysis, play a prominent role in the ways in which women experience their engagement of mothering and exotic dancing, illuminating parallels between both forms of gendered work. Further discussions of these similarities will appear in chapters to follow, grounded in my empirical findings of navigating these dual roles.

Chapter Three: Methodology

According to Teela Sanders (2006), research on sex workers, and marginalized women in general, can present significant methodological challenges “at every stage” (p. 464) of the research process. Most often these concerns stem from hierarchal relations present between the interviewer and interviewee (C.R.I.A.W. 1995), causing ethics committees to question the appropriateness of the research and express concern for the potential risks either party may face. As the media brands strippers “as a threat to self or public” (Benoit et al. 2019), many graduate committees express hesitation over the research’s influence on the reputation of the institution itself (Barton 2006). Awareness of these challenges that typically arise was therefore essential to construct a convincing methodological approach for this project – an approach that was compatible with my capabilities as a qualitative researcher, and more importantly, an approach that prioritized the participant’s well-being at every stage of the research process.

In discussing this approach, this chapter will focus on; i) the incorporation of feminist methodologies, ii) the use of reflexivity and recognizing my own social location as the sole interviewer; iii) the details regarding the recruitment and interview processes; iv) the procedures involved in analyzing the data; v) my experience with Brock University’s research ethics board; vi) my experience with stigma as a sex work researcher and; vii) the methodological challenges that this study encountered and the changes I would make in the future to address these challenges. To conclude the chapter, I will briefly introduce each woman that participated in this qualitative study, and will highlight my experiences recruiting, corresponding with, and interviewing each participant individually.

(i) Incorporation of Feminist Methodologies

With the aims of this study in mind, in addition to the theoretical texts that constructed my theoretical framework, I felt it was necessary that this project incorporated the use of feminist methodologies. As women's lives have been studied and interpreted "within male stream lenses" (Doucet and Mauthner 2006:39) for centuries, many feminist researchers have felt compelled to take on the task of ensuring they conduct qualitative research that challenges male assumptions and theories of women's experiences. In doing so, feminist researchers uphold the belief that knowledge on women must be produced "for women and, where possible, with women" (p. 40), and in turn, recognize the very nature of society as having been constructed on the basis of patriarchy.

Although there is no distinct all-encompassing feminist method itself, feminist scholars construct their own approaches through embracing particular characteristics of conventional "ways of collecting, analyzing and presenting data" (Doucet and Mauthner 2006:40) that best suit their study overall. Utilizing the goal of feminist epistemology to construct and adapt methodological approaches that aim to protect the well-being of their research participants, feminist scholars reflect upon the relationship between their own social location and that of their interviewees. Accordingly, as the researcher, I incorporated the practice of reflexivity and recognition of my own social location when constructing the methodological approach for this research.

(ii) Use of Reflexivity and Recognition of My Social Location

While the data collection process plays a crucial role in upholding the values of feminist methodologies, "reflexivity has come to be regarded as one of the pivotal themes in discussions of feminist research" (Doucet and Mauthner 2006:41). Doucet and Mauthner (2003) encourage

researchers to be reflexive of their social positioning in qualitative research in order “to be more explicit about the particular epistemological and ontological concepts of subjects that are informing their research practices, their analysis and ultimately their research accounts” (p. 424). The use of reflexivity thus allows researchers to be self-conscious of the role that they play in conducting qualitative research, in which “locating themselves socially, emotionally and intellectually allows [researchers] to retain some grasp over the blurred boundary between the respondent’s narrative and [their] interpretation” (p. 419).

Social scientists generally share the belief that “a person’s social location shapes his or her identity, experiences, and perspectives” (Gubrium and Holstein 2001:203), which in turn, influences the processes of research. To account for this influence, researchers are often expected to take their own race, ethnicity, class, sex, age, abilities/disabilities and sexual orientation into account, acknowledging their social location as part of the research encounter. In doing so, researchers are able to reflect upon the types of knowledge being produced and address potential reasonings behind the data they have (or have not) collected (Sanders 2006).

The researcher’s interpretation of data is a prominent focus for feminist researchers, specifically because “the analysis and interpretation of others’ narratives usually take place ‘back in the office’” (Doucet and Mauthner 2006:41), in complete isolation from those being studied. In acknowledging the potential challenges associated with data analysis, especially concerns related to “power, exploitation, knowing and representation” (p. 41), feminist methodologies encourage researchers to indicate how their positionality influences this phase of the research process.

Since feminist researchers insist that knowledge about women “must begin in women’s ‘everyday/every night’ world” (Smith 1999:5; cited in Doucet and Mauthner 2006:37) and is

typically “concerned with issues of broader social change and social justice” (p. 40), feminist methodologies require researchers to draw attention to how their own social location plays a significant role in the production of knowledge. Identifying as a young, white, cis-gender, heterosexual graduate student with no visible disabilities, children of my own, or past experiences working in the sex work industry, I originally anticipated that there would be at least one similarity present between my participants and I – my approximate geographic location. Further, because my participants would be dedicating their time to contribute to this research, I also made the assumption that my participants and I would share a common interest in producing research that can shed light on sex workers’ everyday lives, and in turn, potentially challenge the cultural stereotypes associated with this profession. As this research does not focus on women from one particular class, race, background, sexuality or religion, however, I was very much aware that the social locations of my participants would differ. As a result, I also anticipated that my background, identities, and experiences would differ from that of my participants. I therefore tried to be reflexive when thinking about how these differences may impact who was willing to participate in my qualitative study, the kind of data that I would be able to collect (or not), and my analysis of the data.

(iii) Establishing Connections: Recruitment and Interview Processes

To adequately conduct this small qualitative study, this project focused on the experiences of four women in Canada who navigated both stripping and mothering simultaneously. By focusing on a limited number of women, this research was able to address each woman’s narrated experiences, focusing on the quality of the data being collected as opposed to the quantity of participants being studied. For the purpose of this research, this study welcomed the participation of women of all ages, social classes, racial backgrounds and

ethnicities who either currently navigate, or had previously navigated the roles of mothering and stripping simultaneously.

To establish initial connections with potential participants, this project employed two approaches.¹² First, because the rise of social media in academic research affords researchers the opportunity to connect with target groups to seek target research participants (Curtis 2014), one outlet for accessing potential participants was through the use of online blogs and advertisements utilized by women working in the sex work industry.¹³ Exotic dancers often utilize websites, such as Maggie's, Butterfly and Craigslist, as message boards to communicate with fellow dancers and advertise their services for private events to those within the area. Further, as many rely on Twitter to establish connections with potential clients and other women in the sex work industry, I shared details regarding this project to my followers via Twitter, many of whom also research sex workers, are sex workers themselves, or are dedicated towards advocating for sex worker's rights. By utilizing this platform, I was able to reach a broader audience via 'retweets,' thus increasing the exposure of my study.¹⁴ Once initial connections were established, I recruited remaining participants through the use of snowball sampling.

As a means to enhance measures of confidentiality and best protect the identities of those participating in this research, my data was collected through one-on-one interviews rather than other methods such as focus groups. To ensure that all methodological procedures and my own professionalism as an interviewer would adequately secure the well-being of my participants, I conducted a 'pilot test' with my supervisor, Dr. Andrea Doucet, prior to interviewing my

¹² This section on how I established connections with potential participants is partly guided by my conversations with, and the insights of, Dr. Ebru Ustundag.

¹³ Refer to *Appendix E* for the poster utilized for my Online Advertisements.

¹⁴ 'Retweet' refers to reposting or forwarding someone's post on Twitter to share with your own followers.

participants. This pilot test enabled me to better prepare myself for the data collection stage of this project, with a specific focus dedicated to developing three specific skills: i) being attentive to the needs and comfort-level of the women being interviewed; ii) maintaining a natural flow of discussion and; iii) having prompts prepared to ensure I was able to collect the data necessary to answer my project's overarching question. Rehearsing my interview and critiquing my interviewing skills played an essential role in preparing me to approach this field work with ease, clarity and confidence.

Prior to each interview, participants received an invitation to participate highlighting the purpose of the study, their involvement in the research, their rights as participants and the potential benefits and risks associated with participating. In addition, each woman received a copy of the consent form prior to the time of the interview, providing those interested with information about what their consent would entail.¹⁵ If, after reviewing these documents, the women still expressed interest, each participant was provided the opportunity to choose the format of their interview (in person, phone-call or video-calling), as well as the time and location of their interview, such as a public place or within the participant's home. For the purpose of this study, no interview was to be conducted in the participants' paid work environments. As my resources for conducting this research were also limited, women requiring childcare during their interview were informed that if they chose for the interview to be conducted at an IKEA cafe, they could access free childcare services through the store's 'Småland' program.¹⁶

¹⁵ To review the details and content of these documents, please refer to *Appendix A-C* of this thesis.

¹⁶ Dr. Mary-Beth Raddon provided a significant amount of support and guidance in helping me complete my REB application, including brainstorming a number of resources and services I could offer my participants with my extremely limited budget.

The interviews were semi-structured, audio recorded and approximately one to two hours in length.¹⁷ Each interview began by briefly explaining the purpose of the study, what the study entailed, and addressed any comments or concerns expressed by the participant. In addition, each participant was informed that, when indicated, they may “share information [kept] ‘off the record’” (Creswell 2013:174).¹⁸ The interviews then began by discussing the participant’s experiences of their family life, work life, and lastly, the combination of the two. As compensation for participating in this research, each participant received \$50 via e-transfer.¹⁹

As the nature of this research involved sharing details of their occupation, as well as their personal lives, each participant opted to participate in this research via phone interviews for their own ease and comfort²⁰. Since navigating mothering and paid work is also extremely time-consuming, the mothers in my study shared that participating in this study via telephone afforded them the opportunity to fit my interview into their busy schedules.²¹ Although this method of conducting interviews limited the data I was able to retrieve from each interview (i.e. I was not able to observe non-verbal cues, body language etc.), two of my participants shared that they would not have expressed any interest in participating in this study had they not had the option of

¹⁷ Refer to Appendix D to view my semi-structured interview guide.

¹⁸ Participants were informed that they could request for this information to be kept off the record as long as it did not infringe my obligation as a research to report any instances of abuse or neglect to legal authorities.

¹⁹ All participants were informed that if they withdrew their participation from the study once the interview began, they would still receive this compensation for their time.

²⁰ This was not something that I anticipated when I submitted my REB application. As a result, to accommodate these requests, I had to submit a modification form to the REB asking to incorporate the option of phone or video calling into my research project. When doing so, I also requested to broaden my scope from focusing just on women in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and Niagara region to nation-wide.

²¹ Each participant shared that they were multi-tasking during their interview—from watching their son’s soccer game, commuting to work, folding laundry and running errands—incorporating their participation in this research into their busy schedule (refer to Chapter 4 for further discussion).

being interviewed over the phone. Further, offering the option for interviews to take place via telephone or video calling enabled me to broaden my scope nation-wide.

(iv) Analyzing the Data

The analysis of this project's data consisted of three phases. First, I transcribed the audio recordings of each interview to text and saved the document on my personal computer, requiring two passwords to access this file. Second, these transcripts, alongside notes taken throughout each interview were utilized to find relevant themes present in my participant's responses through coding techniques.²² Adopting some of the approaches outlined in Doucet and Mauthner's (2008) 'Listening Guide,' the coding of my transcripts first began with a relational and reflexive reading, tracing my participant's story lines and drawing attention to my own reflexivity when analyzing this data. In doing so, I followed the Guide's suggestion and constructed a worksheet listing participants' responses in one column and dedicating a second column to highlight my initial responses as the researcher to each narrative. Being conscious of my own biases and reactions to the data collected played a critical role throughout this stage of analysis, enabling me to fully "examine how and where some of [my] own assumptions and views... might affect [my] interpretation" (p. 405) of the data and presentation of the participants overall.

Once the first two stages of analysis were completed, I then conducted a reading focused on how each subject spoke about themselves and their positions within their social world. To do so, this reading focused on the active 'I' throughout my participant's narrated experiences, drawing attention to the subject's presence throughout their transcript. As Doucet and Mauthner (2008) describe, conducting this reading enhances the researcher's ability to recognize responses

²² Such as changes in their tone of voice or hearing any emotional responses (e.g. crying).

that were particularly emotionally or intellectually difficult for my participants to share. The most powerful aspect of this approach is that such a reading acts as a reminder to the researcher “to listen to how narrators speak about themselves before we speak of them” (Brown and Gilligan 1992:27-8; cited in Doucet and Mauthner 2008:406). This, in turn, recognizes the ways in which the subjects perceive and present themselves within their own narrations.

My final reading, which the Listening Guide (Doucet and Mauthner 2008) refers to as a “reading for structured subjects” (p. 406), focused on the role that social structures and dominant ideologies play in framing my participant’s narratives. Guided by selected previous scholarship focusing on mothering, exotic dancing and navigating paid work and unpaid care, conducting this reading provided me the unique opportunity to expand these micro-level narratives into the larger “web of narratives” (p. 407) and to make sense of the individual narratives within macro-level contexts. This reading played a crucial role in this study as a whole, acting as a primary avenue for these narratives to be connected with broader discussions, such as gender and class inequalities.

In conducting these three distinct readings, the responses of all participants were compared exhaustively. The last phase of analysis then drew upon common themes present within the narratives being studied, further elaborating my analysis through existing literature. All three readings of analysis played a crucial role in this project overall, enhancing my ability to uphold the aims of this research and strengthen the robustness of the findings being presented.

Themes Chosen

The process of arriving at this project’s themes was extensive, as I was able to brainstorm a list of 10-12 overarching themes present in all four narratives. The brainstorming of these categories, informed by the ‘Listening Guide’ (Doucet and Mauthner 2008) and my readings of

participants' responses, were influenced by the themes present in my theoretical framework, as well as through recognizing commonalities (e.g. specific terms, topics, etc.) in participants' responses.

To decide which of these themes I would focus on in my thesis, I began to group each prospective theme with supporting evidence from my data, to visualize the magnitude of the themes' presence in each participants' narrative. During this process, some of my participants' responses were categorized into multiple themes. My decision on which themes to pursue was dictated by three factors: i) the amount of supporting evidence I had for each thematic category; ii) my ability to conduct a thorough analysis through my theoretical framework, and finally; iii) which themes could contribute to and widen contemporary scholarly literature focusing on the experiences of working mothers today.

By approaching my data in this manner, some of my chosen themes were not anticipated when constructing the focus of my study. For instance, although I assumed stigma would have, to some degree, an impact on my participants' experiences of their dual roles, by grouping their responses into prospective thematic categories I realized that stigma management played a more significant role than I had initially assumed. My approach to choosing this study's themes thus enhanced my capabilities as the researcher to focus on themes most relevant to the data I was able to collect, while also fulfilling the aims of my thesis and taking into account my ability to adequately analyze each overarching theme.

Once arriving at my chosen themes, I then corresponded each theme to one of my study's sub-question. In answering the question: '*how do these women narrate their mothering roles?*' the themes I chose to focus on were ones that I identified as central in the women's narratives, including: the benefits, hardships and costs of participants' mothering roles, as well as their

experiences of surveillance, mothering practices and pressures they faced when fulfilling the demands associated with their unpaid care work.

In answering the question: *'how do these women narrate their work of exotic dancing?'* I explored the following themes: benefits, hardships and costs associated with their paid work, participants' experiences performing and engaging in this sexualized labour, how this work impacts their day-to-day lives, and the surveillance, pressures and treatment they face while engaging in this labour.

Finally, in addressing *'how do these women narrate these roles (caregiving/ mothering and exotic dancing) and their impacts on each other?'* I identify the navigation of these forms of work, focusing on discussions detailing: the benefits, hardships and costs of navigating these dual roles, the surveillance and pressures participants' face being mothers who work in the sex work industry, the practices involved in fulfilling the demands of both forms of work, and the impact their paid work has on their fulfillment of the demands of unwaged social reproduction.

Utilizing the Listening Guide to analyze mothers' narratives, while also being guided by my theoretical framework, I also identified common themes present throughout their narratives relative to my sub-question *'how do these women navigate and negotiate their socially constructed roles?'* I focus on discussions pertaining to the daily practices and supports involved in the navigation of their dual roles, the division of responsibilities associated with unpaid care, the surveillance and gendered nature of their work, in addition to techniques utilized to manage the adverse effects associated with their dual roles.

(v) My Experience with the REB

Although I generally had a positive experience with Brock University's REB, my research application underwent a critical assessment with suggested revisions that were quite

concerning to me. For instance, in reviewing my ‘Invitation to Participate’ and ‘Consent Form,’ the REB questioned the ‘*accessibility/ appropriateness*’ of the language in both forms-- suggesting I simplify the language utilized in both documents. This assumption that sex workers are illiterate and uneducated women was quite upsetting to me, but is indicative of the reality sex workers face on a daily basis. Incorporating the REB reviewer’s suggestions to essentially ‘dumb down’ the language used in both documents would not have been a large task for me to tackle; however, I was reluctant to do so because I refused to contribute to the ongoing stigmas surrounding sex workers and contradict the very aims of this research project. In response to the REB, I firmly stated that their requested revision was unnecessary, utilizing a reference list consisting of four local and national organizations and advocacy groups that focus on providing resources to women working in the sex work industry to demonstrate the language these organizations utilize to communicate with their target audience. After 10 weeks of reviewing my application, the REB came to the conclusion that both documents were written at an appropriate comprehension level, and I finally received ethics clearance to begin conducting my research.

