

Stigmatized in Stilettos: An Ethnographic Study of Stigma in Exotic Dancers' Lives

by

Jacenta Bahri

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University of Manitoba in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Anthropology

University of Manitoba

Winnipeg

Copyright 2017 Jacenta Bahri

## Abstract

My dissertation is an ethnographic exploration of exotic dancers' relationships with romantic partners and relatives, and the ways in which the social stigma stemming from mixing commodified erotics impacted these relationships. My research focuses on women who provide adult entertainment in bars that cater predominantly to straight men in a mid-sized prairie city, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

Using feminist anthropological participant observation methods, I completed one year of fieldwork working as a driver for exotic dancers and two years of fieldwork working as an exotic dancer in Winnipeg. Through a reflexive analysis of women's stories about their relationships with family, romantic partners, and money, I argue that the stigma of erotic labour is rooted in social beliefs about the impurity of mixing commerce with intimate acts in specific ways that do not conform to heteronormative ideology and traditional norms of womanhood.

Grounded in my ethnographic data, I show how these cultural mores are constantly upheld, reproduced, and disseminated through the mainstream media, laws, and political ideology, in obvious and not so obvious ways. Furthermore, I propose the theory that "stripping money" is earmarked in specific ways that money earned from other forms of labour is not, and argue that this is the basis of stigmatization in dancers' lives and relationships.

Ultimately, the result of such a social positioning of women's work is the structural and symbolic violence of stigma that could manifest as direct physical, psychological, verbal, or economic violence in exotic dancer's interpersonal relationships. Thus, I conclude that the de-stigmatization of exotic dance is imperative for the promotion of women's rights, health, and well-being and that identifying stigma as violence in exotic dancers' lives opens up possibilities for positive interventions in attaining this goal.

## Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I'd like to thank my advisor, Dr. Susan Frohlick (University of British Columbia), whose guidance throughout the challenges of graduate school was essential to my success. Dr. Frohlick went above and beyond her duties as an advisor, exhibiting a tremendous amount of patience with my many moments of self-doubt and anxiety induced procrastination. Navigating academia as a stigmatized researcher is no easy feat, and Dr. Frohlick's expertise in this area was a crucial component in my ability to stay the course when I felt defeated.

I'd like to thank my committee members, Dr. Janice Ristock (University of Manitoba) and Dr. Shawna Ferris (University of Manitoba), who provided much needed advice and feedback during our meetings. Like my advisor Dr. Frohlick, I felt that Dr. Ristock and Dr. Ferris went above and beyond as committee members, always supporting me when I encountered difficulties with my project.

I am forever grateful to the strong and wonderful women who contributed to my project. This research would not have been possible without their participation and willingness to take time out of their busy lives to share their personal experiences with me. I'd like to thank Scarlett and Billie in particular, as they had the arduous task of reviewing the rough draft of my thesis.

I'd also like to thank my mother for her support during my many years in education. Her love, acceptance, and encouragement were a tremendous source of strength for me during times when I felt I could not carry on.

Thank you to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the University of Manitoba. My research would not have been possible without a Doctoral Fellowship from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the University of Manitoba Graduate Studies Fellowship, the Pam Mason Scholarship Award and the other travel bursaries, awards, and teaching opportunities provided by the Department of Anthropology, Graduate Studies, and Women's and Gender Studies over the years.

## Table of Contents

<b>Forward</b> .....	4
We Matter .....	4
Background .....	5
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction and Literature Review</b> .....	10
Context .....	10
Vernacular .....	16
Representation and Ethnographic Fiction .....	19
Themes and Theoretical Framework .....	22
Stigma Theory in Studies of Exotic Dance .....	22
Beyond Stigma Management: Understanding Stigma as Violence .....	28
“Stripping Money,” Intimacy, and Abject Bodies .....	31
<b>Chapter 2: Research Methodology</b> .....	38
Feminist Anthropology .....	38
Entering the Field: Working as a Driver .....	42
Participant Observation: Working as an Exotic Dancer .....	52
Coding and Analysis .....	64
Participants .....	67
Billie .....	67
Scarlett .....	68
Kat .....	69
Ivy .....	70
Lucy .....	71
Misty .....	72
Participant Collaboration .....	73
Class and Race .....	75
Ethics: A Woman Driving at Night .....	79
<b>Chapter 3: Working in “Winterpeg”</b> .....	85
The Day Shift .....	85
Winnipeg, Liquor, and Women: A Brief History .....	87
Setting the Stage .....	90
Regulation of Erotic Entertainment and the Role of the MBLL (Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries) .....	94
Strip Clubs vs. Strip Pubs .....	102
Mandatory Floor Time, Fees, and Fines .....	105

Image 1: No Glitter Sign.....	109
Image 2: Bar Rules .....	110
<b>Chapter 4 “Bad Parents make Good Strippers”: Stigma in Dancers Relationships with Family Members .....</b>	<b>114</b>
The Family Gathering .....	114
Daddy Issues .....	114
Image 3: George Takei Meme.....	115
Understanding Stigma in Family Relationships .....	125
Image 4: Mother's Day Card .....	130
Finding Out .....	132
Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell: Lies, Half-Truths, and Silence .....	138
Children and Negotiating Stigma .....	150
<b>Chapter 5: Boyfriends, Lovers, and “Peeler Pounders” .....</b>	<b>157</b>
Just a Bad Mood .....	157
Perceptions of Masculine Violence .....	166
Beware of “Peeler Pounders:” Dating as a Dancer .....	172
Negotiating Stigma in Relationships .....	180
Hoping for More.....	186
<b>Chapter 6 “Easy” Money, Hard Work: Conceptualizing “Stripping Money” .....</b>	<b>189</b>
“Easy” Money for Hard Work: Cash and the Devaluing of Women’s Labour .....	198
Dirty Money v. Clean Money: Dancing the Right way, for the Right Reasons .....	204
Striponomics: A Place for Strippers as Consumers.....	210
<b>Chapter 7: Conclusion .....</b>	<b>216</b>
The Future of Stripping: An Industry in Flux .....	216
Contributions.....	219
Drawbacks and Limitations .....	222
Recommendations and Future Research Directions.....	224
<b>References.....</b>	<b>231</b>
<b>Appendix I: Consent Forms.....</b>	<b>256</b>
<b>Notes .....</b>	<b>261</b>

## **Forward**

### **We Matter**

I forced myself to take deep breaths and tried to choke back the tears. “I knew this could happen, I knew this could happen” I kept repeating to myself as I sat at my desk while clutching my rejection letter from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, a federal funding body.

Rejection letters from potential funding sources are part and parcel of the graduate school experience, one that I had already become accustomed to at the beginning of my Ph.D. program, but this was not just a simple “we regret to inform you” letter.

According to one assessor, the CIHR only supports “serious research” and “the funding of nightly entertainment does not fall under this umbrella.” Not only was my research, an ethnographic study of stigma in the lives of women who work as exotic dancers in Winnipeg, or as my reviewer so glibly summarized my project: “sitting in strip bars and talking to the staff,” dismissed as unimportant, but so were the people I had proposed to study. I/we didn’t matter.

The irony of this situation was not lost on me; this assessor could not see that their dismissive comments were reinforcing the stigma against exotic dancers I had outlined in my proposal by denying me the funds I would need to carry out my research. I did not get any useful feedback on my proposed methodology, theoretical framework, or anything else that would have legitimately disqualified me, so I will never know why I did not receive this award for sure. This assessor had nonetheless proven my point; the stigma of erotic labour is not irrelevant and has very real material effects on the lives of women who work in it, including my own. They would not allow federal funds to be utilized for research about us and our struggles, women who made a living at night, in bars, in a way that was deemed too unimportant to warrant a research grant

regardless of our contributions to the Canadian economy through our employment and payment of taxes (Ross 2009, 2005).

I should not have been as upset as I was by this rejection since other exotic dancer/ethnographers before me have had similar experiences with funding sources, journal submissions, and ethics review boards (Ross 2009; Egan 2006a; Rambo 2007; Sanders 2006; Israel 2002; Povinelli 2006). I had been warned. Yet on some level, I must have held out hope that views towards exotic dancers had changed since then, or that the Canadian academic community was more open minded than that of the United States or the United Kingdom. Any naiveté I might have had before this was swiftly eradicated by one small paragraph written by a person whose identity I would never know. Contrary to what this assessor must have anticipated, I realized just how important it was that I continue to pursue my research. The stigma attached to women who work as exotic dancers was alive and well in this country and it needed to be addressed.

## **Background**

When I first started working as an exotic dancer in Winnipeg in 2002, a few months prior to starting my undergraduate degree, I could not have imagined that I would ever write a doctoral dissertation about an occupation I regarded as temporary and therefore unrelated to my future career. My main concern at that point in time was finding a job where I could make the maximum amount of money in the shortest amount of time, the perfect combination for any university student. Stripping filled that role for me, and it beat working for minimum wage as a telemarketer or in retail.