(vi) Experiencing Stigma as a Sex Work Researcher

Although I anticipated that I would face several obstacles from the REB due to the stigmas surrounding sex work, I did not expect to experience any form of ‘stigma by association’ (Goffman 1963), both in my academic and personal life, when pursuing this topic. As research focusing on sex work is regarded as “a ‘joke’ and ‘unworthy’ of academic research” (Hammond and Kingston 2014:339), researchers within this field of study are often subject to experiencing a “loss of professional status...barriers to [their] career progression and ... [become] vulnerable to inappropriate remarks” (p. 332). Further, just as sex work researchers often experience discrimination and stigmatization in their personal lives, the stigmas of sex work can also act as

“a vehicle by which sex work stigma spread[s] onto [the researcher]” (p. 330). This stigma, and the ways in which I navigated it, played a prominent role throughout my pursuit of this study, and further enhanced my dedication to produce critical literature. For this reason, I have decided to share and reflect upon my experiences in hopes of demonstrating how this topic has enhanced my own understanding of stigma by association.

Stigma by Association: Academic Sphere

When presenting my research at Brock University’s Mapping New Knowledges Conference, I endured a significant amount of giggling, pointing and uncomfortable smirks from fellow colleagues while they glanced over my poster display. I did not feel as though my qualitative study was being taken seriously, nor did people inquire further about the nature or purpose of my research. The only questions that were posed were, ‘*why are you writing a thesis about this?*’ or better yet, a comment made by a biology graduate student saying ‘*I guess the social sciences have really run out of things to do research on, eh?*’. Actively diminishing my “academic identity and the serious nature” (Hammond and Kingston 2014:340) of my qualitative study, I felt ‘Othered’ and looked down upon by my peers, causing me to become extremely frustrated with how my research was being mocked by some peer groups within academia.

Stigma by Association: Personal Life

What affected me the most, however, was how this stigma persisted throughout my personal life, and was ever-present at the dinner table during every Thanksgiving, Christmas and family gathering. The first time I shared my interest in pursuing this qualitative research project to my family, I was faced with blank stares and questions as to why I would ‘*waste*’ my time and money studying and advocating for the rights of strippers. Further, the questions I was asked were never focused on the actual content of my qualitative research study, but rather, upheld the

stigmas associated with stripping: ‘*How are you going to make sure that you’re safe when you’re interviewing these women? Are you going to bring someone with you?*’, ‘*Who’s going to hire someone who spent two years researching strippers?*’ or my all-time favorite: ‘*Wait, you’re applying for funding? Why should our tax dollars fund research on strippers?*’. I also experienced some unnecessary and sexually suggestive comments from extended (male, heterosexual) family members, saying things such as, ‘*hey, if you need someone to help out with interviews, I’d be more than happy to tag along*’ or ‘*I could go to the strip club and scout out some participants for you*’.²³ Needless to say, many conversations within my personal sphere pertaining to my MA research were both cringe-worthy and uncomfortable to endure.

Navigating My Stigma by Association

Hammond and Kingston (2014) discuss some of the strategies they have employed to navigate stigma associated with their research in their professional and personal lives, sharing: “we both felt reluctant to identify or discuss the nature of our research with people we did not know... we concealed stigma symbols through not talking about the true nature of our research” (p. 342).²⁴ Although I respect their decision to do so, I decided it was best for my development as a qualitative researcher to embrace these experiences of discrimination, utilizing these moments to educate those in my professional and personal life.²⁵ Personally, I felt that I owed it to the women who participated in my qualitative study to not conceal or obscure my research topic for the sake of protecting my own social identity, and instead, directed this energy towards

²³ Part of me felt as though discussing this in my thesis may be inappropriate and could potentially impose a strain on familial relations. On second thought, however, I realized that individuals who were making such comments would likely never actually take the time to read my research, and if they did, would hopefully recognize how their questions and unnecessary comments are in fact problematic.

²⁴ These strategies are what Goffman (1963) refers to as ‘passing’.

²⁵ I respect their decision to engage in these strategies as they share that this approach is what works best for them, their families, and their ability to conduct research with sex workers.

upholding my project's intent to destigmatize sex work. Accordingly, my navigation of this stigma involved a significant amount of facts, research and findings ready-on-hand for whenever I was confronted with instances of stigmatization. Although this approach to navigating stigma by association has benefitted me when pursuing this research, I am highly aware that such an approach may not be a solution for other researchers.

(vii) Methodological Challenges and Potential Solutions

In addition to experiencing and navigating varied forms of stigmatization, I faced criticism online from the sex work community, which posed significant obstacles in my ability to recruit potential participants. Although, for the most part, sex worker advocacy groups, fellow sex work researchers and sex workers themselves supported my research by 'liking' and 'retweeting' the details of my study for their followers to see, some women felt I was unfit to conduct this research. As I have no personal experience working in the sex work industry, a number of sex workers were quite upset that I was pursuing this topic, expressing their concern that my qualitative study may uphold and reproduce the stereotypes associated with stripping. For instance, one message I received said:

You should be ashamed of yourself-for someone who has such fancy degrees you really do sound dumb w[ith] [yo]ur study and asking questions that are as stereotypical and insulting as they come.

I also experienced issues recruiting potential participants due to the low compensation I was able to offer. For some, \$50 for one to two hours of their time was considered insulting. As put by another woman: *"I can make that kind of money in 20 minutes... I'd love to help out[,] but my time is worth more than that."*

To avoid such challenges in future projects, it is necessary that I establish more rapport within the sex work community and pursue funding for my research. I also plan to advocate the

necessity for a larger allowance from the REB when compensating research participants, as they have a maximum of \$70 compensation for each voluntary participant. Further, in the future, I will aim to include sex workers in the process of developing my research questions and methodological approaches, enhancing my ability to produce literature that will contribute to the destigmatization of sex work altogether.

(viii) Research Participants

Once I received ethics approval, I began recruiting participants for this study. After two-and-a-half months of seeking potential participants and talking to women about the goals of this research, four women working in Ontario voluntarily participated in telephone interviews: Jessica, Victoria, Sarah and Katie.²⁶ All four mothers identified as being white, able-bodied, cis-gender, heterosexual women. Their identification of these characteristics was followed by prompts surrounding the question, “Do you mind starting off by just telling me a bit about yourself?” in my semi-structured interview guide. Figure 3.1 further demonstrates the demographics of each participant during the time they navigated both mothering and exotic dancing simultaneously.

Figure 3.1

Name	Age at Time of Interview	Age Began Stripping	Number of Children	Living Arrangements	Key Supports	Experience Stripping
Jessica	34	21	<u>Two</u> Sophia & Atticus	- moved in to her parents house with her children after ending her relationship with her children’s father, Scott	- Jessica’s parents	<u>8 months</u> (in Southern Ontario- 13 years ago)
Victoria			<u>One</u>	- lives with her	- Sandra	<u>2 years</u>

²⁶ As a measure of confidentiality, I utilize pseudonyms for the names of those participating, the names of their children, or names of any other significant personal indicators (i.e. place of work).

	22	20	Ivy	daughter and her mother Sandra	(Victoria's mother)	(GTA: current occupation)
Sarah	26	18	<u>One</u> Isabel	- lives alone with her daughter	-Andrew (Isabel's father) -Cam (Sarah's polyamorous partner of four years) - Christine (Sarah's neighbor)	<u>8 years</u> (GTA: current occupation)
Katie	25	19	<u>Two</u> Sean & Joseph	- lives with her fiancé, Mike, and their two children	- Mike (Katie's fiancé)	<u>3.5 years</u> (GTA- on and off: current occupation)

Jessica

Jessica, a thirty-four year old mother of two, shared her story of being both a mother and stripper for the very first time, and has kept this secret from her friends and family for over thirteen years. I met Jessica one day on the GO train coming home from a conference, and after sharing with her details about my Master's research, she asked for my phone number and email address to keep in touch and to read my finalized thesis. Two months later I received a voicemail from Jessica, telling me that after much contemplation, she decided it would be "*healthy*" for her to reach out and see if I was still seeking participants, as she herself was eligible. She was both eager and anxious to finally share her story.

At twenty-one years old, Jessica and her children's father, Scott, broke up, and being in a financially unstable position, she and her children moved to a small town in Southern Ontario to

live with her recently retired parents. Being a single mother to two children – her three-and-a-half-year-old daughter, Sophia, and her eight-month-old son, Atticus – and receiving no financial or physical support from Scott, Jessica began bartending at a local pub, where she was introduced to an exotic dancing service that outsourced dancers for private events. After much deliberation with herself, her faith, and some of the women who worked for this service, Jessica began stripping two or three nights a week, going to extensive lengths to hide the reality of her income from her family, and the reality of her life as a mother from clients and co-workers.

Aware of how stressful it would be to keep her occupation a secret, Jessica began stripping with an end date in mind-- the week before her oldest daughter began junior kindergarten. In total, Jessica stripped for approximately eight months, dedicating her earnings towards her savings account and an apartment for herself and her children. Since then, Jessica has moved to Niagara, works with a women's organization, and has married her current partner, Joe, who knows everything about her, except for her experiences working as a stripper thirteen years ago. As a result, her interview took place over four phone calls to accommodate her secrecy, and Jessica was compensated for her time by receiving an Amazon gift card in the mail, as she feared her husband would question the transfer of funds to their joint bank account.

Victoria

Victoria, a twenty-two year-old single mother to her six year-old daughter, Ivy, lives in the GTA and shares an apartment with her mother Sandra, who helps Victoria co-parent her daughter. After coming across a Twitter 'Retweet' sharing the details of my qualitative study, Victoria studied my social media accounts to decide whether or not she trusted me enough to share her own experiences as a mother working in the sex work industry. After looking through

my online profiles, Victoria reached out and participated in a phone interview just a few hours later.

At the age of fifteen, like her mother, Victoria got pregnant and was faced with raising a child without the support of her child's father. When Sandra was raising Victoria, her own mother stepped in to help raise Victoria, while Sandra worked two to three jobs at a time to make financial ends meet. When Victoria had Ivy, Sandra stepped in just as her own mother did, allowing Victoria to graduate high school, go to college part-time and work full-time as a waitress at an on-campus bar. Spending little time at home with Ivy, receiving few tips at work and not wanting to work three jobs like her mother had, Victoria decided to apply to a strip club as a dancer and continue her studies online. Victoria has worked as a stripper for about two years now, and is due to complete her diploma in a year's time.

Sarah

Sarah, a twenty-six year old mother to her seven year-old daughter, Isabel, has been a stripper since she was eighteen years old. Sarah became aware of this research when she came across my tweets seeking potential participants and, in addition to volunteering as a participant for this study, played an active role in the project itself by suggesting different news articles, YouTube videos, books, poems, social media personnel and blog posts that she felt I could benefit from. I am extremely grateful for the time Sarah has invested into this project and the ongoing support I have received from her in my role as a researcher.

Sarah met Isabel's father, Andrew, at the first club she worked at as a stripper. Andrew was twenty-six years old and worked at the club as a bartender. Although they never were in an 'exclusive' relationship, Sarah and Andrew decided to keep their daughter and have worked out a co-parenting schedule, where Sarah has Isabel during the week and Andrew takes care of Isabel

on the weekends. Sarah and Andrew have maintained a strong friendship, attend all of Isabel's soccer games together, and have arranged all of the financial responsibilities and custody schedule outside of the legal system. Although Andrew helps out as much as he can, as well as Cam, Sarah's partner of four years, Sarah identifies herself as the primary caregiver for Isabel, and says she takes on the bulk of the domestic work.

Katie

Katie is twenty-five years old and lives in Toronto with her fiancé, Mike, and her two sons. Mike is the father of both of her children – Sean, who is three years old and Joseph, who is eight months old. Katie and Mike have been together for just over four years. Katie became aware of my qualitative study from her co-worker Sarah, who assisted me in recruiting remaining participants via snowball sampling. Katie felt it was necessary for her to share her experiences working as a stripper whilst also being a full-time mom, and share how she's been able to maintain a monogamous relationship while being a sexual entertainer.

Having stripped on-and-off for a total of three-and-a-half years, Katie decided to pursue stripping in college to become more financially independent and began stripping again due to financial stress after her oldest son was born. Katie works during the nights when Mike is home with their children, and stays at home during the day to take care of the boys while Mike is at work. Both Katie and Mike are dedicated to dividing up the housework as equally as possible, and although Katie defines the housework as being “60% *her*” responsibility and “40% *Mike's*,” Katie shared that she is “*happy*” with the way they've managed their work-home life.

(ix) Conclusion

Demonstrating my incorporation of feminist methodologies into my qualitative study, this chapter outlined the ways in which my methodological approach was constructed and

enacted. Utilizing reflexivity and taking into account my own social locations, this chapter drew attention to how these social locations may have impacted (and potentially limited) the data collection of this research project. Outlining the recruitment and interview processes, the procedures involved in analyzing the data and my experiences obtaining ethics clearance from Brock University's REB, I revealed the ways in which I navigated the stigmas of association as a sex work researcher, and proposed future possible solutions to methodological obstacles that arose. To conclude, I introduced the women who participated in this qualitative study. My interpretations and analysis of my participant's narratives are detailed in the next two chapters.

Chapter Four: ‘The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly’ – Exploring Mothers’ Narratives of Paid and Unpaid Work

When reflecting upon her experiences as a mother and exotic dancer, Sarah shared: *“With each [responsibility], you’ve got the good, the bad, and the ugly.”* Building on this description, this chapter draws attention to the parallels between the benefits, hardships and adverse effects my participants have experienced by utilizing the reading focused on the active ‘I’ (Doucet and Mauthner 2008). Outlining the experiences the women in my study shared in relation to mothering, stripping, and navigating both forms of work, this chapter draws attention to how my participants describe the impact of both roles, the overlapping of both forms of work, and the conditions and social contexts that structures these narratives. To address my findings, this chapter is constructed into three distinct sections, focusing on the benefits, hardships and costs associated with i) Mothering, ii) Exotic Dancing, and lastly, iii) Mothering and Stripping, followed by a discussion of the conditions and social contexts that structure my participant’s narratives. As these experiences play a profound role in each woman’s navigation of their unpaid care work and the stigmatized nature of their paid labour, these findings aim to lay the foundation for the chapter to follow.

I. MOTHERING

“I’m a mom twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.” – Jessica

(i) The Good: Benefits of Mothering

When describing the impacts that motherhood has had on their overall well-being, the women I interviewed expressed that their experiences have generally been positive, with two prominent themes arising from their narratives: i) motherhood is a transformational experience and; ii) mothering is emotionally rewarding and gratifying work. These themes are also present

in contemporary research (McMahon 1995; Ali, Hall, Anderson and Willingham 2013; Laney, Carruthers, Hall and Anderson 2014; Laney, Hall, Anderson and Willingham 2015). The purpose of this section is to demonstrate how my participants narrate their experiences of mothering in a positive light, and also draw parallels between these accounts and the experiences of other mothers described in sociological literature.

Mothering as a Transformational Experience

In discussing how mothering has impacted their personal lives, all four women characterized motherhood as being a transformational experience, one that has enriched and changed their lives *“for the better”* (Jessica). Victoria shared that her experience of motherhood has been life altering, giving her *“purpose”* and *“motivation”* to pursue a life that secures the happiness and well-being of her entire family. When discussing the impact her daughter, Ivy, has had on her life, Victoria said:

She makes me smile every single day. I love spending time with her and hearing her say ‘I love you’, or when she comes home from school and shows me a picture that she drew of us... she makes every day a little bit brighter.

Identifying motherhood as *“the best thing that’s ever happened”* to her, Jessica also described motherhood as transformative, giving her *“a new perspective on life”* and allowing her to overcome a *“very dark”* period of time: *“Things changed for the good... Life became so much brighter. They give me so much life.”* For Katie, motherhood was a responsibility she *“would never, could never regret.”*

As the transition into motherhood can involve a form of self-expansion and self-transformation, becoming a mother can afford women the *“opportunity to take on a new identity... to have a pervasive impact on one’s life choices and sense of self”* (Ali et al. 2013:592). According to my participants, motherhood offered them something new: an

emotionally rewarding responsibility (or obligation) that became an extension of themselves. This extension not only impacted their sense of self, but it also expanded their consciousness, perspectives, personalities, and sensibilities (Laney et al. 2015).

Motherhood as Emotionally Rewarding and Gratifying Work

My research participants also described motherhood as having a profound impact on their lives, as the relationships they hold with their children offer them immense emotional rewards. As put by Victoria: *“I have someone who loves me just as much as I love her. I’ve got a best friend for life, and someone who just makes me so happy.”* Sarah also shared that her relationship with her daughter brings her *“joy”* and alleviates some of the stress that comes with the responsibilities and expectations of mothering. When asked to describe one of her favourite moments being Isabel’s mother, she responded:

A week or so ago, I was sick and in bed, and Isabel just wanted to play doctor with me and take care of me. She would rather cuddle with me and play with my hair to make me feel better than go to the park with her friends or sit on her iPad and play games. I just saw so much love in her eyes and it felt so nice having that time to bond with her, even though I was miserable.

Throughout each participant’s narrative, the relationship that my participants hold with their children was the most recognizable ‘perk’ of motherhood. Involving a significant amount of emotional labour, my participants identified the rewards of mothering as including a form of emotional remuneration – a reciprocation of the love and affection that they have invested into each of their children. As such, the women in my study expressed that the benefits of mothering are not simply to have someone to love and care for, but in return, to be loved and cared for as well – establishing a lasting and meaningful bond.

Having established loving relationships with their children, all four mothers shared that the *“endless hours”* (Katie) of unpaid labour associated with raising their children was also

gratifying work. They expressed that their positive experiences of mothering were predominately impacted by how they were performing their role, and further, their children's responses to their chosen mothering practices. For instance, when sharing her favourite moments of motherhood,

Katie said:

Looking at how bright he is and knowing I've been doing a damn good job trying to teach him things, and that he's really taking in all that information... It makes my heart melt.

Jessica also described mothering as gratifying work, as becoming a mother "*completely changed her life for the better.*" This happiness, however, is always dependent on the happiness and well-being of her children: "*If my kids aren't happy, I can't be happy. Like, I physically cannot be happy, because they mean the most to me, and I'm so- I'm just so connected to them.*"

Sarah also identified her happiness as being highly contingent on the well-being of her daughter Isabel, stating:

I can only be happy if she's happy. And not in a 'my-daughter-runs-this-place' kinda way. She's not a brat or anything like that. It's just, I feel whatever she feels.

As the mothers in my study seem to have fused the emotions of their children with their own, they demonstrate how some "women incorporate their children into the boundaries of their selves" (Laney et al. 2015:134). Having established meaningful bonds and connections with their children, my participants identify their ability to make their children happy as making themselves happy, transforming mothering into a gratifying responsibility. Their positive experiences of mothering, however, are identified as being dependent on their children's own happiness, and their children's responses to my participants' chosen mothering practices.

(ii) The Bad: Motherhood's Hardships

Although participants described motherhood as transformative, emotionally rewarding, and a responsibility that they were “*fortunate*” (Victoria) enough to have, they also disclosed that mothering is “*not always easy*” (Victoria). All four women, regardless of whether they identified as single mothers or co-parents, expressed feelings of stress in fulfilling the gendered responsibilities of social reproduction, drawing attention to the hardships associated with their mothering role.

When discussing the mental, physical, and emotional labour involved in participants’ unpaid care work, three prominent themes arose throughout their narratives, illuminating the hardships of motherhood: i) the negative impact of gendered responsibilities involved in unpaid care work; ii) increased surveillance and mommy-blaming over their mothering practices and; iii) undergoing excessive pressures to perform their mothering role in a particular manner.

Gendered Responsibilities

As a teen-mother, Victoria found the demands of motherhood significantly overwhelming, and a responsibility that she “*didn’t have much choice*” to fulfill. When comparing the labour involved in her mothering role to the lack of contributions made by her daughter’s father, Jack, she shared:

I was held accountable, but her father wasn’t. I had to give up a lot of my teenage years and grow up quick, and I still have to make sacrifices and I always will, but I have to make even more sacrifices because he doesn’t. And I have to make up for that... I know he went off to school and partied for like 4 years and can take off 6 months to just go and travel the world and not ever be stressed about making ends meet, or buying snacks for school, or like, getting Ivy to school or dance on time. But I do.

Jessica also identified her gendered responsibilities of unpaid care work as “*overwhelming,*” holding her accountable in fulfilling her children’s needs and desires.

Although Jessica now co-parents with her husband, Joe, how she identifies the responsibilities associated with mothering illustrates her gendered liability for fulfilling (or paying someone else to fulfill) the primary demands of unpaid care work:

There's just always a million things to do... Becoming a mom means becoming your children's personal taxi driver, their chef, their maid, you know? Unless you can pay someone to do it all, it's all on you.

Like Jessica, Katie also co-parents with her partner, Mike, and describes the work of social reproduction as being “60% her” responsibility and “40% Mike's.” Despite this division of unwaged labour, Katie's definition of ‘mother's work’ demonstrates the gendered responsibilities associated with the demands of housework and childrearing:

I spend the day taking care of my boys, cleaning the house, doing laundry, taking them to all their appointments, putting them down for a nap... you know, all that regular 'mom stuff'.

Participants' definition of ‘mother's work’ highlights the gendered nature of unpaid care work, portraying mothers as the primary caregivers responsible for the bulk of this work (Federici 2012; Rosenblum 2012). Due to the gendered responsibilities involved in their mothering role, in combination with intensified ideologies of ‘adequate’ child-rearing, my participants describe mothering as an overwhelming responsibility, subjecting them to various forms of shame and guilt.

Social Surveillance and Intensification of Mothering

These definitions of ‘mother's work’ not only illuminate the gendered responsibilities of unpaid care work, but also demonstrate how these responsibilities expose them to various forms of surveillance and intensified expectations of mothering practices. As put by Sarah,

Don't get me wrong- Andrew is a great dad. Like he's really involved and always tries to help out in any way that he can. But he sucks at doing a lot of things, like brushing Isabel's hair or dressing her for school or even making her a half-decent lunch... I always have to send her to his place with clean clothes and pre-made

lunches for school because otherwise I look like a shit mom to all of Isabel's teachers.

Being a young single-mother, Victoria shared that she often feels attacked for the way she parents her daughter, and has experienced being watched and criticized ever since her daughter, Ivy, was born:

In high school, I got it bad. Everyone judged me and said I was a shitty mom for hanging with my friends and going to a party [every] once in a while.... And I would always get backlash on Instagram, and I get it on Twitter a lot too. People say 'Oh, you shouldn't post a picture like that. You're a mom. That's disgusting.'

Like Victoria, Katie felt that she was constantly being watched and judged on how she chose to care for her children, putting her at risk of being labeled a bad mom: *"Breast-feeding is hard because people give you dirty looks when you're in public. But, if you bottle-feed [then] you're a criminal. You can't win."*

The surveillance of participants' mothering practices thus played a critical role in labeling and determining what 'good' mothering entails, often leading to the stigmatization of their mothering practices. Classifying mothers as 'right' or 'wrong' in their approach to parenting, this surveillance reinforces socially constructed ideals – separating, penalizing and stigmatizing mothers who partake in practices that deviate from the norm (Douglas and Michaels 2004). This surveillance, in addition to the criticism they face for their mothering practices, was described as one of the hardships of motherhood by contributing to their "stress" (Katie, Jessica) and making Jessica feel "run-down."

The social surveillance of participants' unpaid care work acted as a means to criticize and judge their performances of mothering, and was also described as imposing excessive pressures regarding how they should perform their mothering role in order to comply with dominant ideologies of intensive motherhood (Hays 1996). This pressure, which Sarah referred to as

“*unsolicited advice*,” made the women in my study feel as though they were being seen as incompetent or incapable of knowing what was best for their own children. When asked whether she felt pressure in terms of how she should parent her daughter Isabel, Sarah responded:

ALL THE FUCKING TIME. I don't get what goes through people's heads but they think moms need to be told what to do constantly. Like, Isabel's school will send home pamphlets with the kids on advice on 'how to get your child's daily physical activity in,' or reminding us five times a month that it's flu-shot season... We get it. Our kids are fine. They're seven [years-old], we've obviously figured it out by now.

Having internalized the pressure to be the ‘perfect parent,’ however, participants also indicated that they too put pressure on themselves to enhance their parenting practices. In reflecting on her past experience being a mother and stripper just over a decade ago, Jessica shared:

I put a lot of pressure on myself, every mom does. We want to give our kids the best so I was always pushing myself and overthinking things and just trying to be the best mom I could be. My kids deserved that.

Katie also expressed that she is critical of her own approaches to mothering, pushing herself to be the best mom she can possibly be and holding herself to the highest standard, stating:

“How can you only do ½ a decent job when you love your kids so much?”

The intensification and surveillance of mothering practices experienced by my participants were described as subjecting them to excessive pressures to be the ‘best mom’ they can be. Participants described these pressures as ‘*overwhelming*,’ causing them to question their own competency and ability to adequately care for their children. Having internalized these criticisms, the mothers in my study also shared that they hold themselves accountable to improving and prioritizing their mothering practices, sometimes leaving them little time to focus on themselves (Federici 2012).

(iii) The Ugly: Motherhood's Burdens and Costs

With the expectation that mothers should prioritize their child's health and well-being (Hays 1996), participants described the 'price' they have paid engaging in their gendered, intensified and unpaid responsibilities at home. This section focuses on the costs associated with this work, demonstrating how mothering, and the sacrifices involved with this work, have been detrimental to my participant's overall mental health and well-being.

*Mothering as the Ultimate Sacrifice*²⁷

Reflecting on her experiences as a young mother and the sacrifices she has made in order to care for her daughter, Ivy, Victoria shared:

I suffered from postpartum when I first had Ivy and I didn't have the energy or motivation to get up and take care of her, or change her, or soothe her when she cried. And I was just a kid myself. But I had to take care of her- I didn't have the time to really care for myself. So, it was a really dark period for me... I love her with my whole heart, but I'd be lying if I said it didn't fuck with my mental health.

Describing the unpaid work of social reproduction as "sometimes burdensome," Victoria says that she often experiences symptoms of "anxiety and depression." Having to prioritize Ivy's physical, mental and emotional needs before her own, especially at such a young age and without any help from Ivy's father, Jack, becoming a mother meant Victoria had to put her own mental health on the 'back-burner,' sacrificing her well-being for that of her daughter.

Jessica also expressed that making sacrifices for her children significantly characterized her mothering experience, even if it meant putting her own health at risk. Having sacrificed her "time, energy and [her] health," Jessica shared: "You kind of have to do what you have to do for your kids... Your kids come first and I will always put my kids first, even if it jeopardizes me or

²⁷ Although the mothers in my study describe mothering as gratifying work, they also described mothering as a responsibility that has impacted their life choices, which they are willing to do and take pride in doing for the sake of their children. Three out of four participants used the word 'sacrifice' when describing the toll and hardships of being a mother.

my health.” Katie’s mothering role has also required her to make a number of sacrifices for her two sons – sacrifices, she contends, “*any mother would willingly make.*” Although Katie chose to make these sacrifices, the costs associated with her mothering role have made Katie reconsider her plans to have a large family. Not being able to afford to sacrifice more of her time, sleep, and fulfill her own fundamental needs, Katie shares: “*It’s such a commitment. It’s constant. I’m always looking after everyone else. I’m tired. I can’t do it. Honestly, this is it for me.*”

Despite the benefits associated with mothering, interviews with participants illustrate motherhood as imposing intensified and gendered expectations regarding how they should engage in their responsibilities of unpaid care. Having also internalized such expectations, my participants expressed that they experience pervasive effects on their mental health and overall well-being, ranging from feelings of exhaustion and stress, to “*not remember[ing] the last time [they] got more than 5 hours of sleep*” (Jessica). The sacrifices the mothers in my study make to fulfill the responsibilities of care work demonstrate mothering as a demanding responsibility, an obligation to provide the best care for their children, no matter what the ‘cost’ may be.

II. EXOTIC DANCING

“It’s not easy. It’s actually a lot of work... That’s why it’s called sex WORK” – Sarah

(i) The Good: Perks of Exotic Dancing

As with their descriptions of mothering, my research participants described their experiences working as exotic dancers as having beneficial impacts on their life, with three prominent themes arising from their narratives: i) stripping is emotionally rewarding; ii) is empowering and instills confidence and; iii) stripping as paid work affords women independence and financial freedom. These are themes that are also present in sociological literature (Bruckert

2002, 2012; Barton 2006) and demonstrate why stripping is an attractive form of paid work, in comparison to other forms of gendered paid labour.

Emotionally Rewarding Paid Work

Reflecting on her past experiences working as an exotic dancer, Jessica recalled one of the perks associated with the job itself: connecting with patrons and offering them an “*escape from the problems they’re dealing with.*” For Jessica, stripping was an emotionally rewarding occupation, as she was often providing customers with advice and support, giving them “*a reason to smile*”:

I would talk to them about their life and just try to help them out in any way I could... I remember once there was a man in his late 60’s and he had just lost his wife, didn’t have any kids and his extended family were all living in a different province. So he was lonely and all he needed was that companionship. Yes- it’s sad he had to pay to get that, and that he had to get that from a complete stranger... but it was really rewarding. Seeing him feel important, seeing him have that interaction and just for him to talk to someone about his day.

Katie also engages in a significant amount of emotional labour working as an exotic dancer, offering various forms of emotional support to the customers that confide in her. The support she has offered has had a positive impact on Katie’s life, and is one of the many reasons as to why she is “*proud to call [herself] a sex worker*”:

A lot of men come into the club after a rough day at work, where they talk to us about the shit their boss puts them through. And they come here because they don’t have anyone at home to talk to, or maybe they do, but they don’t feel like putting that stress or burden on someone they love... I’m like a part-time therapist when I’m at work, and it feels good knowing I’m really helping people and that I’m making a difference.

Participants describe the work of exotic dancing as emotionally gratifying work, as they often offer emotional support to the patrons of the strip club. The support they are able to provide to their clients made the women in my study feel as if their job served a larger purpose than

offering sexual entertainment. Seeing the positive impact that their emotional labour has on their customers, my participants became further connected with their paid work, and share that they experience satisfaction in providing support to customers who need it.

Empowering and Instilling Self-Confidence

Not only did my research participants describe their participation in sex work as offering immense emotional rewards, but they also described it as an empowering career, positively impacting their lives. In discussing how stripping has impacted her life, Sarah explained that it has changed the way she perceives herself and other women, characterizing her career as meaning “*confidence, feminism, and freedom.*” Katie also expressed that stripping has enhanced how she values herself and her body, defining stripping as an “*empowering*” career:

When I dance on stage, I just feel beautiful. I feel invincible. I feel sexy and strong, I feel like I am defining what feminism is and what feminism should look like. It feels good... who else feels like that when they're at work doing their job? Not too many people do.

Jessica shared that stripping enabled her to build up her self-confidence, so much so that she was able to “*feel comfortable in [her] own skin.*” She attributes the confidence she gained working as a stripper to her ability to re-enter the ‘dating world’ after separating from her children’s father, Scott:

It made me feel good getting male attention, even if that sounds bad... My husband should probably be thankful I stripped because it made me confident again, and without that I probably wouldn't have dated him in the first place.

Independence and Financial Freedom

The most recognizable benefit associated with stripping was, according to the four women, the financial independence and freedom stripping afforded them, especially in comparison to other forms of gendered paid work. In defining what stripping means to her, Victoria shared:

It means being an independent woman who is confident in herself and how she looks, and is able to use her personality and appearance to make enough money to live comfortably. It means [that] I am confident and I'm hardworking. It means I'm able to support myself.

Katie described stripping as a financially rewarding career, alleviating a significant amount of stress over the past couple of years. When comparing her income as a stripper to more conventional jobs she has worked, Katie shared:

[Stripping] gave me enough money to move away from my parents and be more independent...I like getting paid for what I'm worth and not having to beg for a 10-cent raise.

Like Katie, Sarah identified stripping as giving her a significant amount of “*independence*” and “*financial freedom*”:

There's no period of me having to wait three days to get my pay... and I prefer going home and actually seeing how much I made that night. It's motivating- it really makes you work harder and push yourself.

As stripping offers the women in my study the financial freedom that other conventional forms of paid work have not, all four women identified stripping as positively impacting their lives, enabling them to become financially independent. Due to these financial and emotional benefits, their discussions illustrate the attractiveness of working as an exotic dancer.

(ii) The Bad: Financial Hardships Working as an Exotic Dancer

Although participants described exotic dancing as offering them financial independence in comparison to other forms of paid work, the women in my study also share various economic hardships associated with their career, including: i) their unpredictable income; ii) work fees and investments necessary to secure success and; iii) the absence of extended health benefits.²⁸ This section thus aims to illuminate participants' negative financial experiences engaging in this form

²⁸ For example: extended health benefits, maternity leave, parental leave, unemployment insurance, vacation pay, and bereavement leaves to name just a few.

of gendered work, demonstrating how working as a stripper in Canada can be characterized by precarious conditions (Fogel and Quinlan 2011), impacting strippers' income, sense of security, and overall health.

Unpredictable Income

Reflecting on her past experiences working as an exotic dancer, Jessica explained that although stripping offered her financial opportunities that other low-credential jobs could not, her reliance on tips and selling dances as her income was both “scary” and “really stressful” in that “there wasn't a safety net- nothing protecting you from failing financially.” Occasionally impacting her ability to help pay their rent and meet their car payment deadlines, Katie also describes her income as unpredictable, stating:

There have been nights where I've gone home with next to nothing, and nights [when] I've made hundreds of dollars. You can guesstimate- but you never really know what you're going to walk away with. Just because you dance for a crowd of 30 doesn't mean you're getting tipped like it's a crowd of 30, and sometimes there's a crowd of two people who just hand you tons of money for one stage dance.