As an undergraduate student, I studied clothing and textiles. I then pursued a master's degree in history and culture of fashion, only now aware of the irony in taking my clothes off for

a living and seeking an education that would help me understand why people wear them. Thus, when I became interested in researching exotic dance, I saw how exotic dance and fashion were both feminized body/embodyed practices that share many connections.

Fashion and exotic dance intersect as sites of popular culture that are frequently at the center of morality debates, inciting derision as much as fascination (Egan 2006a; Roach 2007; Bahri 2012; Deveraux 2012; Coy, Wakeling, and Garner 2011). Because clothing is so close to the body, it is always considered potentially erotic and therefore deeply personal (Entwistle 2000; Steele 1996; Breward 1995; Scott 2005). After all, one of the reasons exotic dance is viewed as taboo in North American society is because “all human dress [and undress] speaks of social order and therefore is *never* politically neutral,” especially for women; certain forms of dress and undress are thus given “moral value” by society (Scott 2005, 329).

Additionally, money is commonly believed to “taint” artistic work and corrupt intimate human relationships (Zelizer 2011, 2000; Illouz 2007; Povinelli 2006; Sharp 2000; Zerndorfer 2015). Consequently, sartorial decisions, that is, choices about what to wear on one’s body, like occupational decisions, are seen as independent expressions of the inner self and seldom recognized as actions embedded in complex socio-cultural and economic structures.

Thus, a person’s clothing and occupation are both viewed as indicators of an individual’s morality. Perhaps most importantly, both share a troubled history with a form of feminism that tends to be dichotomous in its thinking and poses polarizing ideological questions: Is a woman who enjoys fashion a dupe of patriarchy participating in her own subjugation, or is she creative and agentic? Is the fashion industry ultimately exploitative or empowering for women? Is fashion art or frivolous folly? How can you be a “real” feminist if you love fashion? These types of binary questions will be familiar to any scholar who researches exotic dance or other forms of

erotic labour. Sadly, these polarizing frameworks, albeit feminist, ignore the historical processes and political and economic circumstances that led to fashion and erotic labour industries almost exclusively employing women, not to mention the diversity of the exchanges occurring within each of these businesses.<sup>1</sup> Both areas of research have been marginalized in academia as “silly,” “stupid,” or “unimportant,” views that are antonymous with the great deal of attention that is paid to each issue in daily social discourse and the billions of dollars in profit each industry generates (Steel 1997; Isreal 2002; Egan, Frank, and Johnson 2006; Bradley-Engen 2008; Egan 2006a; Scott 2005).

Fashion historian Valarie Steele (1997, 1) explains how her choice to research fashion at Yale for her Ph.D. was “barely tolerated” in the 1980s because fashion was viewed by academia as “frivolous, sexist, bourgeois, ‘material’ (not intellectual), and, therefore, beneath contempt.” Steele (1991, 16) explains further in her critique of the academy’s disavowal of fashion: “The F-word still has the power to reduce many academics to embarrassed or indignant silence. Some of those to whom I spoke while preparing this article requested anonymity or even refused to address the subject; those who did talk explained that many of their colleagues found it ‘shameful to think about fashion.’”

Similarly, erotic labour research is perceived as “lacking rigor, illegitimate, suspect, and embarrassing” by academia, a view reflected in my own experience with CIHR (Israel 2002, 256). Apparently, such “low-brow” art forms as fashion design and exotic dance do not deserve to be preserved in museums, culturally examined, or historically documented (Ross 2009, 2005; Steele 1997, 1991; Foley 2005). But in spite of this animosity, and perhaps because of it, feminist researchers in both of these fields have started to challenge these characterizations

through reflexive, intersectional, and nuanced qualitative research, a tradition which I plan on continuing with this ethnography (Egan, Frank, and Johnson 2006).

However, unlike working in the fashion industry, I learned very quickly that making good money as an exotic dancer came with a penalty; I could not reveal how the money was made, lest I suffer the social consequences. Spending this money often necessitated a disclosure about how it was earned (how *does* a full-time university student in her late teens afford Chanel sunglasses and Manolo Blahniks?) which meant I had to think carefully about my purchases and how I would explain them to friends, family, and others who were curious. It seemed that mixing erotics with economics made it “dirty” money that could only be washed clean when used to purchase things deemed worthy according to liberal capitalist logic: investments, education, houses, cars, raising children (Dewey 2011, 2012; Bruckert 2002; Brennan 2004a, 2004b; Zalwango et al. 2010). Even these were fragile justifications for taking your clothes off for payment and not enough of a rationalization for some individuals. I lost close friends who refused to associate with strippers, and I anguished over whom I would tell or not tell in certain social situations. These themes frequently arose throughout my research.

Like other scholars who worked as exotic dancers, while I was aware of some of the stereotypes and social stigma associated with women who stripped for a living before I started dancing, I was completely unprepared for the often painful ways this stigma would play out in my interpersonal relationships when I first took the stage to dance for money (Egan 2006a; Ronai 1992, 1998; Egan, Frank, and Johnson 2006). Over time, however, it became obvious that even after many years of absence from this industry my past work as a stripper was seen as problematic by others, including romantic partners, family members, friends, acquaintances, and strangers, no matter how banal it seemed to me.

As a relatively privileged middle-class woman, why did I “need” to dance? Could I not find another job? Was I abused as a child or addicted to drugs? Does stripping not conflict with my feminist values? How can such a reserved/quiet/educated girl like me be a stripper? Did I not know I was a victim? Did I not know I was exploiting myself? Was I not aware that any sense of empowerment or validation I got from dancing was false consciousness? Was money really *that* important to me? These were questions people would often ask after learning about my participation in the exotic dance industry, and these questions have troubled me over the years. The way that people asked them barely belied an insidious implication that by working as a dancer I was a woeful victim that had not only helped prop up the patriarchy but had somehow crossed an imaginary line of respectability from which there was no return or redemption.

Even when I did not reveal my past work as a stripper, somehow exotic dancers always ended up as a topic of conversation, usually as the butt of cruel jokes that only made sense if you thought of women who worked as dancers as disgusting and/or tragic, not to mention how strippers would appear in the constant bombardment of negative portrayals in the mainstream media (Johnson 2006). Eventually, I could not continue to ignore the casual dismissal and dehumanization of exotic dancers occurring daily in my own social worlds. My experience working as an exotic dancer was much more complicated than the questions people asked me or the horrible jokes they told, or the mainstream media’s depiction implied. Instead of answering those questions, I wanted to know *why* people asked me these questions. This is the path that led me to this Ph.D. project.

## Chapter 1: Introduction and Literature Review

### Context

This dissertation is an ethnographic investigation of exotic dancers' relationships with romantic partners and relatives, and the ways in which the social stigma stemming from mixing commerce and erotics impacted these intimate relationships. My research focuses on women who provide erotic entertainment in bars that cater predominantly to straight men in a mid-sized prairie city, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

While past research on exotic dancers in the social sciences has tended to focus on questions of whether or not women find their jobs empowering or exploitative based on their interactions with male patrons, as well as the “types” of women who choose to do this work and why (Schweizer 2004; Barton 2002, 2006; Forsyth and Deshotels 1996, 1997, 1998; Mestematcher and Roberti 2004; Murphy 2003; Pasko 2002; Phileratou 2006; Pilcher 2009; McCaghy and Skipper 1969, 1970; Bell, Sloan, and Strickling 1998; Sloan and Wahab 2004; Sweet and Tewksbury 2000a, 200b; Wood 2000; Wesley 2002, 2003, 2006; Boles and Garbin 1974a, 1974b, Carey, Peterson, and Sharpe 1974; Holsopple 1999; Price-Glynn 2000, 2010; Pederson et al. 2015), I decided to heed the advice of anthropologist Katherine Frank (2007) to expand strip club research into new territory, both literally and figuratively.

Frank (2007) argues that despite claims to the contrary, the literature on strippers and strip clubs is indeed prolific, particularly when it comes to studies that investigate power relations, as is the case with the citations I list above.<sup>2</sup> The fact that researchers still claim that there are very few studies of exotic dance speaks to an unreflexive interrogation of their academic privilege (Frank 2007; Egan and Frank 2005). For those who have never worked in strip clubs (or attended them) prior to undertaking a research project on exotic dance, entry in to

this world and its processes, which are quite ordinary to those of us who have prior experience working in this industry, can seem “new” and shocking to the uninitiated (Frank 2007; Egan and Frank 2005; Colosi 2010). I believe it is still important to look at power relations in strip clubs and how these power relations might affect women’s experiences of empowerment and exploitation. However, the tendency of many researchers to view power as static or ultimately located in the hands of an individual, or to focus only on what is going on *inside* the strip club, and not link these activities to what is going on in society at large, is highly problematic (Egan 2006a; Dewey 2011, 2012; Kulick 1997; Egan, Frank, and Johnson 2006; Egan and Frank 2005; Frank 2007). Like an increasing number of anthropologists and sociologists, I also take issue with suggesting that a dancer’s multifaceted experiences at work or in their personal life can be simply categorized as empowering or exploitative (Egan 2006a; Dewey 2011; Colosi 2010; Frank 2002; Egan, Frank, and Johnson 2006; Maia 2012; Bradley-Engen 2009).

While the women in my study certainly experienced feelings of both empowerment and exploitation related to their work and relationships, this was a highly individualized experience that varied for each person on a day to day, if not hour to hour, basis. And, like other workers, exotic dancers have numerous, complicated, and often conflicting, feelings about what they do for a living (for example, in my own experience, “boring” is how I would describe it most days) (Dewey 2011; Egan, Frank, and Johnson 2006). Therefore, as anthropologist Susan Dewey argues in her ethnography of exotic dance in the United States, sociologist Avery Gordon’s (1997, 4) theory of “complex personhood” should undergird an analysis of dancers’ negotiation of stigma in their personal lives.

Gordon (1997, 4) explains that “complex personhood means that the stories people tell about themselves, about their troubles, about their social worlds, and about their society’s

problems are entangled and weave between what is immediately available as a story and what their imaginations are reaching toward.” Importantly, Gordon (1997, 4) stresses the theoretical significance of recognizing that all human life is complicated and “that even those who live in the most dire circumstances possess a complex and oftentimes contradictory humanity and subjectivity that is never adequately glimpsed by viewing them as victims or, on the other hand, as superhuman agents.” Thus, rather than attempting to prove that women who work as exotic dancers are exploited victims *or* empowered individuals, like other contemporary exotic dance researchers, I demonstrate throughout this thesis that they are both and neither (Sanders and Hardy 2014; Dewey 2011; Egan 2006a; Egan, Frank, and Johnson 2006).

Over the years, as I mentioned in the Foreword, I have encountered individuals who were overtly and subtly disgusted by the revelation that I worked as an exotic dancer. Slightly less often, I also interacted with people who were excessively enthusiastic about how “empowered” I must feel “taking money from the patriarchy” when I revealed my involvement in the industry.

While it should be clear that I am critical of studies that suggest that exotic dancers are exploited victims, I am equally suspicious of scholarship that overstates dancers’ agency and the potential for labour under capitalism to be empowering (see Schwietzer 2004; Schiff 1999; McNair 2013 for example). As Frank (2013, 203) explains, “We can be empowered by the same things that wound us. What makes us feel strong one moment can later make us crumble...One of the biggest fallacies associated with feminism is that empowerment or freedom is inherent in any particular act.” Furthermore, scholar Nicola Gavey (2012) questions the meaning of seeking “empowerment” through capitalist endeavors in a patriarchal society. Thus, I resist reducing exotic dancer’s experiences to either/or propositions, while attending to the fact that the stereotypes of victimhood and exploitation are far more prevalent than the assumption that

dancers are revolutionary symbols of sex-positive feminism. Furthermore, women's own understanding of their identities did not always hinge on their job title alone. Although, because of the high degree of stigma attached to stripping, stereotypes about stripper identity often overshadowed or impacted all of their other social roles in expected and unexpected ways, as I discuss in Chapters Four and Five.

Those of us who research exotic dancers and other stigmatized communities must ask ourselves why we cling to questions of power and what our motivations are for attempting to flatten out exotic dancers' lived experiences into binaries. Again, following Gordon's (1997, ix) theoretical perspective of "complex personhood," in my own research, I start from the position that power is "systematic and particularistic and is often both at the same time," and that any study of exotic dance is also a study of labour under capitalism and neoliberalism in a local socio-political context. In other words, like other contemporary sex work researchers, first and foremost, I view exotic dance as *work* and the women who work as dancers as complex individuals navigating complicated socioeconomic systems (Shaver 2005; Jeffrey and MacDonald 2006; Ditmore, Levy, and Willman 2010; Wood 2000; Chapkis 1997; Bruckert 2002; Frank 2002; Maia 2012; Dewey 2011; Egan, Frank, and Johnson 2006; Perrenas 2011; Cabezas 2009; Brennan 2004a, 2004b; Brooks 2010; Colosi 2010).

However, as I mentioned above, dancers must contend with a high degree of social stigma. Indeed, many of the studies that focus exclusively on the issue of power in strip clubs are driven by stereotypical assumptions about the "kind" of women who work there and the "types" of customers who purchase their services (Egan and Frank 2005; Frank 2007; Wahab et al. 2011). Unfortunately, this obsession with power and personal characteristics has resulted in little attention paid to a range of other issues facing women who work as exotic dancers, such as the

rapid changes in the consumption of leisure activities under global capitalism, or the local economic and social circumstances of both men and women (Frank 2002, 2005, 2007, 2013; Egan and Frank 2005; Dewey 2011; Colosi 2010; Berson 2016; Gavey 2012).

As Dewey (2011, xii) points out, although there is much literature on erotic labour, “a significant knowledge gap exists regarding how women who engage in erotic labour situate themselves within their biological families and other social networks.” Similarly, anthropologist Don Kulick (1997) suggests that research on sex work should not only focus on experiences at work, but also consider the impact of this labour on romantic and other interpersonal relationships. Thus, I chose to question the meaning of stigma in dancers’ lives and relationships in order to disrupt the one-dimensional stripper archetype, where she is almost always imagined as a woman without family or home, and as a being that exists only to fulfill the heterosexual male fantasy for pay. I also chose to focus my research on the particularities of the experiences of dancers in one locale, that is, erotic labour as a part the political economy of Winnipeg, Canada.

Therefore, moving away from simplistic arguments about power, I move the questions into another arena, although power remains an important element to my inquiry. How did women who work as exotic dancers in Winnipeg understand the role that stigma plays in their relationships with relatives and romantic partners? What are the ways in which stigma impacted these relationships? What does negotiating stigma in familial and romantic relationships mean in terms of theorizing the nature of the stigma of erotic labour, the reasons this stigma exists, and its materialized impact on women? How do the ways in which stigma impacted dancer’s relationships link to state regulation, the local socio-political economy and culture, and their treatment as workers in this economy? Based on three years of ethnographic research in

Winnipeg's exotic dance community, I argue that much of the stigma associated with dancing and other forms of sex work stems from the idea that monetary transactions taint sexuality, or that money and sexuality can only mix in very specific ways. The contagion, dirt, and grime associated with money and commerce and how this "rubs off" in a literal and metaphorical sense, are all persistent themes that arose during my field work and are common threads that link each chapter together. Grounded in this ethnographic data, I propose the theory that "stripping money" is earmarked in specific ways that money earned from other forms of labour is not, and argue that this is the basis of stigmatization in dancer's lives and relationships.

Furthermore, I suggest that examining stigma in exotic dancers' lives exposes the contradictions inherent in a liberal capitalist economy that is also heavily invested in monitoring the sexual morality of its citizens, especially women, and women of colour in particular (McClintock 1992). Thus, I contend that exotic dancers are rendered abject because they reveal uncomfortable truths about life for women under patriarchal capitalism. Specifically, they reveal contemporary structural realities where the success of this economic system is dependent upon the exploitation of women's emotional and sexual work, expected to be freely or cheaply given.

Following this logic, many women are caught between a rock and a hard place because they must choose between an occupation that would give them relative economic stability (and other additional benefits, which I discuss in Chapter Six) or meet the expectations of their families, partners, and society in general. Thus, when women chose to work as exotic dancers, the financial benefits are positive, but the social consequences can be devastating.

Recently, scholars have noted the importance of acknowledging that stigmatized individuals do not passively accept stereotyping, shaming, and discrimination (Hannem and Bruckert 2012; Bruckert 2002). Thus, another point I aim to make in this dissertation is that

dancer's stories of experiences with stigma, while sometimes extremely violent, must not be read as tales of women with tragic lives; rather, we must see their experiences as situated in a wider socio-economic system of racial, classist, and patriarchal oppression that disciplines all women's bodies, albeit in radically heterogeneous ways. Severely restrictive cultural norms of dress and sexual conduct place all women in a precarious position, where even a small shred of clothing can make all the difference between derision, victim blaming, and violence or praise and adulation for a "good" performance of femininity (Foley 2005; Valverde 1999, 2008).

Additionally, the women that I worked with consistently challenged social stigma and questioned the hypocrisy of capitalism, refusing to accept shaming and misogyny, as well as rejecting the idea that their bodies were not entirely their own. Thus, I also aim to bridge the divide between exotic dancers and other women, as all women are at risk for the violence of stigmatization under patriarchal capitalism.

### **Vernacular**

Throughout my dissertation, I will be using a variety of terms to refer to exotic dance and dancers. Historical accounts locate the roots of modern exotic dance in burlesque; thus exotic dance is occasionally referred to as burlesque, although this is quite rare (Allen 1991; Wilson 2008; Ross 2009).<sup>3</sup> Exotic dancing, stripping, striptease, lap dancing, pole dancing, topless dancing, adult entertainment and erotic dancing are all terms commonly used in the literature to describe variations of particular economic-erotic exchanges.