Having worked at the same club for over eight years, Sarah shares that her unpredictable income “definitely makes it harder to manage [her] money.” To eliminate some of the financial stress associated with her earnings, Sarah explains that she considers all the factors that impact her income in order to gauge how much she will earn in any given month. Noticing that holidays and seasonal changes prominently affect her earnings, she shares:

My average income changes depending on the season as well. Like, Halloween is crazy. You make so much and people are actively tipping you while you're on stage. But Thanksgiving and Christmas time is usually a dry-spell, people are with their families and spending loads of money on gifts and all that. But then, they get their Christmas bonuses and come New Year's Eve we pick up again. Obviously there are nights that are exceptions to this pattern, but it at least gives me a general sense of what to expect... It kind of helps me to plan ahead, but it's still really stressful. It's like watching a tornado approach your house even though you did everything you could to avoid as much damage as possible.

As their income working as exotic dancers is “unstable, unregulated and unpredictable” (Fogel and Quinlan 2011:53), the precariousness of their earnings highlights how their reliance on dances they sell and tips they earn significantly impacts their sense of financial security.

Imposing financial stress on their day-to-day lives, my participants describe their unpredictable income as “*annoying, sometimes unreliable*” (Sarah) and overall “*frustrating*” (Sarah, Katie), significantly impacting the way they manage and spend their earnings.

Work Fees & Financial Investments

Having to pay for the ‘privilege’ to work, my participants also indicate that their obligation to pay a combination of club, stage or DJ fees contributes to their financial stress. Characterizing this obligation as one of the downsides of working as an independent contractor, Victoria shares:

It sucks paying to work, especially if you're paying managers and tipping out to people who treat you like shit and really don't give a fuck about you... And if you cancel last minute or don't show up, they still expect you to pay the \$100 or 150 you would've paid if you did come to work.

To secure a decent living after paying their club fees, Sarah stresses that strippers also have to regularly invest in their appearance (Bruckert 2002; Barton 2006; Fogel and Quinlan 2011), a cost that many women don't have to fulfill when employed in other forms of paid labour:

Yeah, I'd say I make a lot of money [working] as a stripper, but to make that kind of money you have to spend a lot as well. I have to look the best I can- I always have to have my nails done, my hair done, I have to buy the cutest lingerie and makeup that won't melt off my face. Not because I want to, but because I have to... And some girls even go to the extent of getting plastic surgery. It's the kind of industry where you can't make money if you don't spend it first.

These financial investments were described as contributing to the economic stress and precariousness of stripping participants experienced on a regular basis, impacting their economic security. Thus, although stripping can offer women financial independence and earnings that

surpass most ‘pink-collar’ careers (Barton 2006), exotic dancing must also be recognized as having various financial drawbacks, impacting strippers’ income and sense of financial security.

The Absence of Extended Health Benefits

Like other forms of self-employment, the women in my study describe the precariousness of their jobs as predominately characterized by the absence of extended health benefits, subjecting them to economic stress and vulnerability.²⁹ Having no coverage working as a stripper and a bartender at a local pub, Jessica shared:

I was always in fear of me or my kids getting sick, or one of them getting a cavity. Because that can be soo expensive, like it can really put a dent in your savings... I remember going to the dentist and them saying that I had to get my wisdom teeth removed, and with the good drugs, it was going to be a couple thousand dollars. So, I chose to do it the cheapest way I could because I didn't have any coverage whatsoever, which was obviously excruciating- like, I would NOT wish that kind of pain on my worst enemy. But what other choice did I have? I had other bills to pay as well.

For Jessica, this economic vulnerability forced her to make choices dictated by her unstable earnings, impacting her overall health. Victoria also expressed that her lack of benefits “*has put [her] health at risk,*” forcing her delay costly prescription refills to a later date, when she has enough money to afford this expense.

As strippers who work as independent contractors are not entitled to receive any form of leave from paid work unless they pay premiums to EI for extended coverage, the women in my

²⁹ Two women interviewed for this study navigated these dual roles prior to the introduction of these extended benefits under the *Fairness for the Self-Employed Act* (Department of Justice Canada 2012), meaning they were ineligible for receiving maternity and parental leave benefits during this time. Despite the introduction of this act, all four women in my study did not opt to pay these premiums to receive extended coverage.

study also expressed being subject to financial stress and vulnerability working as independent contractors.³⁰ As put by Katie:

We don't get paid sick days, so that means whenever I'm sick I don't get to make money. And god forbid you're sick and can't get your shift covered, because not only do you lose out on making money, but then you also still have to pay all the fees for missing your shift as well... So you're either sick but still have to go to work and try to make something to at least cover the cost of your shift, or you stay home and pay for it.

All four women narrated their experiences working as strippers as imposing significant amounts of economic vulnerability and financial stress due to their unpredictable income, obligation to pay work fees, financial investments necessary to secure their success and the lack of extended health benefits. These conditions, characterizing their paid work as precarious, influences the choices participants have had to make in terms of managing their finances, occasionally exposing them to situations where they are unable to prioritize their health and well-being. Drawing attention to these financial drawbacks, my participants' narratives illuminate the hardships associated with their careers and the practices they engage in to navigate their financial instability working as independent contractors.

(iii) The Ugly: Management & The Adverse Effects Working as a Stripper

Although strippers work as independent contractors, their paid work is significantly controlled by those who manage them: dictating the hours they work, the rules they have to obey, the price they can charge for private dances and the fees associated with their labour. As the relationship between dancers and club management is generally influenced by gender and sexualized relations (Pilcher 2009), participants stated that they were often “*exploited by*

³⁰ Including, but not limited to: maternity leave, bereavement, holiday pay, sick leave and family illness.

management” (Sarah), paying a ‘price’ to do their paid work.³¹ Reflecting on participants’ experiences working as exotic dancers, this section aims to explore the costs associated with their paid work, limited to discussions pertaining to: i) the mistreatment they face from their club’s management team and; ii) the lack of concern the club has for dancers’ overall safety.

Mistreatment by Club Management

At the age of 18, Sarah began her career as an exotic dancer with little knowledge as to how strip clubs, particularly the one she was working at, function – making her vulnerable and an “*easy target*” to be taken advantage of:

I made the mistake of walking into a club and saying ‘Oh, I don’t know how to do this, or how this all works, but I really want a job working here,’ because they totally took advantage of that and took so much of my tips. They lied to me and told me the fees were a lot more than they actually were, which I found out after a month of being there. It really fucked me over. And I wasn’t able to get any of that money back.

Like Sarah, Victoria also expressed that the club she works at regularly mistreats dancers and tries to control the dancers for their own financial benefit. In reflecting upon what she dislikes about working as an exotic dancer, Victoria said:

I don’t like how much [management] benefits off of us, and how they act like they can tell us what to do constantly. Even though you’re not one of their employees, they still treat you like you are. Not in a good way either- they just constantly belittle you and bitch at you, and they really try to control your every move... It can really wear you down working in an environment like that.

Katie shared that she also experiences forms of mistreatment in her workplace, as her club’s management prioritizes profits over her well-being:

Management is just anal about us constantly being appealing and getting guys to buy drinks and keep coming back. They care about the money they make more than they care about us.

³¹ Of course, racial power relations are also present within strip-clubs (Price-Glynn 2010), however, as all women participating in this qualitative study identified as Caucasian, my data did not lend itself to making contributions to these important dimensions of this topic.

Sarah, Victoria and Katie's interviews demonstrate that strippers are vulnerable workers, perceived as "*replaceable*" and often "*dehumanized*" (Sarah). Prioritizing their ability to maximize their own income and secure the club's economic success, my participants' accounts demonstrate that those who manage their paid work often employ forms of "*manipulation*" (Sarah, Victoria) imposing financial and emotional costs on their lives.

Lack of Concern for Dancers' Safety

According to the women I interviewed, the managers in the strip clubs where they worked showed a lack of concern for dancer's safety and well-being, which also negatively impacted my participants' paid work experiences, potentially putting their safety at risk and making them vulnerable to experiencing assault and harassment from patrons (Price-Glynn 2010). Victoria shared that she and other dancers are regularly sexually and verbally assaulted while working at her strip club, an issue club's management fails to adequately address. When asked what changes she would implement in her working environment, she shared:

I would make it so customers are blacklisted if they cross a line, or at least have to pay the dancer a fine or some kind of penalty. Most of the time it's just ignored, or they just get kicked out and are told 'don't come back', but they don't enforce anything. Like I'll see that same guy who literally assaulted me the next night sitting in the crowd. It sucks because it seems like we aren't worthy of any kind of real enforcement.

Jessica, who worked as a stripper for an outsourced agency, said she was "*lucky*" because she "*always felt safe*" going to different gigs, as their regular bodyguard Steve "*genuinely cared*" for her and the other dancers. Whenever Steve was unable to escort them to private events however, Jessica shared that she was exposed to various forms of harassment from patrons, as Steve's replacement "*didn't have [their] best interest at heart*":

He didn't give two shits about us. Like he really didn't care at all. He was just there for the paycheck and to 'enjoy the show'. He didn't 'do' his job, it was

actually repulsing. And I know that we lucked out with Steve because the other dancers would always tell me horror stories of working at clubs that allowed that kind of behaviour... But really we shouldn't be seen by co-workers as being just some girls who take our clothes off and give you part of our earnings.

As club management does not penalize those who mistreat and put dancers' safety at risk, they actively create an environment where sexual assault and harassment is normalized.

III. COMBINING MOTHERING AND STRIPPING

"I'm stronger because of it" – Sarah

(i) The Good: Perks of Being a Mother Working as a Stripper

When reflecting on their navigation of mothering and stripping, the women in my study shared that their dual role were beneficial for a number of reasons, including i) earning a suitable income to support their families and ii) having favourable work hours that increase their ability to secure quality 'family time'. This section aims to demonstrate how these working mothers describe their navigation of both roles in a positive light, drawing attention to how stripping enables them to better support and care for their family, in addition to fulfilling the unpaid responsibilities of social reproduction at home.

A Suitable Income for Working Mothers

All four mothers remarked that working as a stripper offered them the opportunity to earn a comfortable living, securing their ability to provide their children with basic necessities.

When asked how stripping benefits her family and ability to care for her daughter, Sarah responded:

The money, of course. I'm able to make enough money to support Isabel... I can pay for food, a decent apartment, for us to do things like go to the movies or have a girls day out.

Being able to better financially support her children when she started stripping, Jessica shared that the income she earned allowed her to not only become financially independent, but also

increased her confidence as a single mother. Reflecting on how working as a stripper influenced her ability to parent, Jessica said:

Being a stripper allowed me to help put food on the table and buy diapers and save up so we could have our own home. It allowed me to save up and get back on my feet, and not have to be so reliant on my parents... It gave me confidence knowing that, as a single mother, I was able to support my children. It sounds corny, but I felt like a bad-ass mom. I really did.

Katie and Victoria also expressed that working as strippers offered financial rewards that positively impacted their ability to care for their children, as they were able to give their children what they “need,” as well as provide their children with the life they “deserve.” As put by Katie:

I know I can give them what they want, and that come the time they go to university, they’ll have a good amount of money saved up for them... It’s not really about spoiling them, it’s more about investing in them and investing in their futures.

Since the intensification of mothering practices requires middle-class resources (Hays 1996), stripping has offered the mothers in my study the opportunity to earn a suitable income necessary to support their family, in addition to saving for their children’s futures. Navigating both forms of work simultaneously was thus regarded as a positive experience for my participants, as they expressed their income enabled them to “care for [their] children to the best of [their] ability” (Victoria) and fulfill the demands of unpaid care work.

Favourable Work Hours & Increase in ‘Family Time’

All four women identified the hours involved in their paid work as another ‘perk’ when navigating both responsibilities, ultimately affording them the opportunity to spend more “quality time” (Jessica) at home with their children. Reflecting on the past seven years navigating mothering and stripping, Sarah shared:

The hours work great for me. A lot of us moms [who work as strippers] are really thankful we get to work at night and that our time at work doesn't really take away from our time with our kids... It works out perfectly.

Jessica also felt that working night shifts best suited her family's needs, enabling her to care for her children throughout the day. Sacrificing less quality time with her children than she would have if she worked a "9-5 job," Jessica said:

Yes, I missed out on putting my kids to bed and the last hour of their night, but I was able to be there with them all day long. I was able to eat breakfast, lunch and dinner with them, go to the park, do all that fun stuff I wouldn't have been able to do if I worked at some other job... I wouldn't trade all that time I got to spend with my kids for anything.

As a part-time student, the hours Victoria works as a dancer allows her to focus on studying and finishing her assignments throughout the day, while her daughter, Ivy, is still at school. Her decision to pursue stripping has had a domino effect on her family, giving her the opportunity spend time with Ivy after school, and has also enabled her mother to reduce the number of hours she has to work, allowing them to spend time all together as a family:

It's a choice that has allowed my mom to cut back on the hours she has to work and has given us enough money to move into a bigger apartment and just be in a completely better place... and my daughter's happy 'cause we can pay more attention to her, so it's definitely a choice I'm proud of.

For Katie, the hours working as a stripper has allowed her children to have one parent home at all times, an arrangement that she feels "works best" for her family. Taking care of her children during the day and having Mike stay home with the kids at night, Katie shared that her family benefits from her evening shifts as both parents get to spend their "own special time" with Sean and Joseph:

They never have a stranger taking care of them, either mommy or daddy are always at home... It makes me happy because I know how much Mike and I cherish our time with our kids.

The hours involved in participants' paid work were described as benefiting their mothering practices, as they were able to gain more quality time with their children, which Sarah described as "*invaluable*," in addition to spending time with other family members.

(ii) The Bad: The Difficulties Navigating Mothering and Stripping

Acknowledging the gendered responsibilities involved in their mothering responsibilities, my participants shared one of the key difficulties associated with navigating their dual roles was the overwhelming number of responsibilities they face on a day-to-day basis, fulfilling the demands of "*two 'full-time' jobs*" (Katie). As such, this section discusses the stress imposed upon the mothers in my study due to their need to "*consistently multi-task*" (Katie), illuminating Federici's (2012) argument that "getting a second job has never released [mothers] from the[ir] first" (p. 31).

The Need to Multi-Task

Ironically, all four women interviewed for this qualitative study answered my questions while multi-tasking: Victoria was running errands, Sarah was commuting to work, Jessica was sitting in her car watching her son's soccer game, and Katie was cleaning her apartment and folding her family's laundry. As put by Sarah: "*We are working moms, what can we say? We are busy as hell haha... We ALWAYS multi-task.*" Despite trying to divide the unpaid labour equally with her fiancé, Katie still assumes a larger responsibility doing the housework and taking care of their two sons. Describing her navigation of mothering and stripping as tiring, as the demands of both forms of work are time-consuming, Katie shared:

Mike helps out a lot, but I'm mainly the one to cook and clean and take care of the kids throughout the day... It's hard keeping up with two boys and making sure the house is clean and all that before I head into work. Some days it's totally non-stop and I'm doing like, ten things at once.

In reflecting upon her responsibilities as a single mother, an exotic dancer and as a student, Victoria's experience navigating her roles often leaves her feeling "*stressed*," stating: "*There's only so many hours in a day... We go home after work tired and exhausted but still have to do a million and one things... The to-do list never gets shorter.*" Having to balance the responsibilities of their dual roles, these mothers' accounts demonstrates that "the burden of a double shift, that is, the burden of a life built exclusively on work" (Federici 2012:51) imposes various obstacles and stress onto their daily lives, despite their partners' efforts to fulfill the unpaid responsibilities at home (Saginak and Saginak 2005). Thus, juggling and multi-tasking the demands of both roles, my participants describe the navigation of both forms of work as leaving them feeling "*tired*" (Jessica, Katie) and "*overwhelmed*" (Victoria, Jessica), forcing them to work, paid or unpaid, *twenty-four seven*.

(iii) The Ugly: The Burdens of Navigating Mothering and Stripping

Although my participants shared that working as strippers offers women a comfortable income and work hours that secure quality time with their family, they also stressed that navigating these two roles simultaneously comes at a high cost. Reflecting upon their experiences balancing paid work and unpaid care work, this section aims to highlight the adverse effects the women in my study have faced, with one prominent theme arising from their narratives: combining both forms of work is emotionally draining and results in a loss of 'me time'. As such costs impact the ways in which the women in my study engage in their dual roles, these experiences will be further explored in the chapter that follows.

Emotionally Draining & Loss of 'Me Time'

Engaging in two forms of work that are physically, emotionally, and mentally demanding, participants described their dual roles as "*emotionally draining*," as they have little

time to even focus on themselves. As put by Victoria: *“I’m just always tired and I can’t ever get a break... I know one day I’m going to completely wipe myself out.”* Reflecting on having navigated motherhood and stripping just over a decade ago, Jessica recalls that it was hard to find a *“healthy balance”* where she was able to earn a decent living, care for her children and also take care of herself:

It was hard to get up in the morning after working all night and then have to take care of two kids... I was always so exhausted and my body hurt from dancing, and I literally couldn’t even function without drinking like a gallon of coffee everyday.

Sharing that navigating both roles *is not easy*, as her children’s well-being is reliant upon her performance of each respective role, Katie explained that the pressures of her dual roles often inflict immense amount of stress:

I can’t have shit days, otherwise people tell me I’m not a good mom... And I can’t be shit at my job because then my income is impacted by it.... It’s really stressful and you just don’t have much time for yourself.

Sarah shared that managing her dual roles is often difficult, explaining her obligation to constantly prioritize the well-being of her children and customers before she can actually take care of herself:

My daughter was really sick so I spent the whole day taking care of her and being right by her side, and then when I went to work I had some guy literally crying on my shoulder because his girlfriend cheated on him and I had to sit there and be engaged and give him all this support and take care of him... And when I got home that night all I could think to myself was ‘I just need silence. I need to be alone. I need 5 minutes of not focusing on other people.’

Comparing their experiences of navigating mothering and paid work to that of other employed mothers, my participants also shared that they believed that the costs they experience impose far more pervasive physical, emotional and mental effects onto their day-to-day lives. As put by Victoria:

You're always performing, or taking on this person when you do both jobs, which I find sometimes drains me... I would say I'm probably more tired than most working moms because I spend so many hours dancing and doing [acrobatic] tricks... and I also have to be so present when talking and dealing with customers. Like, not only do I have to be pleasant, but I have to watch everything I do and say, and everything they do and say, and make sure that their hands are where they are supposed to be and that they aren't crossing any lines.

Reflecting on her past experiences navigating motherhood and stripping, and differentiating this experience from that of her current form of conventional paid work with a local woman's organization, Jessica shared:

It was a lot. You go from cleaning up poopy diapers and having your kids being loud and hectic and running around to having to get all dolled up for work and being so high energy and interacting with all the customers...I was always caring for other people and I had no time for myself. No time to really enjoy a hot shower or get a full night of sleep or think about my own feelings... I was getting so run down.

Due to the intensification of mothering practices, these narratives demonstrate the expectation to willingly prioritize the needs of their children above their own (Hays 1996; Fox 2006; Lee 2008). The women in my study, who all work or worked as independent contractors, must also engage in their paid work in an intensified manner, maximizing their income to best support their children. Subject to an array of intensified physical, emotional and mental labour associated with their dual roles, the mothers in my study expressed that they often feel “*exhausted*” (Jessica, Katie, Victoria), and that they have little time and energy to focus on themselves and their overall well-being.

IV. DISCUSSION

In this final section of this chapter, I identify how macro-level structures impact women's narrations and navigation of: i) mothering; ii) exotic dancing and; iii) mothering and stripping.

(i) Mothering

Characterizing mothering as being a transformational experience that is emotionally rewarding and gratifying work, participants' descriptions highlight the perks associated with their unpaid care work. Depicting their experiences of motherhood as offering immense emotional benefits that act as a form of compensation for their unpaid labour, the women in my study describe their mothering role as gifting them with "*purpose, light, love*" (Victoria) and "*joy*" (Sarah, Jessica). Although mothering is widely acknowledged as a positive and rewarding experience (Anwar and Stanistreet 2015), it is critical to recognize how their portrayal of their unpaid care work reflects dominant ideologies (Hays 1996) that have "romanticize[d] [mothering] as a labo[u]r of love" (Glenn 2016:16), especially in Western cultures.

Socially acknowledged as "an act of love" (Federici 2012:17) – or rather, a series of caring acts (Rosenblum 2012; Glenn 2016) the unpaid care work associated with this gendered responsibility demands love to be "the basis of good child rearing" (Hays 1996:110). 'Good mothering' must then be recognized as necessarily requiring emotion work (Hays 1996; Luxton 2006; Fox 2006; Federici 2012; Pederson 2012). To comply with these ideologies, women try to 'pass' as 'good mothers' (Rock 2007) by representing themselves as self-sacrificing, loving, embraces her maternal responsibilities and is deeply committed to caring for her children (Hays 1996; O'Brien Hallstein 2006).

When discussing the work of social reproduction, participants shared that, despite the benefits of their mothering role, they also experienced hardships including i) being negatively impacted by the gendered responsibilities of unpaid care work; ii) the increase of surveillance and the intensification of mothering and; iii) undergoing excessive pressures to perform their mothering role in a particular manner. These gendered hardships were described as provoking stress, causing them to feel "*run-down*" (Jessica), and often leading to feelings of "*shame*"

(Katie) if their parenting practices deviated from the ‘gold standards’ of mothering (Douglas and Michaels 2004; Blum 2007; Henderson et al. 2016). Consistently assessed, analyzed and critiqued for the ways in which they meet their gendered and intensified responsibilities of mothering (Braedley 2006), the mothers in my study experienced significant pressures to abide by dominant ideologies of adequate child rearing (Hays 1996). Such pressures, alongside the surveillance and gendered responsibilities of their unpaid work, were thus regarded as imposing significant challenges to their day-to-day lives, leaving little time to focus on themselves and their own well-being (Fox 2006).

The demands of their intensified and gendered responsibilities of unpaid care work were also described as imposing numerous adverse effects on the mothers in my study, demonstrating how mothering, and the sacrifices involved with this work, has had a detrimental impact on their overall mental health and well-being (Henderson et al. 2016). Depicting this work as a “*commitment*” (Katie) that is “*sometimes burdensome*” (Victoria), my participants shared that they have gone to extensive lengths to prioritize their children’s needs and desires above their own, doing so to fulfill the demands of their mothering roles. These sacrifices, including a sacrifice of their health, time, money, energy and sleep, were described as demanding them to put their own needs on the “*back burner*” (Victoria), and are, in part, due to dominant ideologies of ideal mothering (Hays 1996).

(ii) Exotic Dancing

When sharing their positive experiences working as exotic dancers, participants described stripping as i) emotionally rewarding; ii) empowering and instilling self-confidence as well as; iii) offering them independence and financial freedom. Making them feel “*proud*” (Jessica, Katie, Victoria), “*beautiful...sexy, and strong,*” (Katie) my participants thus describe the perks

of working as strippers as including emotional and financial rewards. However, it is not the actual work of exotic dancing that offers this empowerment per se, but the meanings the women in my study attach to their labour (Frank 2002), particularly in comparison to other forms of gendered paid work. Further, in a world where money is acknowledged as the “primary medium of power” (Fraser 2016:102), the financial opportunities offered to my participants act as a means of empowerment, enabling them to overcome, in part, the gender inequalities present throughout the labour market.

Despite the emotional and financial rewards participants experienced working as exotic dancers, their narratives also draw attention to the financial hardships of their paid work, specifically i) their unpredictable income; ii) work fees and investments necessary to secure success and; iii) the absence of benefits. Due to this economic stress, the women in my study described being subjected to positions of financial vulnerability, insecurity and precarious conditions (Fogel and Quinlan 2011), in turn, describing their income as “*scary... stressful*,” (Jessica) “*frustrating*,” (Sarah, Katie) and “*sometimes unreliable*” (Sarah). Although this work imposed financial challenges for my research participants, it remained as an appealing choice – a choice that is influenced by the labour market and the lack of feasible opportunities available for women to earn a sustainable living. Nevertheless, the work of exotic dancing, although classified as a form of self-employment, is still impacted by macro-level economic structures, impacting the inputs and outputs of their earnings (Barton 2006).³²

Having been subjected to mistreatment by their club’s management and a lack of concern for their overall safety, the women in my study describe the exploitation they endure within their working environments – making Katie, Victoria and Sarah feel “*replaceable*” and Sarah feel

³² Inputs being their earnings, outputs referring to the fees they pay in order to secure the privilege to work.

“*dehumanized*” by their superiors. As strippers’ compliance with their employer’s demands, expectations, and regulations plays a critical role in their ability to secure economic success, the women in my study are subjected to varied forms of exploitation – despite how “*empowering*” (Katie) this paid work may be. Further, as strip clubs are highly regulated and “operate outside of standard labour practices” (Bruckert 2002:106), laws and regulations dictating how strip clubs must function do not focus on protecting the rights and well-being of the dancers themselves; rather, these regulations aim to protect the general public (Couto 2006) from ‘immoral’ displays of sexuality. Accordingly, the exploitation the women in my study faced was not solely inflicted upon them by those who manage the clubs, but also policies and legal regulations that enable such exploitation to prevail.

(iii) Mothering and Stripping

When discussing their navigation of the combined roles of mothering and exotic dancing, participants shared that their paid work has significantly enhanced their ability to perform their mothering role, as they are able to i) earn an adequate income and ii) have work hours that increase their quality ‘family time’. As their gendered and indispensable responsibilities of unpaid care work are largely invisible (Bezanson 2006a), naturalizing the idea that women do not need, nor deserve, compensation for the work that they perform (Federici 2012), women’s labour is significantly undervalued (Arat-Koç 2006; Folbre 2006; Federici 2012) and is reflected in gender inequalities present within the labour force (Fraser 1994; Budig et al. 2012; Federici 2012). Thus, the engagement in forms of unconventional and gendered paid work, such as sexualized paid work (Bruckert 2002; Barton 2006; Federici 2012), has become a compelling option for many women in order to secure economic independence.

For the mothers in my study, the financial rewards associated with exotic dancing alleviated them from the low-paying jobs they were previously engaging in and enabled them to earn a sufficient income to support their families. As intensified expectations of mothering demand middle-class resources (Hays 1996), stripping provides them with the economic opportunity of being a ‘good mother’: meeting their children’s needs, desires (Dillaway and Paré 2008) and providing their children with the life that Katie, Victoria and Jessica’s children “*deserve*” (see also Rock 2007). Participants shared that they were best able to care for their children—or rather, best able to comply with dominant ideologies of idealized mothering practices (Hays 1996; Fox 2006) as well as the structural conditions of mothering by engaging in stripping as a form of paid work.

The women in my study shared that stripping also enabled them to be better mothers, as their work hours enabled them to spend quality time and invest more emotional energy into caring for their children (Hays 1996; Luxton 2006; Fox 2006; Federici 2012; Pederson 2012). Since their paid work offered favourable work hours, the mothers in my study shared that stripping was a beneficial occupation, as it allowed them to spend more time with their children and enabled them to play a more active role in their children’s lives. Participants viewed their work hours as appealing because they “*work best*” (Katie) for their family’s needs. This is, in part, structured by the lack of accessible, affordable and adequate childcare services and high eligibility criteria for maternity and parental leave available, which excludes many mothers, in Canada (McKay, Mathieu and Doucet 2016; Doucet and McKay 2017; Prentice and White 2019; MacDonald and Friendly 2019).³³

³³ With the exception of Quebec—refer to Prentice and White (2019) for further discussions.

As both mothering and stripping are demanding forms of work, participants shared that navigating these dual roles can be emotionally draining, as they have little time to focus on themselves and establish a “*healthy balance*” (Jessica) in their day-to-day lives. On one hand, participants stress the necessity of being attentive, self-sacrificing and caring in their mothering practices (O’Brien Hallstein 2006), as they strive to comply with dominant ideologies of child-rearing, which perpetuate standards of perfectionism (Hays 1996; Douglas and Michaels 2004) and their obligation as mothers. On the other hand, holding themselves accountable to engaging in these intensified ideologies that demand a significant amount of money and resources to adequately fulfill, the women in my study stress the necessity of also engaging in their paid work in an intensified manner, illuminating how their economic success significantly impacts their mothering practices. Accordingly, it is not just the burden of a double shift that the mothers in my study endure; instead, it is the burden of a double shift significantly impacted by precarious and unpredictable economic conditions, positioning them at fault if they fail to navigate their dual roles successfully. To avoid such failure, my participants are forced to engage in practices that put their mental health and well-being on the back burner, increasing the burdens that they face as working mothers.

Participants’ experiences of these costs are in part, due to the intensification, gendered nature and unwaged labour of social reproduction, in addition to the lack of supports provided to them working as exotic dancers. Receiving no standard wages nor benefits (Bruckert 2002; Barton 2006), the women in my study navigate the demands of social reproduction in precarious conditions, which unlike other forms of self-employment, are significantly impacted by the stigmatization of their paid work. The increased stigma and costs that participants faced as strippers differs from dominant discourses of mothers working in other, less stigmatized forms of

paid labour. This will be further explored in the following chapter, highlighting the ways in which participants navigated both mothering and exotic dancing simultaneously.

Conclusion

The four women I interviewed described their experiences engaging in the work of social reproduction and exotic dancing, illuminating the perks, hardships and costs associated with each respective, and overlapping, role. Mothering was described both as gratifying work but also challenging work, due to the gendered responsibilities, intensification, surveillance and pressures associated with their mothering roles. Exotic dancing, although described by participants as an empowering and financially rewarding career, was also characterized by precarious conditions and exploitative working environments, impacting earnings and emotional well-being.³⁴ In combination, however, stripping was described by participants as an attractive career, increasing their ability to earn a sufficient income and work hours that enabled them to care for their children during the day. Despite these benefits, participants shared that they faced the repercussions of working two full-time jobs, including the necessity of multi-tasking and resulting in a loss of ‘me time.’ These costs differentiate from mothers engaging in other forms of paid work, partly due to the stigmatization of their paid work as exotic dancers. It is thus critical to explore how stigma is an integral part of my participants’ mothering practices, and further, how women navigate and negotiate their socially constructed roles of motherhood and exotic dancing, but also managing the stigmas associated with both roles. I explore these issues in the following chapter.

³⁴ These precarious conditions include an unpredictable income, financial investments necessary to engage in this work and the absence of benefits/paid work leave.

Chapter Five: 'Making it Work' –

Dealing with Stigma in Unpaid Care Work & Exotic Dancing

When describing their navigation of mothering and exotic dancing, one factor arose as significantly impacting the ways in which the women in my study fulfill their responsibilities of unpaid care work: dealing with the stigmatized nature of their paid labour. For instance, reflecting on her experiences navigating mothering, exotic dancing, and the stigmas associated with her career, Katie shared:

It's always challenging and something I have to think about every day... As a mom, I make it work. But that's because I'm constantly focused on making it work. And I'm kinda forced to... This job is far from easy. It's hard as fuck... Everyday I go up on that stage carrying the weight of my family on my shoulders. I do it to put a roof over their heads and start saving for our future.

Sarah expressed that the stigmas associated with stripping have been attached to her personal life and in her relationships, questioning her ability to parent. While discussing her estranged relationship with her own parents, and how their perception of Sarah changed when they found out she was working as a stripper, she said:

We go through a lot to give our kids the best life possible... And yet, we get spat on, shunned, looked down upon and torn apart... It's horrible. It's a lot to deal with sometimes.

Like Sarah, Victoria also experienced criticism for being a mother working in the industry; however, the criticism she faced was typically online: *"I just delete the comments and usually block them, but sometimes it affects me... I try to ignore them, but sometimes it hits you really hard."*

Jessica shared that she was so afraid of facing these stigmas and the repercussions she would encounter if her family were to become aware of her involvement in the industry that she decided to keep her paid work a secret from everyone she knew: *"I couldn't face what would've*

happened if they found out... It would've damaged everyone's perception of who I am." As all four mothers identified stigma as negatively impacting their daily routines and practices of their mothering roles, the stigmatization of their paid work must be acknowledged as impacting the ways in which they access key supports to fulfill the demands of their dual roles. Therefore, this chapter aims to illuminate *how these women navigate and negotiate their socially constructed roles*, and more specifically, how they do so while navigating and negotiating the stigmatization of their paid labour. This chapter identifies the practices and strategies the mothers in my study have incorporated into their day-to-day lives, enhancing their ability to navigate their responsibilities of unpaid care work and their stigmatized paid labour, or, in other words, the strategies they rely on in *"making it work"* (Katie).

Specifically, I focus on two prominent themes that arose from my data. First, I explore how the mothers in my study constructed their own personal communities in order to negotiate the stigma associated with their paid work. Second, I explore their conditions of social reproduction and their division of (unwaged) labour and parental responsibilities; I address their reliance on 'teaming up' with their partners, co-parents, family and friends to assist with the unpaid demands of social reproduction, and the necessity of 'returning the favor' to those who act as their key supports. This chapter concludes by discussing the findings presented throughout this chapter, highlighting the conditions, ideologies and social contexts that structure participants' navigation of unpaid care work and stigmatized paid labour.

I. THE CONSTRUCTION OF PERSONAL COMMUNITIES

"You become aware of who loves you for you and respects you for you. Who's there to lift you up and who's, who's just an asshole." – Katie

Having experienced the stigmas of exotic dancing first hand, the mothers in my study

shared that, due to their gendered responsibilities at home, they often faced excessive criticism, depicting them as not only being ‘bad women,’ but also as ‘bad mothers.’ According to my research participants, the consequences of the stigma they experienced vary, ranging from impacting the ways in which they were perceived by their family and friends, to how they were treated in their paid working environment. To cope with the implications of these stigmas, in addition to fulfilling the intensified demands of unpaid care work at home, my participants highlight the necessity of constructing personal communities, including communities of “*support*” (Katie, Jessica, Victoria, Sarah) and “*acceptance*” (Katie), enabling them to thrive in managing both forms of work. Implementing strategies such as: i) redefining ‘family’; ii) establishing healthy work environments and; iii) adapting practices involving secrecy, the women in my study manage stigma in both their paid and unpaid work, as the following accounts reveal.

(i) Redefining ‘Family’

When discussing their navigation of mothering and exotic dancing, the women in this study identified the stigmas associated with their paid work as having significantly impacted their relationships with their relatives, forcing them to redefine what ‘family’ entails. For Sarah, the stigmatization of her career has had significant implications, changing her family’s perspective of who she is because of how she earns her living. Hearing her voice break up and holding back her tears, she shared that she’s had to learn how to live her life without the presence and support of her family, forcing her to cope with the emotions that come with being “*shunned*” and “*rejected by her own blood*”:

Probably 85% of the people who know what I do for work, and know that I’m also a mom, have passed judgment at some point in time. Whether it’s to my face or behind my back... My cousins and my own grandparents want nothing to do with me. Like, we can’t even go to Thanksgiving or Christmas dinner. They had the

audacity to say I could drop my daughter off [for dinner] and pick her up after... They're supposed to be there for me. They're supposed to love me no matter what... Family isn't always blood, it's who treats you like blood.