Defining exactly what these modern erotic-economic exchanges entail has proved to be somewhat problematic for researchers, as the types of services on offer in adult entertainment venues are highly contextual. However, Frank's (2007, 503) description of exotic dance 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” encompasses this variation.

In my ethnographic fieldwork carried out in Winnipeg, the women I worked with most often referred to themselves as “dancers,” or sometimes, slightly less often, as “strippers.” Many scholars have tended to present exotic dance in monolithic terms, even though it involves varying degrees of undress, social interaction, and physical contact, or refer to dancers as “sex workers” without explaining their rationale (Egan and Frank 2005; Frank 2007; Cabezas 2009). In her ethnography of sex tourism in Cuba and the Dominican Republic, anthropologist Amalia Cabezas (2009) stressed the importance of listening to how participants identified themselves, rather than forcing them into the category of “sex worker,” as she had done in her past research. Cabezas (2009) found that not forcing the label of “sex worker” onto participants was helpful because it opened up new lines of inquiry about the permeability of identity categories and what these categories meant to the individuals in her study. As Cabezas (2009) points out, there is also an element of class and race based privilege that comes into play when researchers decide to use “sex worker” to refer to interlocutors who do not identify themselves this way, and it is thus not always an appropriate term. Cabezas (2009, 21) explains that for her research, which took place in the global south, “The imposition of the term *sex worker* reveals an indiscriminately racist and classist perspective. I argue that the label *sex work* is difficult to apply to the new forms of flexible, contingent practices that may contain elements of partial commodification but that do not conform to rigid categories of commercial sex.”

Unlike the individuals who participated in Cabezas’ (2009) study, however, some dancers in Winnipeg, including me, referred to themselves as sex workers some of the time, which highlights the more explicit commercial element to stripping as well as an identification with a

certain form of feminist politics (Frank 2002). However, most did not refer to themselves as sex workers because of its conflation with prostitution. This speaks to the stigma and visibility attached to street sex work, but for the women who participated in my research it was also about avoiding miscommunication with customers about the types of services that were on offer in strip clubs here. Frank (2007, 503) also points out the importance of differentiating between prostitution and exotic dance because it is “a different form of consumption-although this line is sometimes blurred in practice.”

For the purposes of this research, I view exotic dance as one of many occupations that exist in the cultural milieu of sex work or sexual/erotic labour (Perrenas 2011). Thus, while heeding Cabezas’ (2009) warning about the imposition of terms that participants do not use, I still find the category useful for situating exotic dance as a commercial activity. I use “sex work” inclusively to refer to all types of labour that involve an erotic, intimate, or sexual aspect. This means that exotic dance has distinct components that distinguish it from other forms of sex work, yet it also constitutes one of the many forms of labour that is referred to by this umbrella term.

However, while exotic dance can be understood as a form of sex work due to its erotic elements, it is equally as important to recognize that it also intersects with other forms of entertainment, leisure, dance, art, and media and shares many similarities with other service industry occupations in capitalist societies which increasingly require the deployment of emotional labour (Frank 2007; Illouz 2007; Agustin 2005; Bernstein 2007a, 2007b; Morris and Feldman 1996).<sup>4</sup> And although exotic dance is usually viewed as sexually charged or erotic from the perspective of the consumer, it is essential to recognize how dancing is viewed from the perspective of the producer, that is, as labour that can be very physically and mentally

challenging, mundane, and/or as a form of artistic expression depending on the performers' subjective experience.

### **Representation and Ethnographic Fiction**

Upon reflection on her ethnography of the construction of mental illness in a small Irish town, anthropologist Nancy Scheper-Hughes (2007, 208) decided that, were she to re-write it, she "would be inclined to avoid the 'cute' and 'conventional' use of pseudonyms" and would not "attempt to scramble certain identifying features of the individuals portrayed on the naïve assumption that these masks and disguises could not be rather easily de-coded by villagers."

I sympathize with Scheper-Hughes' (2007) sentiment. While Winnipeg is not a small town, its isolated location on the Canadian prairies means that many residents have formed closely knit communities that give the city a "small town" feel, which I explain in more detail in Chapter Three. With this in mind, I briefly considered using the real names of strip clubs, bars, and other locations, as I assumed that anyone who was familiar with Winnipeg would easily be able to guess the real places I was talking about. Many other ethnographers do not identify the city in which their research takes place as well. But this was not a realistic possibility for me, as understanding Winnipeg's distinctive history, politics, geography, laws, and labour organization was essential to understanding the ways in which exotic dancers here experienced stigma in their lives (see Chapter Three). However, while I understand Scheper-Hughes' (2007) reasoning for not using pseudonyms or attempting to disguise participant's identities, I also had to reflect on the exotic dance scholarship that stresses considerations other than privacy for the use of pseudonyms. Most importantly, exotic dancers are stigmatized. Therefore, using pseudonyms and other methods to protect participants' identities are imperative for their safety (Shaver 2005; Chapkis 2010; Agustin 2005; Sanders 2006; Wahab 2003). Thus, I use pseudonyms to refer to all

of the individuals that I mention throughout my thesis and ultimately decided to use fictive names for bars, strip clubs, and other locations. Additionally, because my research methods included participant collaboration, where two dancers that I met during my fieldwork reviewed the rough draft of my thesis, which I explain in more detail in Chapter Two, I was reassured that names, people, and places were sufficiently disguised in my writing.

However, after making these decisions about representation, I also realized that I needed to consider my own safety and privacy as a researcher. How do I share my stories about experiences with stigma in my life, as other dancers had so generously shared with me, while protecting myself at the same time? As a feminist and partially auto-ethnographic study, self-reflexivity, and intersubjectivity were important ethical elements to my inquiry that have precedent in exotic dance scholarship (Wahab 2003; Ronai 1992, 1998). Since I am part of the community that I studied, I am uncomfortable sharing such personal accounts about the lives of others without a willingness to share my own. After consulting with my advisor and colleagues, I decided to weave several fictional accounts into my writing, with characters that may be composites of several individuals, that did not really happen, but still contained ethnographic “truths” about stripping in Winnipeg (Frank 2000, 2002; Ronai 1992; Ellis 2007; Ellis and Bochner 2006; Minge and Zimmerman 2013; Pinney 2005; Fassin 2014).

Ethnographic fiction is becoming increasingly common as a representational method, particularly among scholars who do research with exotic dancers and other stigmatized communities (Frank 2000, 2002; Minge and Zimmerman 2013; Ellis 2007; Ronai 1992; Pinney 2005; Fassin 2014). Frank (2002, 36) explains that “Anthropologists have begun to realize that the boundaries between art and science are permeable, and to recognize that even ethnography is at its best a partial truth, consisting of subjective representations of reality.” Although I am not

an experienced fiction writer, storytelling and fantasy creation is a skill that I have developed over the years because it is a fundamental part of my job as a dancer. While interacting with patrons at the strip club, we mix truth and fiction in various measures, attempting to concoct the perfect formula to draw cash out of wallets. Therefore, I feel that ethnographic fiction is fitting as a representational method when telling women's stories about their work and lives as dancers.

Beyond a desire to protect myself as a participant-observer, using fiction in anthropological writing has other benefits (Frank 2000, 2002; Minge and Zimmerman 2013). Frank (2000, 483) explains, "There is a possibility of portraying a complexity of lived experience in fiction that might not always come across in theoretical explication, even one that is concerned with elucidating the complexity of power relations and human interactions." Furthermore, the poignancy of fiction and the more accessible style of writing it requires may draw in readers from outside of academia (Frank 2000).

Anthropologists Jeanine Minge and Amber-Lynn Zimmerman (2013) also talk about the importance of experimental modes of ethnographic representation, such as aural, visual, sensory, and artistic, that challenges the authority of traditional academic writing as a way to convey complex human experience. Therefore, I feel that "complex personhood" as a theoretical framework is best served by incorporating fiction into my thesis (Gordon 1997). Still, Frank (2000, 2002) points out that it is important to distinguish between pieces of fiction and the stories that come from field notes and interviews. Thus, I clearly demarcate the fiction pieces, which are in italics at the beginning of chapters, from my more traditional ethnographic writing. My fiction pieces are written from the perspective of Jessica, my alter-ego, and fake "real name" while interacting with strip club patrons. Jessica is a fictional character who shares many characteristics with me, but she is also a composite of other dancers that I have met over the

years, who interacts with other fictional individuals who are also composite characters. In addition to these pieces of fiction, I use direct quotes from participants, as well as excerpts from field notes that have been edited for privacy and to make them more readable.

## **Themes and Theoretical Framework**

### **Stigma Theory in Studies of Exotic Dance**

Sociologist Erving Goffman (1963, 12-13) defined stigma as “an attribute that is deeply discrediting” and the stigmatized individual as “tainted” or “discounted” in some way. His theoretical framework for identifying the ways in which stigmatized individuals manage their stigma in face to face social encounters has been used extensively in the literature on exotic dance and other stigmatized communities (Parker and Aggleton 2003; Hannem and Bruckert 2012). In most studies that utilize Goffman’s (1963) framework, stigma seems to be understood as stereotyping or discrimination (Parker and Aggleton 2003; Hannem and Bruckert 2012).