Similar to Sarah, Katie also experienced this rejection, as Mike's family disapproved of her choice to work as an exotic dancer. Mike's family threatened to take Katie and Mike to court to legally gain guardianship of their two sons, and perceived Katie as a danger to her own children, assuming that her involvement in the sex work industry meant that she was exposing herself, as well as her sons, to *"the wrong crowd."* Reflecting on her experiences of this rejection, Katie shared that her perception of who is 'family' has *"drastically changed,"* and that this redefinition has played an essential role in ensuring she's able to be *"the best mom [she] can be"*:

You learn to weed people out. You have to weed everyone out who doesn't care enough to accept you for who you are and see everything that you do for your children... Honestly, cutting ties with his family was the best decision we've ever made. Because the more you invite that kind of negativity in your life, the more it takes away from you and your ability to make yourself happy, and if you can't make yourself happy then you can't really make your kids happy either.

Facing a constellation of stigmas due to being a teen-mom, a sole parent, and an exotic dancer, Victoria shared that stigma follows her in every aspect of her daily life. Having dealt with being stigmatized by her classmates, extended family, friends and even *"complete strangers,"* to reduce the amount of criticism that she faces, Victoria chooses to maintain a tighter social circle. Breaking ties with family members and friends who have disapproved of her decisions, Victoria expressed that she focuses on creating bonds with people who respect her, surrounding herself and her daughter with people who *"genuinely value"* them and will *"support [them] no matter what"*:

My mom is really the only person I consider to be our blood-family... I have a few friends that I talk to from high school who Isabel calls Auntie Meg and Auntie Stacey, and they'll sometimes come over and hang out with us or come

over and have a spa night. Our life is really family-focused, even though we have a small family.

Limiting their exposure to the perception that they possess personal, moral, and character blemishes, the mothers in my study shared that redefining ‘family’ plays a critical role in protecting themselves and their children from the toxic consequences of stigmatization. By constructing personalized communities, my participants shared they were able to reduce the amount of stress involved in their navigation of both roles, in turn, enabling them to focus more of their attention to providing a healthier environment to raise their children in.

(ii) Establishing Positive Work Environments

As strip clubs are often precarious, hostile, and competitive labour environments in which stigma permeates (Barton 2006; Bruckert 2012), to counteract the costs of participating in this field, the women in my study explain the necessity of establishing healthy and supportive networks amongst their fellow dancers. Simply put by Victoria: *“It’s better for us to be there for each other than to work in an industry like this and be against one another.”*

For Jessica, the friendships she established with her fellow dancers provided her an “escape” from the stresses of being a single mother, the demands working as a stripper, the toxicity of stigmatization and the stresses involved in keeping her dual roles a secret. Such friendships have a profound impact on her emotional well-being. Offering her the opportunity to bond with women like herself, and perceive herself as more than just a mom, these relationships enabled Jessica to seek guidance and support from the other dancers, playing an “essential” role in managing the costs of engaging in her paid work. She shared:

They made me feel young again and not like a single mom. And being so isolated in that town, they really lifted my spirits up. These girls really took care of me... I was able to talk to them about stuff I might not have wanted to talk to my parents about, and I didn’t really have anyone else to talk to but my parents...I needed that, and I don’t know how I would’ve coped without them.

Creating an environment they “*wanted*” (Katie) to be in and where they felt like they “*belonged*” (Katie, Sarah), these mother’s narrations demonstrate that their dedication to establishing friendships with fellow dancers plays a critical role in their ability to manage the stresses of their paid and unpaid work. Reflecting on the impact that her “*work friends*” have had on her ability to navigate the frustrations of mothering and stripping, Katie shared that “*without these girls, [she] wouldn’t be able to do it*”:

There’s a lot of shitty people who work at strip clubs... but I try not to focus on that too much, I try to distance myself from people like that... But because I love spending time with the other dancers, I’m actually excited to go into work. Being able to talk to them, especially after a hard day at work or just a long day at home taking care of my kids, it-it just keeps me sane. I know they’ll sit there and listen and that they get me, and they have my back. Most of the time, they can relate to me and totally understand why I’m upset, and it’s actually therapeutic talking to them and then going home with a lot of that weight lifted off of my shoulders.

Their shared attributes enabled the women in my study to establish bonds with their fellow dancers – friendships founded on the basis of support, empathy, acceptance, and even “*girl power*” (Jessica). Participants expressed that only exotic dancers can relate to one another in terms of the discrimination that they face. Establishing positive relationships with one another provided the mothers in my study with the ability to seek comfort and guidance, especially if they could not receive that from their own kin. Creating these bonds free from judgment, their discussions illuminate how maintaining positive relationships at work aided in the management of stigmatization, providing them with the opportunity to rely on one another in coping with the stresses and toxicity involved in navigating both forms of work.

(iii) The Use of Secrecy

With the primary goal of protecting themselves from the negative effects of stigmatization, as well as their children from experiencing forms of courtesy stigma (Goffman

1963), when constructing their personal communities of support, participants shared that they rely on their judgment to decipher who they can trust with the knowledge that they work as exotic dancers. As courtesy stigma is a primary concern for women working in the sex work industry (Barton 2006; Bruckert 2012), the use of secrecy plays a fundamental role in their fulfillment and navigation of their dual roles.

Keeping her paid work a secret from her family and friends, Jessica spent the most energy towards separating her mothering and stripping identities. For Jessica, maintaining secrecy was critical, fearing she would be unable to continue stripping if her parents found out, and that her parents would no longer be willing to assist her in caring for her two children. Needing the income stripping provided her and the support of her parents in caring for her children, Jessica fabricated details of her whereabouts and maintained two separate personas – the single mother who worked late nights at a local pub, and a young graduate who was stripping to pay off her student debt:

I told my parents that I just was picking up a few extra shifts here and there [at the pub], and that I just needed to do that so I could be more independent... At work I just made up a story and told everyone that I was a student who just got out of school, and that I was trying to pay off my student loans. And they all bought it. I even lied about my last name and everything. I was so lucky that everyone bought it, and because we didn't have Facebook and Twitter at the time, its not like anyone could go and look me up.

Although doing so for the well-being of her family and her ability to best support her children, keeping her dual roles a secret came at a high cost for Jessica. Subjecting her to immense forms of stress, as she had to go to extensive lengths to maintain this secrecy, Jessica shared:

I was constantly worried about my parents finding out. Like I actually became paranoid about it. I was in a constant state of being anxious and fearing that I was going to get busted. I couldn't even eat or sleep sometimes because I was so worried... I literally almost had a heart attack one night because my mom found some lingerie I bought for work, and I knew she was suspicious. I had to lie and say I bought it for a co-worker for her bachelorette gift or something, and that we

were all told to give her lingerie. But after that I couldn't chance it, so I had to leave all my stuff- like this huge duffle bag filled with makeup and panties and high heels in [my co-worker's] car.

Victoria and Sarah also tried to conceal the reality of how they earned their income, especially from those who interacted with their children. Reflecting on her decision to keep her involvement in the sex work industry a secret from other parents at her daughter's school, Victoria shared:

I don't do it to protect myself, I do it to protect Isabel. I'm not going to expose my daughter to that kind of shit. She doesn't deserve it, and I don't want anyone treating her differently... It's not that I'm ashamed either, I just don't know what her friends' moms would say if they found out, or how they would react. I don't want my kid to get left out at school or be bullied or not be allowed to have her friends come over.

Although Sarah is proud of how she supports Ivy, she feels “*there's a time and a place*” when she can showcase that pride. For the sake of her daughter, Sarah keeps her paid work a secret from select individuals, reducing Ivy's exposure to experiencing forms of courtesy stigma for how her mother earns her living:

I've developed a kind of radar that tells me who I can and can't trust, but I don't even risk it when it comes to my kid... I don't want her to be seen as 'the stripper's daughter'. I want her to be seen as being the bright, funny and loving little girl that she is.

The mothers in my study thus engage in practices of secrecy and trust as a means to manage their stigma and best protect their children from experiencing courtesy stigma due to their paid work. Establishing personal communities enabled participants to maintain healthier relationships, reduce the adverse effects that they and their children may have faced, and strengthened their access to key supports who assist them in fulfilling the unpaid responsibilities of care work.

II) CONDITIONS OF SOCIAL REPRODUCTION & DIVISION OF PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES

“We really try to work together to give her the best life we can.” – Sarah

Reflecting on their navigation of paid work and unpaid care, all four mothers shared that the assistance they received from their informal supports played a critical role in their ability to fulfill the demands of their dual roles. This section focuses on how the women in my study engage in practices of i) ‘teaming up’ with their partners, co-parents, family and friends to assist in the unpaid demands of social reproduction, and will further illuminate the necessity of ii) ‘returning the favor’ to those who act as their key supports. I argue that these daily practices involved in the navigation of their unpaid care work and stigmatized paid labor assist the mothers in my study to fulfill the responsibilities of their ‘second shift’ at home.

(i) ‘Teaming Up’

As my participants do not rely on formal and paid childcare services, partly due to the lack of affordable and accessible childcare in Canada (MacDonald and Friendly 2019; Prentice and White 2019), they describe their reliance on their communities of informal support to help fulfill the demands of social reproduction. Identifying her mother, Sandra, as her key support in fulfilling the unpaid responsibilities of housework and care, Victoria shared that her mother plays a critical role in her daughter Isabel’s life, helping Victoria navigate her own roles being a mother, exotic dancer, and part-time student:

Since my grandma helped my mom raise me when she got pregnant as a teen, my mom stepped up and really helped me take care of Isabel and let me live a bit more of a normal teenage life than a lot of other teen moms... We’ve fallen into a pattern and it just works. We’ve ‘teamed up’ and work together to give Isabel the best life we can, making sure we are giving her what she needs and getting her to where she has to go.

Another single mother, Jessica explains that her parents also acted as key supports in helping her care for her two children, and even more so, by welcoming them into their home when Jessica was struggling financially. “*Thankful*” for how much her parents helped her navigation of mothering and exotic dancing, Jessica shared:

I was living under their roof and didn't have to pay rent; they were helping out with the kids so I didn't have to pay for daycare or a babysitter... I was fortunate enough for my mom to help out. You know, feeding the kids, getting them bathed, putting them to bed. There was always that extra set of hands, whether it was my mom or dad helping me out, which really allowed me to take care of Sophia and Atticus. Obviously we had our challenges, but we always worked together and tried to put [our challenges] aside.

Sarah identified a number of individuals who played a prominent role in the division of unpaid care work. Although she remains responsible for the bulk of this work, without such assistance, she would be unable to navigate both roles. Crediting her navigation of mothering and exotic dancing to the support she receives from her partner, Cam, her daughter's father, Andrew, and her neighbour, Christine, she states:

My partner helps a ton with just being present and also spending nights with her while I'm at work. He's done that since we met 4 years ago and it really helps me out a lot. And he loves her so much. Her dad's also just a great dad... He's also a couple years older than me so when she was just born, he was able to help out a bit more because he had been making money for quite some time... My neighbour down the hall helps out too whenever I'm not feeling well or I just have too much on my plate.

Establishing communities of support enabled the mothers in my study to access informal assistance in meeting the demands of their mothering responsibilities, reducing their workload of unpaid care, as well as the necessity of purchasing costly services to aid their fulfillment of social reproduction. By distributing this labour amongst their key supports and ‘teaming up’ to best care for their children, my participants shared they are best able to care for and financially

support their children, enhancing their ability to navigate the demands of mothering and exotic dancing.

(ii) ‘Returning the Favour’

By ‘teaming up’ with those they consider ‘family’ to navigate the demands of their dual roles, the mothers in my study identified the necessity in also “*return[ing] the favor*” (Victoria). As Victoria’s mother helped her take care of her daughter, and has always made Victoria and Isabel a priority, Victoria shared that she tries to alleviate her mother’s financial burdens, which in turn, gives her mother more time to stay at home to watch Isabel. This compensation enables Victoria to “*feel less guilty*” for relying on her mother’s assistance, and also establishes a healthier dynamic when sharing the responsibilities of unpaid care work at home:

Because she helped me so much growing up and worked so much, I cover rent and groceries, and she pays for our utilities... With me helping out during the day around the house, she’s able to come home and relax a bit...I don’t think you can really have that joint effort without everyone actually caring about how that workload is affecting each person.

Sarah also tries to ‘return the favour’ to her neighbour, Christine, who assists in caring for her daughter Ivy, sharing:

We walk our neighbour’s daughter to school in the mornings, because her mom has to drop her son off at daycare, which is a different way, and she picks up the girls after school and brings Ivy back home... We’re both single moms, so we’ve always tried to help each other out whenever we can.

Due to the stigmatization of their paid work, in addition to the lack of state and social supports available to them, my participants recognize the necessity of weaving stronger relations with their key supports by offering them varied forms of compensation for their assistance. This compensation enabled my participants to secure more dependable assistance from their informal supports, in turn, enhancing their navigation of their dual roles.

III) DISCUSSION

Examining my participants' descriptions of the daily practices they engage in to fulfill the responsibilities of their dual roles, this section utilizes my theoretical framework to identify the conditions, ideologies and social contexts that structure their navigation of unpaid care work and stigmatized paid labour.

(i) The Construction of Personal Communities

As stripping is a stigma-laden profession (Barton 2006), participants shared the necessity of constructing informal communities of “*support*” (Victoria, Katie, Sarah, Jessica) in navigating the demands of their dual roles, as well as managing the stigmas associated with their paid work. In constructing these communities, they implement strategies of i) redefining ‘family’; ii) establishing positive work environments and; iii) adapting practices involving secrecy and trust. Participants’ reliance on these strategies highlights how macro-level structures impacts my participants’ navigation of mothering and exotic dancing, within stigmatized conditions.

Describing the stigmas associated with their paid work as having negatively impacted their relatives’ perspectives of them, by redefining what ‘family’ entails, the mothers in my study are best able to protect themselves and their children from such mistreatment. Creating familial relationships with those who perceive them as part of ‘normal’ society (Goffman 1963), this practice enabled them to construct communities of support that aid their ability to care for their children and provide sources of support to assist in fulfilling their gendered responsibilities of unpaid care work. Further, by only investing their mental and emotional energy into those capable of reciprocating the same level of respect and support, the mothers in my study expressed that they were best able to care for their children by reducing the distractions, stresses,

emotional strain and costs associated with identity management (Bruckert 2012).

Establishing positive work environments was also regarded as necessary in constructing participants' personal communities of support, as these networks of solidarity helped them cope with the toxicity and mistreatment of their paid working environments. As strippers experience varied forms of social isolation and marginalization, sharing "the stripper stigma that brands her as a fallen woman in the eyes of mainstream culture" (Barton 2006:133) with fellow coworkers as a practice of solidarity enabled the mothers in my study to seek comfort with their peers, in which, "like soldiers in a combat situation... [they rely] on each other for protection" (p. 133). Accordingly, creating positive working environments played a critical role in their ability to manage the stresses and costs associated with their paid work (Barton 2006), providing them with an understanding and empathetic support network that assisted them in their navigation of their occupational stigma.

The practice of developing a support system with coworkers not only assisted with participants' ability to engage in their stigmatized paid work, but was also perceived as necessary in order to fulfill their responsibilities of unpaid care work in precarious and stigmatized conditions. Relying on fellow dancers for advice and support, the mothers in my study were able to learn how to cope with the stresses and costs of working as an exotic dancer. For those who did not receive this emotional support and acceptance from their own kin, positive relationships with coworkers were fundamental to their ability to cope. Constructing positive work relations offered participants reassurance for engaging in the sex work industry and supported them in navigating their dual roles. This enabled my participants to reduce the costs of their occupational stigma (Barton 2006), in addition to coping with stigmas that depicted them as "*bad*" (Katie, Sarah, Victoria, Jessica) and "*incompetent*" (Victoria) mothers.

In constructing their personal communities of support, the mothers in my study also engaged in practices of secrecy and trust in order to protect themselves, as well as their children, from experiencing the negative effects of stripper stigma (Barton 2006; Bruckert 2012). Reducing the costs they face due to the stigmatization of their paid work, these practices enabled some mothers, like Jessica, to ensure they could access and secure the assistance of their key supports in fulfilling the demands of their unpaid work in less stigmatized conditions. Accordingly, “in an attempt to negotiate an ethically comfortable space that affords them access to support while minimizing the negative consequences of their occupational location” (Bruckert 2012:74), participants engaged in these practices in order to decipher who to disclose their engagement of paid work to, and with whom they needed to keep it a secret.