Stigma is mentioned as an inevitable part of erotic labour in most studies. However, the majority of the scholarship that specifically focuses on stigma is concerned with how exotic dancers or other sex workers manage or attempt to deflect stigma based on Goffman’s (1963) framework, rather than articulating its meaning, its origins, and pervasive effects on women’s lives (Thompson, Harred, and Burks 2003; Thompson and Harred 1992; Wesley 2003; Roberts, Bergstrom, and La Rooy 2007; Grandy 2008; Trautner and Collett 2010; Rosenbloom, Rakosi and Fetner 2001; Philaretou 2006; Barton 2007; Morrow 2012).

Another problematic aspect of some of this exotic dance scholarship is the tendency of researchers to dismiss women’s assertions of agency at work as “temporary illusionary feelings of female power” and suggest that dancers have uniquely dysfunctional relationships with family

members, thereby reproducing the myth of false consciousness and the pop psychology rhetoric of “daddy issues” (Philaretou 2006, 42).

For instance, sociologists Richard E. Thompson, Jack L. Harred, and Barbara E. Burks (2003), following Goffman’s (1963) framework, identify several categories of stigma management techniques utilized by the exotic dancers they interview. According to the researchers, dancers divide their social worlds into two; small groups of close friends who know they are dancers, and everyone else from whom they try to keep it a secret. Most dancers Thompson, Harred, and Burks (2003, 562) interviewed expressed “outright hostility over the fact that people stigmatized them for their work” and “pointed out that those who stigmatized them were not so innocent themselves” as one way to deflect stigma.

Another way for exotic dancers to alleviate stigma, Thompson, Harred, and Burks (2003, 564) argue, is to justify their involvement in dancing as a means to an end by “putting their dancing in the context of altruism,” i.e., claiming that they are only engaging in dancing to support their children, husbands, boyfriends, parents, or other life goals and projects. Furthermore, the researchers point out that distancing their “real” selves from their “dancer” selves, or “cognitive dissonance,” was one of the most important ways in which dancers managed their stigmatized identities (Thompson, Harred, and Burks 2003, 552). Similarly, feminist scholar Jennifer Wesley (2003, 501) asserts that these types of distancing techniques are ultimately destructive to dancers’ psychological well-being because it requires the constant separation between “identity and body” and that “it may take [dancers] years, if not a lifetime, to escape the identity problems they experience.”

Researcher Andreas G. Philaretou (2006, 44) also argues that there are only two incredibly bleak possible outcomes for women who pursue a career as an exotic dancer: “a)

succumbing to her pseudo-sexual occupational self, thus failing to maintain a healthy sense of real self, with long-term negative emotional and psychological consequences, or b) abandoning her projected pseudo-sexual occupational self and leaving the job.” Philaretou (2006) does not interrogate the assumptions and privilege that are implicit in such a bold statement: What are the negative consequences of leaving one’s job, for instance? What is meant by a “real self” and how is psychological health assessed? How is the “dancer self,” that Philaretou (2006) finds so damaging, different from the “work selves” that are described by individuals in other occupations? These questions are important, and they remain unanswered.

Although the dancers I worked with did indeed use some of the strategies discussed in these studies to distance themselves from stigma or to manage stigma in social interactions, I am concerned with the lack of a deeper analysis of women’s responses, as well as the thinly veiled distaste for participants’ occupation. Wesley (2003) and Philaretou (2006), for example, do not connect the negative effects of psychological distancing with the pervasiveness of social stigma. If exotic dancers suffer because “they begin using their bodies in ways that they still do not quite acknowledge while assuring themselves that the body is separate from who they really are,” perhaps it is cultural values that emphasize a mind/body, public/private separation and condemn the erotic use of the body for financial gain that should be critiqued rather than stripping itself (Wesley 2003, 501). After all, as I shall demonstrate in the forthcoming chapters, stigma is not only an individual experience but a system of structural discrimination and violence (Hannem and Bruckert 2012). Thus, for exotic dancers, stigma management must also be understood as attempts at managing violence.

Additionally, what Thompson, Harred, and Burks (2003) view as “hostile” reactions from dancers, I see as an astute critique of a society that stigmatizes them, yet also fetishizes and

appropriates aspects of their labour through “stripper chic” platform shoes, thongs, and pole dancing classes (Roach 2007; Bruckert 2002; Bradley-Engen 2008; Egan 2006a; Bahri 2012; Devereux 2012; Berson 2016). Studies that simply state that dancers are “dividing their worlds in two” or understand all dancers’ behaviour as fitting into “stigma deflection” categories miss all of the messy gray areas and the complex ways in which dancers recognize the role of stigma in their lives.

Wesley (2003), Philaretou (2006), and Thompson, Harred, and Burks (2003) explain some of the ways exotic dancers distance themselves from the stigma of their occupation and articulate some of the difficulties dancers encounter when they use stigma management techniques. However, the power of social stigma, how or why certain identities become stigmatized, and its more nefarious effects, such as the impact it has on women’s interpersonal relationships, are not addressed. The sometimes damaging ways in which women managed stigma in the studies by Wesley (2003) and Philaretou (2006), then, should be seen as a negative consequence of persistent social stigma rather than a psychologically damaging effect of stripping.

Sociologist Graham Scambler (2007, 1082) argues that to understand the stigma of sex work “it is a moot point... whether sex work poses more of a risk to the worker’s sense of self than all other occupations” because “other types of service work” are so similar to erotic labour, especially in terms of “employers’ command over the sexuality of workers.” In other words, to suggest that erotic labour is more damaging to a workers identity than other types of emotional labour or service work is to reproduce moralizing discourses about the sacredness of the eroticized body rather than to investigate these discourses (Jeffery and MacDonald 2006; Weldon 2010).

Interrogating implicit cultural norms, and how the researcher is influenced by them, is imperative for an exploration of stigma in the lives of exotic dancers (Hannem and Bruckert 2012).<sup>5</sup> After all, stigma management techniques are not unique to exotic dancers, but are used widely by a variety of similarly stigmatized groups including, but not limited to: sex worker *hijras* in India (Houssain 2010), custodial workers (Hood 1988), men who identify as gay (Poon & Ho 2008), gay men dealing with HIV/AIDS (Kowalewski 1988), the relatives of convicted murderers (May 2000), belly dancers (Kraus 2010), and women released from prison on parole (Opsal 2011).<sup>6</sup> Therefore, exotic dancers' distancing and deflection strategies are not distinctive, especially when compared to the way people deal with working in other stigmatized jobs (Bergman and Chalkey 2007; Grandy 2008; Hannem and Bruckert 2012; Southgate and Shying 2014).

For example, researcher Jane C. Hood (1988, 112) describes how "custodians managed their low-status jobs by elevating their own statuses and deflating those of their superiors" who looked down on them. Hood (1988, 113) notes how custodians working on a university campus "described their 'bosses' as stupid people who did not know how to clean and questioned the common sense of 'all those people with degrees.'"

Interestingly, Rachel Kraus' (2010) study of belly dancers' management of what she labels "soft stigma" shows how belly dancers use similar stigma management techniques to exotic dancers in order to distance themselves from the "harder" stigma of exotic dance. Kraus (2010, 450) finds that "Belly dancers use a combination of resistance, secrecy, semantic manipulation, management of their personal fronts, and education to negate perceptions they are erotic dancers." Thus, stigma management techniques utilized by exotic dancers should not be viewed as inherently "psychologically damaging," as many stigmatized groups, in fact, use them

with varying degrees of success.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, along with individual interactional approaches to stigma like Goffman's (1963), exotic dancer's negative feelings and experiences in relation to psychological distancing must be understood as part of the wider context of social stigma (Pheterson 1993; Hannem and Bruckert 2012; Scambler 2007; Bruckert 2002).

Additionally, an assumption that there are only two social worlds, the public and the private or, work and home, is highly problematic to begin with, as is the idea that social worlds are discreetly separated and static (Bruckert 2002; Day 2008; Minge and Zimmerman 2013). As I demonstrate throughout my dissertation, women did not create a distinct "divide" in their social worlds, i.e., between those who knew that they were dancers and those that did not. The lived reality of a stigmatized identity was far more complicated because dancers also identified themselves in other ways, and those "in the know" could change at any moment, with or without their knowledge.

Minge and Zimmerman (2013, 82) explain that "Performance of identity is not static; it is a constant process, a negotiation of identity, a fluid and ever changing contextual experience." In other words, identity has ebbs and flows, contradictions and fissures, and dancers' social worlds are dynamic, overlapping, and mutually constituted. Depending on the context, different aspects of a woman's identity may come to the fore, while the dancer identity recedes to the background. For instance, women who work as exotic dancers in Winnipeg are mobile, often moving in and out of a dancing career over the course of their lives depending on their changing needs, wants, and social roles. What it actually means to be an exotic dancer in Winnipeg is constantly in flux as well, as the deployment of emotional labour increasingly overtakes the predominance of stage performances as the main aspect of a dancers work (see Chapter Three). Thus, women are only successful in this industry insofar as they can adapt to these shifts in the workplace and

continuously re-learn their environment (Lewis 1998; Clipperton 2012; Macklin 2003; Fogel and Quinlan 2011; Law 2015). Furthermore, many dancers were conscious of the ways that the stigma they experienced was internalized and would struggle with this reality. Being conscious of stigmatization and the potentially problematic ways in which you manage it does not necessarily make it any easier to contend with (Hannem and Bruckert 2012).

### **Beyond Stigma Management: Understanding Stigma as Violence**

In addition to the implicit assumptions about exotic dance in the studies I cite in the last section, the way that stigma is conceptualized by these scholars cannot explain the full impact of stigmatization on women's lives. As I mention in the last section, while social stigma has been understood as stereotyping or obvious discrimination in past studies, and scholars tend to focus on how dancers manage this, I take a different the approach. Throughout my dissertation, I draw on researchers Richard Parker and Peter Aggleton's (2003) conceptual framework for HIV/AIDS's related stigma, which theorizes stigma as a form of literal and symbolic violence.

Although Parker and Aggleton (2003) are concerned with the literature that explores the stigma of HIV/AIDS, many of the same problems plague the literature on exotic dance. That is, even though stigma is mentioned in almost every study, it is rarely adequately defined or conceptualized as a theoretical framework. Instead of only conceptualizing stigma as derived from perceived "deviance," as Goffman (1963) does, they reframe stigma as "the social production of difference...linked to established regimes of knowledge and power" (Parker and Aggleton 2003, 17). Therefore, they argue, stigma should not only be conceived of as something personal, as in something "individuals *do* to other individuals" but as "social and cultural phenomena linked to the actions of whole groups of people" (Parker and Aggleton 2003, 16). Combining Goffman's stigma theory with Foucault's concept of power, the scholars maintain,

“Offers a compelling case for the role of culturally constituted stigmatization” (Parker and Aggleton 2003, 17). Furthermore, Parker and Aggleton (2003, 17) assert that this framework allows researchers to explore stigmatization as “the point of intersection between culture, power, and difference” and understand stigma “as central to the constitution of the social order.”

Additionally, they argue for an integration of anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu’s (1977) concept of symbolic violence to draw attention to “the disabling effects of stigmatization on the minds and bodies of the stigmatized” (Parker and Aggleton 2003, 18). According to Bourdieu (1977), symbolic violence is exploitation in disguise, “whereby symbolic systems (words, images and practices) promote the interests of dominant groups as well as distinctions between them, while legitimating that ranking by convincing the dominated to accept existing hierarchies through processes of hegemony” (Parker and Aggleton 2003, 18). Symbolic violence, then, serves to reify inequality and operates to convince those at the bottom to accept their subordinate position (Parker and Aggleton 2003). Thus, an important part of stigma is symbolic violence, or “hidden exploitation” that is used “whenever overt, brutal exploitation is impossible” for asserting dominance in normalized daily power struggles (Bourdieu 1977, 192). Drawing on Foucault (1984) and Bourdieu (1977) to understand stigma can account for classed and gendered power dynamics that are already in play. Since women are already at a social, political, and economic disadvantage in patriarchal societies, they are more vulnerable to stigmatizing processes (Campbell, Nair, and Maimane 2006; Wardlow 2006).

Therefore, although stereotyping and discrimination are certainly important components of stigma, I argue that stigma is much more insidious, constituting the shame, disrepute, and humiliation experienced in the social worlds of women who work as exotic dancers, which also has very real and deeply felt material effects on women’s lives.

Scambler (2007, 1087) argues for an “acknowledgment that the disadvantage accruing through stigmatization is often mixed in with...exploitation and oppression” in studies that explore the stigma of sexual labour. Similarly, scholar Gail Pheterson (1993) addresses “whore stigma,” which conveys the dishonor that women engaged in sexual labour experience through legal and social systems that seek to punish and discredit them for their deviation from traditional notions of womanhood. Sociologist Stacey Hannem (2012, 22) also explains that “Goffman concerns himself only with this visible result of power differential and not with the origins of the asymmetrical rule or the knowledge attached to it.” In other words, stigma is both a structural *and* interpersonal experience that needs to be analyzed with a theoretical framework that goes beyond Goffman’s understanding of stigma management in face to face social interactions (Hannem and Bruckert 2012).

Thus, grounded in my research findings, and building on this scholarship, I theorize that stigma is a form of systemic violence that materializes in women’s lives in numerous ways, which I attempt to tease out by specifically looking at how violence manifests in dancers’ interpersonal relationships. Stigma can be understood as systemic violence because it was experienced on a daily basis, permeated every aspect of exotic dancers’ lives, and had very real material and embodied consequences (Maticka-Tyndale et al. 1999, 2000; Choo et al. 2012). Although working in a stigmatized occupation played a significant role in the interpersonal violence dancers experienced, I differentiate between stigma, which I understand as systemic violence, and the personal violence that dancers encountered from family or partners. Violence from family and romantic partners could be verbal, economic, psychological, or, less often, physical (Stanko 2002; Ghaseem-Fachandi 2009; DeShong 2015). In other words, the systemic violence of stigma and interpersonal violence are different, but they are not mutually exclusive.

Thus, I argue that the subtle and not so subtle forms of interpersonal violence in these relationships can be understood as particular manifestations of stigma.

Additionally, forms of violence, other than physical violence, are often experienced by women as quite banal because they are woven into the fabric of their daily lives (Stanko 2002; Dobash 1979; Ghassem-Fachandi 2009; Hatty 2000; Muldoon et al. 2015; Reidy et al. 2014; Thaller and Cimino 2017; York 2011; DeShong 2015). Thus, women did not tend to label particular interactions or experiences as violence unless they were physical. Still, I use the word “violence” theoretically to refer to certain acts because they harm women’s lives in a variety of ways that I explore in the forthcoming chapters. It is also important to note that while stigma is often internalized, dancers also exercise a great deal of agency by attempting to resist and challenge this social stigma (Bruckert 2002). For instance, many exotic dancers I know who experienced blatant shaming on social media would directly call out these individuals and shame *them* for reinforcing misogyny and sexism. Thus, social stigma, while certainly a form of structural violence, does not always silence (Bourdieu 1977).

### **“Stripping Money,” Intimacy, and Abject Bodies**

While I argue that stigma is best theorized as systemic violence, I also suggest that understanding the reasons that dancers are stigmatized necessitates an analysis of the role that money and intimacy play in society, women’s position as labourers in the economy and the positioning of women as potentially abject bodies when this labour is mixed with intimacy (Kristeva 1982). A central argument of my thesis is that the stigma that exotic dancers experience in their lives and relationships stems from a very powerful societal belief that sexuality and human intimacy is contaminated by its degree of association with money, particularly when women are the producers and men are the consumers (Illouz 2007; Zelizer 2000, 2011; Egan 2005; Frank 1998;

Allan and Barber 2005; Meagher 2002; Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003; Sharp 2000). Even though “money” is the reason most exotic dancers and other sex workers, including myself and the participants in my study, entered the occupation, many studies neglect to provide a sufficient analysis that connects the blatant economic aspects of stripping to social stigma (Jeffery and MacDonald 2006; Weldon 2010; Sanders and Hardy 2014).

The dancers in my study had much to say about “stripping money” and its connection to stigma and relationships, which I discuss further in Chapter Six. Therefore, I explore several theories related to money and intimacy that undergird my understanding of the stigma women experienced, based on the degree to which they mixed commerce with intimacy and sexuality, as well as the perceived morality of the ways in which this “stripping money” was spent.

Sociologist Eva Illouz (2007), for instance, argues that contrary to the pervasive belief that capitalism and globalization has made intimacy scarce, the opposite has indeed occurred. Instead, Illouz (2007, 5) suggests that we live in a culture of “emotional capitalism,” which she describes as “a broad, sweeping movement in which affect is made an essential aspect of economic behavior and in which emotional life-especially that of the middle classes-follows the logic of economic exchange.” Illouz’s (2007) theory is established by other studies of sex work that suggest emotional labour is increasingly expected as a part of a customers’ experience (Bernstein 2001, 2005, 2007a, 2007b; Frank 1998, 2002; Egan 2005; Sanders and Hardy 2014). The type of emotional work that Illouz (2007) describes was certainly a significant part of participants’ jobs, and is a part of many other individuals’ labour, particularly women who work in the service, caring, or “pink collar” industries (Bernstein 2007b, 2001; Constable 2009; Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003; Hochschild 1983; Allan and Barber 2005; Morris and Feldman 1996). Similarly, sociologist Viviana Zelizer (2000, 2011) argues that economics pervade and

define all social relationships, differing only by how money is transferred from one individual to another.