A key factor in implementing practices of secrecy and trust was to ensure the mothers in my study were able to separate and protect their children from experiencing courtesy stigma due to their engagement in stigmatized paid work (Barton 2006; Bruckert 2012). My participants’ implementation of this practice was, in part, impacted by internalizing dominant ideologies of adequate child-rearing – upholding the expectation that mothers are individually responsible for protecting the emotional well-being of their children (Hays 1996; Fox and Luxton 2001; Rosenberg 2001; Fox 2006; Pederson 2012). This practice protected participants’ children from experiencing the costs of courtesy stigma, and additionally enabled the mothers in my study to overcome the stereotypes associated with their dual roles, a practice that enabled them to ‘pass’ as the ‘good’ or ‘ideal’ mother (Rock 2007). Although these stigma management strategies were described as enhancing their ability to navigate their dual roles, practices of secrecy and trust can also impose additional stresses on women working in the strip trade (Bruckert 2012).

(ii) Conditions of Social Reproduction & Division of Parental Responsibilities

The gendered responsibilities of unpaid care work are significant and have undergone a drastic intensification in the ways in which mothers are expected to fulfill this work (Fox 2006). The mothers in my study rely on their personal communities of support to receive informal assistance in navigating paid work and their 'second shift' at home (Federici 2012; Hochschild and Machung 2012). Although informal reliance can be unpredictable and precarious in itself, constructing informal communities of support affords my research participants the opportunity of not having to purchase these services on the market at high-costs (Luxton 2006b; MacDonald and Friendly 2019). This reliance illuminates that, due to the unaffordable childcare services available in most Canadian cities (MacDonald and Friendly 2019), the women in my study must depend on their key supports to assist in fulfilling the unpaid demands of social reproduction (Luxton 2006b). It is critical to note, however, that this informal support is only available to the mothers in my study if they engage in practices of secrecy, or rely on those who are accepting of their engagement in this form of paid work, and are also willing (and able) to assist them.

Conscious of the time, emotional labour and energy it takes to fulfill the demands of unpaid care, the mothers in my study stressed the importance of acknowledging and showing appreciation to their key supports for their engagement in this work. Further, to secure more reliable assistance, my participants identified the necessity of offering reciprocal help to their key supports, whether it be through offering financial compensation (such as paying rent in exchange for the time they have invested in childcare) or assisting them in fulfilling their own responsibilities of unpaid care. Participants' informal relations of support played a critical role in the navigation of these mothers' intensified demands of adequate child-rearing (Hays 1996), in addition to their stigmatized paid work.

Conclusion

The practices that the mothers in my study engaged in play a critical role in their navigation of their gendered, intensified, and unwaged work of social reproduction, as well as their stigmatized and precarious form of paid work. In the absence of accessible, adequate and affordable services and state support, their informal communities of support assisted the mothers in my study in fulfilling the demands of their unpaid care work, enhancing their abilities to also engage in paid labour. As stigma further marginalized the mothers in my study and subjected them to social isolation, they also face the burdens of a ‘third shift’ – managing the stigmas associated with their paid work. Implementing strategies of stigma management and creating personal communities of support, the women in my study shared they were best able to reduce stigmatization that they and their children have faced, and secure key supports to assist them in navigating their dual roles.

Chapter Six: Conclusions

Informed by key readings on social reproduction, social surveillance and intensification of mothering, women working in the sex industry, and occupational stigma, this thesis adopted a feminist methodological approach to explore micro and macro-level understandings of the narrated experiences of women who are both mothers and exotic dancers. My overarching thesis question was: ‘how do these women navigate and negotiate their socially constructed roles and practices as both mothers and sex workers?’. Through four semi-structured phone interviews with women who have (either currently or in the past) navigated mothering and stripping simultaneously, this study explored the daily routines and practices employed by the women in my study to meet the responsibilities of both roles, highlighting how these practices contribute to scholarly literature focusing on the experiences of working mothers today.

To understand both the barriers and advantages my participants have faced when navigating both forms of work, this study was guided by five sub-questions, which included: i) what are the daily practices involved in the navigation and negotiation of mothering and exotic dancing?, ii) How do participants narrate these roles (caregiving/ mothering and exotic dancing) and their impacts on each other?, iii) What macro-level social structures and social institutions structure the ways in which participants manage paid work and domestic care work?, iv) How do they negotiate the social surveillance of these two socially constructed identities, and with what effects?, and finally v) How does the navigation of, and between, these socially constructed roles contribute to contemporary theoretical and empirical understandings of mothering, changing conditions of care and social reproduction, and paid and unpaid work?

The goal of this study was to illuminate women’s experiences of, and navigation between, mothering and exotic dancing by exploring how they negotiate the daily work of social

reproduction, the forms of support they have access to, and the barriers they have faced. Further, this project aimed to give space to the narratives of the women in my study by placing their day-to-day experiences of both forms of work in the context of contemporary capitalist society, and in relation to gender and class inequalities.

This concluding chapter provides a summary of my MA thesis research project, starting by briefly addressing my main findings by answering each of my sub-questions. I also draw attention to the limitations of this research, including the lack of intersectional perspectives, small sample size, and my social location as the researcher. I then outline potential research topics for further investigation and my plans to expand upon this study in my PhD dissertation.

Addressing My Research Question(s) and Main Findings

This study was, in part, guided by the question ‘*what macro-level structures influence the ways in which these women manage paid work and domestic care work?*’. Participants’ narratives inform us that their experiences of navigating these dual roles are structured by ideologies of adequate child-rearing (Hays 1996), the gendered nature of unwaged care work (Reay 1998; Rosenberg 2001; Bezanson 2006b; Bezanson and Luxton 2006; Braedley 2006; Federici 2012; Rosenblum 2012; Fraser 2016), precarious labour conditions (Barton 2006; Fogel and Quinlan 2011), capitalism and neoliberal policies (Bezanson 2006a; Bakker 2007; Federici 2012), the lack of adequate, accessible and affordable state and social supports (Luxton 2006a; Luxton 2006b; Federici 2012; McKay et al. 2016; Doucet and McKay 2017; Prentice and White 2008; MacDonald and Friendly 2019), in addition to the stigmatization of their paid work (Barton 2006; Bruckert 2002, 2012; Hannem 2012). These macro-level structures impacted the ways in which my participants were able to fulfill the demands of their paid work and unpaid

care, illuminating some of the challenges that stigmatized working mothers face, as well as the reproduction of gender inequalities present throughout Canada's paid labour force.

I also explored the question '*what are the daily practices involved in the navigation and negotiation of mothering and exotic dancing?*', in which my data demonstrates participants' reliance upon constructing and securing personal communities of informal support to fulfill the demands of their dual roles. With lack of adequate state and social supports, participants' informal reliance on their informal key supports enhanced their ability to navigate stripping, unpaid care, and the stigmas associated with their paid work. To establish these communities and eliminate the adverse effects associated with navigating their dual roles, the mothers in my study engaged in practices of redefining family, establishing positive work environments and adopting practices of secrecy and trust. To secure their reliance upon their communities of support, which was necessary in order to navigate and negotiate the demands of mothering and exotic dancing, participants also engaged in varied forms of compensation as a means to weave strong, reliable and reciprocal relations with their informal supports.

My thesis addressed the sub-question '*how do these women narrate these roles (caregiving/ mothering and exotic dancing) and their impacts on each other?*' Participants' narratives demonstrated varied benefits, hardships and costs associated with each respective role, as well as navigating both roles simultaneously. They describe mothering as a transformational experience, emotionally rewarding and gratifying work, while also drawing attention to the negative impacts of gendered responsibilities, increased social surveillance over their mothering practices, being subjected to excessive pressures to perform their mothering role in an intensified manner. Stripping was described as being an emotionally rewarding, empowering, and financially liberating form of paid work, while it also was depicted as a form of precarious work,

as participants earned an unpredictable income, paid work fees and made financial investments necessary to secure success, and were not entitled to extended benefits. Participants also drew attention to the costs associated with this form of paid work, including mistreatment by the club's management team, employers' lack of concern for their safety, occupational stigma, and fear that this stigma would negatively impact their children.

Overall, the mothers in my study describe stripping as a means to enhance their ability to meet the demands of unpaid care work, as stripping offered a suitable income and favourable work hours. My findings illustrate that, despite the benefits participants experienced working as strippers, navigating both forms of work also imposed various hardships on their day-to-day lives, subjecting them to the demands, and exploitation of two 'full-time' jobs. Their accounts demonstrate that it is not just the burden of a double shift that the mothers in my study endured, but rather their precarious, stigmatized and unpredictable economic conditions, positioning them at fault if they failed to navigate their dual roles successfully. Accordingly, my research participants describe balancing work-family life as emotionally draining and ultimately resulting in a loss of 'me time'—potentially putting their mental well-being at risk.

This qualitative research study also explored the question '*how do participants negotiate the social surveillance of these two socially constructed identities?*' Due to dominant ideologies of intensive mothering practices (Hays 1996), in addition to the stigmatization of their paid work, the mothers in my study shared that they have faced immense surveillance and criticism as both mothers and sex workers, forcing them to navigate the demands of their dual roles while actively managing the stigmatization of their paid work. To reduce the costs that this surveillance has had on their mothering roles, participants stress the necessity of engaging in practices of secrecy in order to limit the knowledge of their dual roles to only those who they feel they can trust. This

negotiation enabled them to best navigate the demands of their dual roles, and further, protected their children and key supports from being subjected to the implications of courtesy stigma.

Finally, this thesis was guided by the sub-question ‘*how does the navigation of, and between, these socially constructed roles contribute to contemporary theoretical and empirical understandings of mothering, changing conditions of care and social reproduction, and about paid and unpaid work?*’. Participants’ narratives contribute to growing scholarship on navigating paid work and unpaid care, offering insight into the practices involved in negotiating paid work and unpaid care in stigmatized and precarious conditions. Further, illuminating the barriers imposed upon participants due to the stigmatized nature of their paid work highlights the necessity of constructing and securing informal communities that act as their key supports, in contexts where there is little social or state support for social reproductive work. Participants’ accounts also highlight the demands associated with their ‘third shift’ – managing the costs of occupational stigma, as well as the fear of their children’s experiences of stigma by association. My findings demonstrate how participants navigate and negotiate their socially constructed roles and practices as both mothers and sex workers, and how their experience navigating paid work and unpaid care may differentiate them from women engaging in more conventional waged employment.

Limitations

This qualitative study encountered a number of limitations. First, all four women who participated in this study identified as Caucasian, able-bodied, cis-gender, heterosexual women—preventing me from providing an intersectional analysis of my findings, and illuminating how racialization, colonization, ethnicity, ableism, transphobia and homophobia impacts and structures their navigation and negotiation of these dual roles and mothering

practices. Further, my data analysis was limited, as I did not inquire about the types of clubs that participants worked in (i.e. upscale or down-market competitors), which plays a prominent role in the treatment they face in their workplace and the clientele their place of employment attracts (Barton 2006). As this study only focused on the experiences of four mothers who have navigated both roles of mothering and stripping simultaneously, this study was also limited due to my small sample size. Although this is a limitation, I maintained this small sample size to ensure I could adequately analyze each participant's narrated experiences in the context of an MA level research project.

This research project also faced limitations due to my own social location as the primary researcher/ interviewer. As I have no previous experience researching or working with the sex work industry, some potential participants were hesitant or disapproved of my qualitative study, which limited the number of women who volunteered to participate. Further, as I am not a mother, nor work as an exotic dancer, this project was potentially limited in terms of the data that I was able to collect. Accordingly, my analysis of these findings also faced limitations, as I was unable to draw upon my own personal experiences and knowledge working in the sex work industry.

Key Contributions

In addition to producing an understanding of the daily practices involved in women's navigation of stigmatized paid work and their second shift of unpaid care, one of the key contributions of this qualitative research study is that it draws attention to the obstacles and benefits associated with managing mothering and exotic dancing. This research showcases some of the benefits, hardships, and costs involved in each respective role, as well as the navigation of these dual roles simultaneously. This research also contributes to an understanding of how

macro-level structures play a key role in how my participants engage in their paid and unpaid forms of work.

Drawing attention to state and social supports available in Canada to mothers navigating paid work and unpaid care, this study also demonstrates how the conditions of social reproduction influenced my participants' ability to manage their dual roles. Illuminating the negotiation of mothering practices and the work of social reproduction situated in stigmatized and precarious conditions, this qualitative study contributes to growing literature focusing on the experiences of women's second shift, engaging in sexualized forms of paid work, stripping, social reproduction and mothering. Thus, this research contributes to widening the concept of working mothers in contemporary literature, drawing attention to the experiences of mothers engaging in stigmatized, precarious, and unconventional forms of paid work.

Implications for Future Research

While conducting this small qualitative research study I've become aware of the need for further research to focus on the experiences of diverse women who navigate unpaid care work and the stigmatized labour of sex work. Accordingly, for my PhD dissertation³⁵ I hope to explore how women navigate paid and unpaid labour, how they experience and manage varied stigmas as well as state and moral regulation and social surveillance, and how these may vary depending on the specific type of sex work they participate in as well as by class, race, and sexuality. Building upon this MA thesis project, my next research project will aim to widen and deepen a critical theoretical and empirical analysis of the connections between macro-level structures, mothering and sex work, shifting public debates about sex work and the possible effects of these debates on women's everyday lives, structural stigma and policy implementations (Hannem 2012; Bruckert

³⁵ I will be continuing my studies post-grad at Carleton University in the PhD Sociology program.

and Hannem 2013), and connections between social and sexual policies in Canada.

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Appendix A

Invitation to Participate Form

Title of Research: “Exploring the Narratives of Mothers who work as Strippers”

Principal Investigator: Dr. Andrea Doucet (Faculty Supervisor)
Sociology Department, Brock University

Student Principal Investigator: Michelle Lesley Annett (MA Student)
Sociology Department, Brock University

Invitation to Participate

I, Dr. Andrea Doucet, Professor and Faculty Supervisor from the Department of Sociology at Brock University, and Michelle Lesley Annett, Masters of Critical Sociology student at Brock University, invite you to participate in a research project entitled “*Exploring the Narratives of Mothers who work as Strippers*”.

The purpose of this research is to focus on the experiences of mothers, who are also exotic dancers, with the overarching question: ‘*how do these women navigate and negotiate their identities and practices being both mothers and sex workers?*’ Focusing on a total of 3-4 women working in Canada, this study aims to make sense of these day-to-day experiences in relation to Canada’s current labour market, as well as gender and class inequalities. This research is driven by the intent to progress towards a more inclusive feminism-- one in which includes the concerns and experiences of all women in the agenda of Canada’s feminist goals.

This study invites women who are currently, or have in the past, managed both roles of motherhood and stripping at the same time. Should you chose to participate, you will be asked to partake in one semi-structured interview with the student principal investigator, Michelle Lesley. Interviews are expected to last 1-2 hours in length, and will take place in either a public space of your choice (such as a library or coffee shop), within your own home, over the phone or through the use of video-calling apps including Skype, Facetime or Duo. Each interview will be audio-recorded to ensure accuracy throughout the data collection. To protect your identity and the identities of others mentioned in your interview, pseudonyms will be used throughout the research project. As compensation for participating in this study, you will receive \$50.

Since there is little literature focusing on this topic, the data collected from this study will contribute to research focused on the experiences of working mothers in Canada today. In doing so, this study aim to draw attention to the need for including the experiences of mothers who take part in highly marginalized forms of paid work. This work also aims to provide a critical view of how larger contexts (such as government policies and the labour market) influence these experiences of motherhood, producing an empathetic understanding of these mother’s daily routines.

As a potential participant, I ask you to go over this invitation and the consent form to make an informed decision regarding your participation. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the Brock University Research Ethics Officer

(905 688-5550 ext. 3035, reb@brocku.ca). If you have any questions regarding this project in particular, please do not hesitate to contact either of us (see below for contact information).

Thank you for your time,



Contact Information

Dr. Andrea Doucet
Faculty Supervisor
905-688-5550 x3150
adoucet@brocku.ca



Michelle Lesley Annett
Student Principal Investigator
902-318-4539
ma17kt@brocku.ca

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through Brock University's Research Ethics Board [#18-009].

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form (For In-Person Interviews)

Title of Research: “Exploring the Narratives of Mothers who work as Strippers”

Principal Investigator: Dr. Andrea Doucet (Faculty Supervisor)
Sociology Department, Brock University
905-688-5550 x3150
adoucet@brocku.ca

Student Principal Investigator: Michelle Lesley Annett (MA Student)
Sociology Department, Brock University
902-318-4539
ma17kt@brocku.ca

Overview

You are invited to participate in a study that involves qualitative research. This study will focus on the experiences of mothers, who are also exotic dancers, with the overarching question: *‘how do these women navigate and negotiate their identities and practices being both mothers and sex workers?’* Focusing on a total of 3-4 women working in Canada, this study aims to make sense of these day-to-day experiences in relation to Canada’s current labour market, as well as gender and class inequalities. This research is driven by the intent to progress towards a more inclusive feminism-- one in which includes the concerns and experiences of all women in the agenda of Canada’s feminist goals.

What will be Required of Participants

Should you chose to participate, you will be asked to partake in one semi-structured interview with the student principal investigator, Michelle Lesley. Interviews are expected to last between 1-2 hours, and will take place in either a public space (i.e. libraries, coffee shops etc.) of your choice or within your own home. At any given time, you obtain the right to deny answering any questions without facing any consequences.