According to Zelizer (2000, 2011), researchers in the social sciences have not acknowledged all of the subtle ways in which intimacy and money collide and define each other. She suggests that “every population that uses money at all adopts some set of distinctions between erotic relations; most populations mark those distinctions not with payment versus nonpayment, but with distinctive forms of monetary transfers” (Zelizer 2000, 822). Therefore, Zelizer (2000) argues, *all* erotically charged relationships involve some sort of economic element. In fact, how we define or categorize these relationships depends upon the particularities of how money is transferred between the parties involved. In other words, money plays a significant role in creating and defining erotic relationships, whether it is a more blatant exchange between an exotic dancer and her customer or a less blatant one between romantic partners. Following Zelizer’s (2000, 2011) logic, money marks the relationship and perceived level of authentic intimacy; a woman dancing nude in her bedroom for a man for “free” after he buys her dinner makes her a girlfriend, a woman dancing nude in a bar for thirty dollars a song (perhaps for the same man) is an exotic dancer. The significance of this difference is important; the woman and her boyfriend are exempt from societal judgment, while the dancer is not, and this is because of how economics plays out in their respective relationships (Frohlick 2013; Chernoff 2003).

In the popular imagination, the bedroom or home is often imagined as a sacred space that provides a safe haven for relationships from “the harsh and impersonal world of market capitalism (Constable 2009, 54),” while the strip bar represents the profanity of “cold intimacy,” where cash can be exchanged for sexually charged emotional connection that is ultimately

illusory (Illouz 2007). Zelizer (2011, 166) asserts that “Critics, moralists, and social scientists at large have frequently thought not only that money corrupts but more generally that economic rationality and the sentiments attached to intimate relations rest on fundamentally contradictory principles.” In reality, Zelizer (2011) argues, money is essential to the establishment of intimate relationships and the types of intimate exchanges that occur within these relationships. Much like Illouz (2007), Zelizer (2000, 824) links the fear of intimacy and sex being contaminated by money and economic exchange to the misguided “concern with the broader commodification effects of an ever expanding modern market.”

Similarly, anthropologist Elizabeth Povinelli (2006, 196) argues that in neoliberal colonized states, “No matter how closely the intimate event is aligned to other kinds of economic and political contracts, it is also continually distinguished from them. Indeed, the intimate contract is often represented as if it were in imminent harm of collapsing into the political and economic contract.” Again, like Illouz (2007) and Zelizer (2000, 2011), Povinelli (2006) understands the propensity to separate economics and politics from sexual intimacy and love as related to the anxiety that these relationships might dissolve without monetary investment or state contracts.

Although exotic dancers are often involved in what might be considered traditional hetero/homonormative monogamous relationships with romantic partners (Bradley-Engen and Hobbs 2010; Van der Meulen 2010), they also violate the state’s boundaries for “good” female citizenship because they also charge strip club patrons for intimacies “that women have historically provided for free (Bernstein 2007b, 198).” Therefore, the state does not protect strippers; it is complicit in their stigmatization through its carceral regulation of women’s sexual expression (Valverde 1999, 2008; Bumiller 2008; Van der Meulen 2010; Shaver 1994; Young

2008; Maticka-Tyndale, Lewis, and Street 2005; Alemzadeh 2013; Hayward 2015). The result is what Povinelli (2006, 202) describes as “corporeality,” or “transforming the human into meat, reducing the person to her body.” Thus, the contagion associated with tainting intimate events with money and market place logic is equated with the mixing of the sacred (human intimacy and sexuality) and the profane (money and capitalism), where exotic dancers represent the abject body (Kristeva 1982).

Feminist psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva (1982, 4) argues that “It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite.” Women who work as exotic dancers, then, are a “dreaded object” society projects its fears onto because their existence serves as a reminder that implicit rules of social order do not always prevail (Bumiller 2008, 23). When faced with fear, violence can be justified against culturally constituted “enemies” of social order as a form of self-defense “to expel and repress the subjects of abjection” with the hope of returning to a sense of safety (Bumiller 2008, 23).

It is my argument that this fear is projected onto dancer’s bodies in the form of social stigma, where fear is transformed into a peculiar cocktail of cultural repugnance and fascination with women who exchange erotic intimacy for money that results in particular manifestations of stigma in exotic dancers’ interpersonal relationships.

According to feminist theorist Judith Butler (2004, 30), “certain human lives are more vulnerable than others, and thus certain human lives are more grievable than others.” Because it is generally accepted that the dispossessed are more vulnerable to violence, it absolves us from the grieving process when horrifying acts are committed against them (Butler 2004). In light of this, Butler (2004, 30) argues, “we might critically evaluate and oppose the conditions under

which certain human lives are more vulnerable than others.” This does not mean simply identifying lives that are more precarious than others, as this might incite more violence against them by revealing their lack of power to those who might exploit them. In fact, exotic dancers and other sex workers are often constructed as “victims of violence” or “trafficked victims,” with these characterizations serving in many instances to justify patriarchal state interventions that limit women’s power and exacerbate their vulnerability (Agustin 2007; Jeffery 2005; Perrenas 2011; Maia 2012).<sup>8</sup> Butler (2010, 31) explains that “what is at stake are communities not quite recognized as such, subjects who are living, but not yet regarded as “lives.”

Stigma and abjection essentially erase the humanity of women who work as exotic dancers. They are not “real” women with “real” lives; instead, they are symbols of moral decay or victims of criminality, lives that don’t matter because they are already lost. When this happens, acts of violence against women can be justified because “she’s just a stripper.” Indeed, women often told me that a formidable obstacle in dealing with stigma was overcoming people’s perceptions of them as not “real” women, as I will show in the forthcoming chapters.

Personal and deeply felt experiences of stigma cannot be removed from their context in the larger social exclusion/disciplinary project (Scambler 2007; Parker and Aggleton 2003). Our friends, our family, our lovers, are all embedded in a social system that has influenced their beliefs about exotic dancers, who they are, what they do, and how they should be treated (Dalla 2001; Wong, Holroyd, and Bingham 2011; Bradley-Engen and Hobbs 2010). Thus, I explore the particularities of stigma stemming from the concept of “stripper money,” that is, the distinctive perception of the money that women make by blatantly mixing erotics and commerce, in the personal lives of women who work as exotic dancers in Winnipeg. I also link these experiences

to the wider social problem of systemic and interpersonal violence against women in Canadian culture.

In this chapter, I provided an introduction to my project, including my research questions, themes, and theoretical framework, and positioned my work in the broader exotic dance literature. In Chapter Two, I explain the research methodology that I used to answer my questions, which included feminist anthropological approaches, including participant observation, interviews, and participant collaboration. Chapter Three examines the particularities of working as an exotic dancer in Winnipeg, Manitoba, including how Canadian laws, provincial regulations, and their status as independent contractors, contributed to women's marginalization and stigmatization as workers. In Chapter Four, I provide an analysis of how stigma materialized in exotic dancer's relationships with their family members. The ways in which stigma impacted women's romantic and sexual relationships with men is explored in Chapter Five. Drawing together my argument that stigma is a form of systemic violence that plays out in dancer's interpersonal relationships, in Chapter Six I look at how money was conceptualized by participants, linking this to the theory that society views "stripping money" as "tainted." Chapter Seven summarizes the findings of my thesis and suggests future areas of investigation.

## **Chapter 2: Research Methodology**

### **Feminist Anthropology**

For this project, I used qualitative ethnographic research methods, which allows the researcher to study a community or culture in-depth (Robben and Sluka 2007; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). For a cultural anthropologist, ethnographic fieldwork is the primary method of data gathering and is characterized by participant observation (Dewalt and Dewalt 2002). Participant observation includes “actively participating in a wide range of daily, routine, and extraordinary activities with people who are full participants in that context” and recording these experiences in field notes (Dewalt and Dewalt 2002, 4). Thus, for the participant observation component of my fieldwork in the exotic dance community of Winnipeg, I worked as a driver for exotic dancers for one year, recording my experiences in field notes. After one year working as a driver, I spent two years working as an exotic dancer, again recording my observations in field notes, making a total of three years of fieldwork, which I completed from 2012-2015. In total, I spent just over 1000 hours driving dancers, spending time at and working in strip clubs in Winnipeg. There were also occasions where I spent time hanging out with these participants outside of work, going for coffee, lunch, dinner, or drinks, or other social activities. Some of these interactions were recorded in my field notes and used as a source of data throughout this dissertation when it was relevant, and women permitted me to do so.