With Respect to Potential Benefits and Risks

As there is little literature focusing on this topic, the data collected from this study will contribute to research focused on the experiences of working mothers in Canada today. In doing so, this study aim to draw attention to the need for including the experiences of mothers who take part in highly marginalized forms of paid work. This work also aims to provide a critical view of how larger contexts (such as government policies and the labour market) influence these experiences of motherhood, producing an empathetic understanding of these mother’s daily routines. No direct benefits are anticipated for the participants themselves.

As compensation for participating in this study, you will receive \$50 in cash. Being that this research focuses on your experience as a working mother in the sex work industry, discussing your past experiences may provoke an emotional response. If this occurs, I can offer a number of local and national professional services that can offer you aid and/or assistance. It is important to note that as a researcher I am obligated to report any potential instances of child abuse or neglect to legal authorities, which in turn, would breach measures of confidentiality.

If you choose for your interview to be conducted in a public place, such as a busy coffee shop or park, another potential risk is that others nearby may overhear the interview. To avoid this risk, I highly recommend you choose a location that will offer you the utmost comfort and an adequate amount of privacy. If needed, I can offer some location recommendations for your interview that will best suit your needs.

Confidentiality

As a measure of confidentiality, this research will utilize pseudonyms for the names of those participating, the names of their children, or names of any other significant personal indicators (i.e. place of work). The list linking pseudonyms with identifying information will be stored and lodged on my personal computer, with a separate password to access. It is crucial to note that this master list will not contain participants' full names-- only their initials. If two participants have the same initials, this master list will also identify the date and time that their interview took place. Although pseudonyms will be used throughout this study, we cannot promise anonymity.

Upon consent, all data collected will be audio-recorded and will be kept in a locked personal filing cabinet. These recordings will be transcribed to text by me, in which this document on my password protected computer will also contain a separate password to access it. Only Dr. Andrea Doucet and Michelle Lesley Annett will have access to this data, which will be erased, shredded and destroyed by August 2020. Consenting to this form also consents to the use of confidential direct quoting to secure the accuracy of data.

Voluntary Participation

All participants obtain the right to withdraw their voluntary participation at any given moment without having to provide a reason for doing so. To withdraw your participation, you can either verbalize your wish to do so, leave the room and later contact Michelle Lesley with this request, or utilize Michelle Lesley's contact information to inform her of your decision at a later time. If you decide to withdraw your participation from this study, you will be given two options: 1) you can opt for the data that has already been collected to be included in the analysis of this project or 2) you can request for all of your data to be excluded from this study and immediately destroyed. If you request for your data to be excluded from this study, you will receive confirmation via email that all audio-recordings, transcripts and any other information pertaining to your participation have been erased, shredded and recycled. This disposal includes the shredding and recycling of any hard-copy data collected throughout your interview and a complete erasing of the audio-recorded interview. There are no penalties for those who have chosen to withdraw from the study. If you withdraw from the study once your interview has begun, you will still receive the \$50 compensation for your time.

As a participant, you also obtain the right to refuse to answer any questions that you are asked without providing a reason, or request particular responses to be kept 'off the record'. This request however does not apply to my legal obligation to report any instances of child abuse or neglect.

Publication and Results

Once the data has been collected and transcribed, a summary of this project's findings will be sent to each participant via e-mail no later than April 2019. If interested in accessing the finalized text, you will be able to upon request through contacting Michelle Lesley Annett (see

contact information above). We estimate this thesis will be finalized by August 31, 2019 in which results from this project may be published in professional journals and/or presented at conferences indefinitely.

Contact Information and Ethics Clearance

If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please contact Michelle Lesley Annett using the contact information provided above. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at Brock University [#18-009]. If you have any comments or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics Office at (905) 688-5550 Ext. 3035, reb@brocku.ca.

Thank you for your assistance in this project. Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

Consent

I agree to participate in this study described above. I have made this decision based on the information I have read in the Information-Consent Letter. I have had the opportunity to receive any additional details I wanted about the study and understand that I may ask questions in the future. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any given time

Participant's Name: _____

Email Address (or contact information): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C

Informed Consent Form (For Interviews over the Phone/ Video Calling)

Title of Research: “Exploring the Narratives of Mothers who work as Strippers”

Principal Investigator: Dr. Andrea Doucet (Faculty Supervisor)
Sociology Department, Brock University
905-688-5550 x3150
adoucet@brocku.ca

Student Principal Investigator: Michelle Lesley Annett (MA Student)
Sociology Department, Brock University
902-318-4539
ma17kt@brocku.ca

Overview

You are invited to participate in a study that involves qualitative research. This study will focus on the experiences of mothers, who are also exotic dancers, with the overarching question: *‘how do these women navigate and negotiate their identities and practices being both mothers and sex workers?’* Focusing on a total of 3-4 women working in Canada, this study aims to make sense of these day-to-day experiences in relation to Canada’s current labour market, as well as gender and class inequalities. This research is driven by the intent to progress towards a more inclusive feminism-- one in which includes the concerns and experiences of all women in the agenda of Canada’s feminist goals.

What will be Required of Participants

Should you chose to participate, you will be asked to partake in one semi-structured interview with the student principal investigator, Michelle Lesley. Interviews are expected to last between 1-2 hours, and will take place over the phone or through the use of free video-calling apps including FaceTime, Skype or Duo. At any given time, you obtain the right to deny answering any questions without facing any consequences.

With Respect to Potential Benefits and Risks

As there is little literature focusing on this topic, the data collected from this study will contribute to research focused on the experiences of working mothers in Canada today. In doing so, this study aim to draw attention to the need for including the experiences of mothers who take part in highly marginalized forms of paid work. This work also aims to provide a critical view of how larger contexts (such as government policies and the labour market) influence these experiences of motherhood, producing an empathetic understanding of these mother’s daily routines. No direct benefits are anticipated for the participants themselves.

As compensation for participating in this study, you will receive \$50 for your time. This compensation will be e-transferred to you, and you will receive the password for this e-transfer prior to the end of the phone/video call.

Being that this research focuses on your experience as a working mother in the sex work industry, discussing your past experiences may provoke an emotional response. If this occurs, I can offer a number of local and national professional services that can offer you aid and/or

assistance. It is important to note that as a researcher I am obligated to report any potential instances of child abuse or neglect to legal authorities, which in turn, would breach measures of confidentiality.

If you choose for your phone interview to be conducted in a public place, another potential risk is that others nearby may overhear the interview. To avoid this risk, I highly recommend you choose a location that will offer you the utmost comfort and an adequate amount of privacy. With respects to your privacy, please note that Michelle Lesley will only conduct your phone/ video interview while she is in a private space, where others cannot overhear the conversation.

Confidentiality

As a measure of confidentiality, this research will utilize pseudonyms for the names of those participating, the names of their children, or names of any other significant personal indicators (i.e. place of work). The list linking pseudonyms with identifying information will be stored and lodged on my personal computer, with a separate password to access. It is crucial to note that this master list will not contain participants' full names-- only their initials. If two participants have the same initials, this master list will also identify the date and time that their interview took place. Although pseudonyms will be used throughout this study, we cannot promise anonymity.

Upon consent, all data collected will be audio-recorded and will be kept in a locked personal filing cabinet. These recordings will be transcribed to text by me, in which this document on my password protected computer will also contain a separate password to access it. Only Dr. Andrea Doucet and Michelle Lesley Annett will have access to this data, which will be erased, shredded and destroyed by August 2020. Consenting to this form also consents to the use of confidential direct quoting to secure the accuracy of data.

Voluntary Participation

All participants obtain the right to withdraw their voluntary participation at any given moment without having to provide a reason for doing so. To withdraw your participation, you can either verbalize your wish to do so, end the call and later contact Michelle Lesley with this request, or utilize Michelle Lesley's contact information to inform her of your decision at a later time. If you decide to withdraw your participation from this study, you will be given two options: 1) you can opt for the data that has already been collected to be included in the analysis of this project or 2) you can request for all of your data to be excluded from this study and immediately destroyed. If you request for your data to be excluded from this study, you will receive confirmation via email that all audio-recordings, transcripts and any other information pertaining to your participation have been erased, shredded and recycled. This disposal includes the shredding and recycling of any hard-copy data collected throughout your interview and a complete erasing of the audio-recorded interview. There are no penalties for those who have chosen to withdraw from the study. If you withdraw from the study once your interview has begun, you will still receive the \$50 compensation for your time.

As a participant, you also obtain the right to refuse to answer any questions that you are asked without providing a reason, or request particular responses to be kept 'off the record'. This request however does not apply to my legal obligation to report any instances of child abuse or neglect.

Publication and Results

Once the data has been collected and transcribed, a summary of this project's findings will be sent to each participant via e-mail no later than April 2019. If interested in accessing the finalized text, you will be able to upon request through contacting Michelle Lesley Annett (see contact information above). We estimate this thesis will be finalized by August 31, 2019 in which results from this project may be published in professional journals and/or presented at conferences indefinitely.

Contact Information and Ethics Clearance

If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please contact Michelle Lesley Annett using the contact information provided above. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at Brock University [#18-009]. If you have any comments or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics Office at (905) 688-5550 Ext. 3035, reb@brocku.ca.

Thank you for your assistance in this project. Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

Consent

I agree to participate in this study described above. I have made this decision based on the information I have read in the Information-Consent Letter. I have had the opportunity to receive any additional details I wanted about the study and understand that I may ask questions in the future. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any given time

Verbal consent is required in order to participate in this study. This consent must be given at the beginning of your phone/ video-call interview.

Appendix D

Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Family Life

- 1) Do you mind starting off by just telling me a bit about yourself?
- 2) How many children do you have? How old are they (approx.) ?
- 3) What is your current living situation?
- 4) Can you tell me about a typical day in your life as a mother? [A typical week? A typical weekend?
- 5) Do you co-parent or have any other type of family support (financially or through sharing caregiving responsibilities)?
- 6) If so, how do you arrange who is responsible for what (with your partner, mom, ect.)? Do you try to share the housework? The financial needs? The child- caring?
- 7) Do you access any professional services to help with your parenting responsibilities? (i.e. childcare, nanny, YMCA, tutor) Did you use childcare when your children were young?
- 8) Do you feel any pressures in regards to how you should parent? (i.e. personally, socially, from family) Have you in the past?
- 9) What's your favourite thing about being a mother? What's your least favourite thing about being a mother?

Work Life

- 1) Do you mind sharing with me a brief overview of your schooling/ employment history?
- 2) How long have you been working in this industry? [How did you get started? How long do you plan to work (in this industry or in general)?]
- 3) What does a typical workweek consist of? How many shifts/ hours? Is this your only source of household income?
- 4) According to previous research, every strip club has different rules and different fees for the women working there. At the bar you work/ worked at, were you paid no matter what? Did you have to pay house fees? Did you have to tip out? Did you get fined for not attending a shift? Was the arrangement beneficial to you or were there times not earning a wage set you back financially?

5) There's often a lot of discussion in the media about women working in this industry and whether or not they actually chose to pursue this work- that being said, was this career your "choice" or something else?

6) Do you ever feel any pressures at work? [From who? i.e. bosses, clients, other dancers, ect.]

7) What do you enjoy most about your occupation? What do you enjoy least?

8) If you could change 3 things about your workplace/ occupation, what would these changes be? [i.e. wages, benefits]

9) *If they stripped prior to having children as well:* How did having children change your work life? [i.e. How you are treated at work, how you approach your job, how you view your job]

10) In 3 or so words, what does being an exotic dancer mean to you? (i.e. freedom, empowerment, tiring)

Combining Both forms of Work

1) As a working mom, what challenges have you faced?

2) Have you ever been treated unfairly by others for being a mother working in this industry? How do you cope/ deal with this mistreatment? Can you tell me a particularly example or multiple?

3) Are there any benefits being a mom working in this industry (per say, opposed to having another occupation)?

4) How do you transition from being in 'parent mode' to being in 'working mode'?

5) Are your children aware of how you earn your living? [If not, why? If so, how did you explain your job to your children?]

6) Are your family members/ friends aware that you work in this industry? [What were their responses?]

7) Who AND WHAT are your key supports as a mother working in this industry? What are your key constraints? (ie subsidize day care)

8) In an ideal world, would you organize your life any differently? What would you be doing? Would your family life or work life look any different?

9) Is there any questions that I didn't ask that you'd like to comment on, or anything you'd like to tell me? Or do you have any questions for me?

Appendix E

Online Advertisement

***Seeking Research Participants*****"Exploring the Narratives of Mothers who work as Strippers"**

The purpose of this research is to explore the narrated experiences of women, who are both mothers and exotic dancers, with the overarching question: 'how do these women navigate and negotiate their identities and practices being both mothers and sex workers?'

Participant's Involvement:

Participate in an audio-recorder interview (1-2 hours in length)

Eligibility:

- Managed both roles of being a mother and exotic dancer at the same time
- Lives in Canada

Compensation of \$50 cash.

If interested in participating and would like to receive additional information regarding this study, please contact Michelle Lesley Annett at ma17kt@brocku.ca or by phone (902)-318-4539.

This research has received clearance by Brock University's REB (#18-009)

****Publically interacting with this social post may comprise measures of privacy and confidentiality****

Appendix F

Ethics Clearance



Brock University
 Research Ethics Office
 Tel: 905-888-6660 ext. 3036
 Email: reb@brocku.ca

Social Science Research Ethics Board

Certificate of Ethics Clearance for Human Participant Research

DATE: 8/29/2018
 PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: DOUCET, Andrea - Sociology
 FILE: 18-009 - DOUCET
 TYPE: Masters Thesis/Project STUDENT: Michelle Lesley Annett
 SUPERVISOR: Andrea Doucet
 TITLE: Exploring the Narratives of Mothers who work as Strippers

ETHICS CLEARANCE GRANTED

Type of Clearance: NEW Expiry Date: 8/1/2019

The Brock University Social Science Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above named research proposal and considers the procedures, as described by the applicant, to conform to the University's ethical standards and the Tri-Council Policy Statement. Clearance granted from 8/29/2018 to 8/1/2019.

The Tri-Council Policy Statement requires that ongoing research be monitored by, at a minimum, an annual report. Should your project extend beyond the expiry date, you are required to submit a Renewal form before 8/1/2019. Continued clearance is contingent on timely submission of reports.

To comply with the Tri-Council Policy Statement, you must also submit a final report upon completion of your project. All report forms can be found on the Research Ethics web page at <http://www.brocku.ca/research/policies-and-forms/research-forms>.

In addition, throughout your research, you must report promptly to the REB:

- a) Changes increasing the risk to the participant(s) and/or affecting significantly the conduct of the study;
- b) All adverse and/or unanticipated experiences or events that may have real or potential unfavourable implications for participants;
- c) New information that may adversely affect the safety of the participants or the conduct of the study;
- d) Any changes in your source of funding or new funding to a previously unfunded project.

We wish you success with your research.

Approved:

Lynn Dempsey, Chair
 Social Science Research Ethics Board

Robert Steinbauer, Chair
 Social Science Research Ethics Board

Note: Brock University is accountable for the research carried out in its own jurisdiction or under its auspices and may refuse certain research even though the REB has found it ethically acceptable.

If research participants are in the care of a health facility, at a school, or other institution or community organization, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure that the ethical guidelines and clearance of those facilities or institutions are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of research at that site.

Appendix G

Ethics (Modification) Clearance



Brock University
Research Ethics Office
Tel: 905-888-6660 ext. 3035
Email: reb@brooku.ca

Social Science Research Ethics Board

Certificate of Ethics Clearance for Human Participant Research

DATE: September 17, 2018
 PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: DOUCET, Andrea - Sociology
 FILE: 18-009 - DOUCET
 TYPE: Masters Thesis/Project STUDENT: Michelle Lesley Annett
 SUPERVISOR: Andrea Doucet
 TITLE: Exploring the Narratives of Mothers who work as Strippers

ETHICS CLEARANCE GRANTED

Type of Clearance: MODIFICATION Expiry Date: 8/1/2019

The Brock University Social Sciences Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above named research proposal and considers the procedures, as described by the applicant, to conform to the University's ethical standards and the Tri-Council Policy Statement.

Modification: Addition of phone or video-calling options for interviews and expansion of geographic region from which participants are drawn.

The Tri-Council Policy Statement requires that ongoing research be monitored by, at a minimum, an annual report. Should your project extend beyond the expiry date, you are required to submit a Renewal form before 8/1/2019. Continued clearance is contingent on timely submission of reports.

To comply with the Tri-Council Policy Statement, you must also submit a final report upon completion of your project. All report forms can be found on the Research Ethics web page at <http://www.brocku.ca/research/policies-and-forms/research-forms>.

In addition, throughout your research, you must report promptly to the REB:

- Changes increasing the risk to the participant(s) and/or affecting significantly the conduct of the study;
- All adverse and/or unanticipated experiences or events that may have real or potential unfavourable implications for participants;
- New information that may adversely affect the safety of the participants or the conduct of the study;
- Any changes in your source of funding or new funding to a previously unfunded project.

We wish you success with your research.

Approved:

Lynn Dempsey, Chair
Social Science Research Ethics Board

Robert Steinbauer, Chair
Social Science Research Ethics Board

Note: Brock University is accountable for the research carried out in its own jurisdiction or under its auspices and may refuse certain research even though the REB has found it ethically acceptable.

If research participants are in the care of a health facility, at a school, or other institution or community organization, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure that the ethical guidelines and clearance of those facilities or institutions are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of research at that site.