Recorded interviews are also a commonly used research method in cultural anthropology, providing another important source of data (Dewalt and Dewalt 2002). Therefore, I conducted open ended interviews with six women who work as exotic dancers; Scarlett, Billie, Ivy, Misty, Lucy, and Kat; whom I met at various points during the first year of my fieldwork. Each interview lasted from one to three hours, and one dancer, Scarlett, was interviewed twice,

making a total of seven interviews. Five of the seven interviews took place in an office located on the University of Manitoba campus, and two were conducted in participants' homes, according to their preference. I transcribed each interview into word documents as soon as possible after they took place. While the pace of transcription could be frustrating at times, often taking me several hours a day for a few days to complete the transcription of one interview, I also found it helpful to carefully listen to our conversations throughout this process. As I transcribed, it stimulated my thoughts about where I might focus my analysis and gave life to the words I was writing. However, I could also recognize points during the conversations where my interview techniques could have been improved, an issue I will return to later in Chapter Seven when I discuss the drawbacks to this study.

In addition to these traditional anthropological research methods, I also used feminist ethnographic "thick description," a methodology undertaken to challenge the domination of positivism and colonial, patriarchal theoretical perspectives in the social sciences (McNamara 2009; Aggarwal 2000; Darling-Wolf 1998; Dickson-Swift, James, and Liamputtong 2008; Lather 2001; Naples 2000; Narayan 1993; Pratt 2005; Smith 1996, 2000; Stacey 2000; Whitaker 2011; Capous-Desyllas and Forro 2014; Crowley 2007). "Thick description" is the result of qualitative research methods that involve "deep conversations with participants" and emphasizes the importance of the cultural context of these conversations (McNamara 2009, 162). According to feminist social work researcher Patricia McNamara (2009), "thick description" is important to feminist research because it has the potential to promote social justice, as it stems from recognizing the legitimacy of women's oral histories. Thus, prioritizing the voices of women who work in sexualized entertainment and challenging hegemonic ideas about exotic dance(rs) was a crucial part of this project (Shaver 2005).

According to scholar Stephanie Wahab (2003), in addition to traditional anthropological research methods like interviews and participant observation, an important way to realize the aims of feminist ethnography is to encourage more collaboration between the researcher and the research participants in the knowledge creation process. This produces a “connection between theory and action” and acknowledges the intersubjective nature of ethnography (Wahab 2003, 626). To this end, two dancers that I met at the start of my fieldwork, Scarlett and Billie, volunteered to participate in my research as collaborators. Scarlett and Billie’s involvement included reading the rough draft of my dissertation, and giving me feedback throughout my fieldwork on the types of questions I was asking in the informal interviews, as well as any theories or ideas that I was developing towards the end of my project, which I will elaborate on later in this chapter. Like Wahab (2003, 630), I argue that social scientists should always endeavor to include research participants in “data analysis and dissemination of the findings” whenever possible. Frank (2002) also points out the importance of this approach, as her research on patrons of high-end strip clubs was directed by insights that were gained by having former customers and exotic dancers she worked with give their feedback on her writing. Furthermore, exotic dancers may benefit from the collaborative process by having the opportunity to challenge popular misconceptions and stereotypes the researcher might unintentionally reproduce in their writing (Wahab 2003).

My research methods have precedent in other ethnographies of exotic dance, including the work of anthropologist Suzana Maia (2012), who studied middle class Brazilian women who traveled to New York to work as exotic dancers, and anthropologist Susan Dewey (2011), who explored the experiences of motherhood amongst working class women working as exotic dancers in the mid-western United States. Both scholars emphasized the importance of building

rapport with the women who participated in their studies and the insights that could be gained by “hanging out” with a relatively small number of participants in a “person-centered” ethnography (Maia 2012, 12). Indeed, Maia (2012) ultimately decided against using any material from her more formal, recorded interviews, claiming that she “found their answers in this context rather flat.” Instead, she focused her analysis on the time she spent with women at work, in their homes, running errands, going for drinks, and other daily life situations. While I agree that there was much value for me in spending time this way with the women that I worked with, unlike Maia (2012), I found that my interviews with dancers evinced nuanced answers. In fact, given the nature of the exotic dance business in Winnipeg, where we are constantly moving from one bar to another (which I discuss in more detail in the next chapter), these interviews were often the only time we had to sit down and talk about the issues that concerned us without distractions. Therefore, a significant portion of my data comes from my interviews with dancers, in addition to our informal conversations at work or hanging out.

Thus, feminist anthropological principles guided the way I approached my fieldwork in the exotic dance community, particularly in how I focused on building rapport with a small number of participants. Throughout my fieldwork, both driving and dancing, I refrained from asking too many direct personal questions while we were working, and instead let each conversation or interaction be led by the dancer I was speaking with. There were multiple reasons for this strategy. First, as I mentioned in the Foreword, dancers are used to being asked extremely invasive questions, if not by researchers, then by others in their lives, like customers, friends, and family members. Most dancers find many of these questions, rude, ignorant, and exasperating, especially because we are often asked the same things over and over again: “Were you sexually abused as a child?” “Do most dancers do drugs?” “What drove you into stripping?”

“Why do you have bruises? Are you being abused?” are questions my co-workers and I have frequently encountered.<sup>9</sup> Refraining from repeating such questions was imperative for me, not only for the sake of building trust with the women I worked with but also for the sake of not reproducing the stigma that I was seeking to challenge through this project. I am satisfied that I was able to achieve this goal. The second reason for me not to ask direct questions and to let dancers lead the dialogue was to make sure that customers would not overhear the conversations. When we did discuss more personal issues while working, this was usually in changing rooms or bathrooms (when I was working at the club during a shift of dancing) or in the privacy of my vehicle (while I was working as a driver).

Here I have given a brief outline of my fieldwork methodology, which involved feminist anthropological approaches to participant observation. In the rest of the chapter I discuss each stage of my fieldwork in detail, including my reasoning for selecting these methods to answer my research questions, difficulties I encountered in the field, the limits to my data gathering strategies, descriptions of the research participants, as well as ethical concerns related to my methodology, some of which were in conflict with the University of Manitoba’s Joint Faculty Research Ethics Board before I was ultimately approved. In relation to this conflict, I also explore the complexity of my status as a non-white woman researcher working in a stigmatized occupation and how these aspects of my identity impacted my fieldwork, including my relationships with participants and the strategies that I used to collect data throughout my project.

### **Entering the Field: Working as a Driver**

“Driver girl! Hey, driver girl!” I look back to the table of guys that are shouting at me in unison as I walk by. It’s a familiar group of regulars, along with the manager. “Driver girl? Really?” I say to them, and they laugh as I continue to walk toward the DJ booth where the dancer I’m driving is getting ready for her show. “Of course they can’t remember my name!” I think, smiling to myself. Well, to be fair, I don’t remember theirs either. I’m amused at being called “girl”

at the age of thirty, but I guess all of the dancers are referred to as “girls” no matter what their age. And even though I’m no longer working as a dancer, being a former dancer still makes me one of the “girls.”

In Chapter Three, I go into greater detail about the inner workings of Winnipeg’s exotic dance industry. To understand my methodology, however, it is important for me to provide a brief sketch of how the exotic dance industry is organized in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Much like office temps, dancers are considered independent contractors who are booked in Winnipeg and small town bars across Manitoba and Western Ontario by an agency, Elegant Entertainment. Elegant Entertainment is currently the only agency in Winnipeg that books exotic dancers at bars featuring erotic entertainment and strip clubs. This means that dancers are not employed directly by the bars in which they work. Rather, they are paid per show in a weekly paycheck distributed by the agency, with the agency subtracting their commission as well as any drivers’ fees or fines.<sup>10</sup> This is unique because, in most other parts of Canada and the United States, dancers are directly employed by one bar and do not receive a paycheck for the stage shows they perform. While dancers who work in these locations are also classified as independent contractors, their income is usually based entirely on tips and the sale of private dances.

Thus, unlike their counterparts working in other areas of Canada and the United States, while working in Winnipeg, dancers rotate daily between four strip clubs that feature dancers on a full time basis: Secrets, Gilded Cage, Kisses, and Silhouettes, as well as between seventeen other pubs and bars that feature erotic entertainment part time.<sup>11</sup> This system is referred to as “jamming” by those in the trade, a reference to the city’s first strip clubs in the 1970s, which billed rotating dancers as “exotic dancer jamborees.” This system of labour requires a great deal of driving for any given shift. A dancer must either own a vehicle in order to drive herself to

work or ask the agency to provide her with a driver for a fee. Since women often travel from other parts of the country to work here without their vehicles, drivers are an essential part of the exotic dance industry in this city.

Thus, for the first year of my fieldwork, I was able to strategically position myself as a driver for Elegant Entertainment in order to slowly gain rapport with dancers over time, and explain my research to them. Since I had previously worked as an exotic dancer for this agency, I felt comfortable approaching my former agent, Steve, and his business partner Brad, about my research project, and they were happy to hire me as a driver.

In July of 2012 I walked into the newly refurbished downtown office, and even though it had been over eight years since I had worked as a dancer for their agency, Steve and Brad recognized me immediately. I was relieved that Steve responded positively to helping facilitate my research by hiring me as a driver.

After our discussion, one of the office assistants, Barb, took my information, photocopied my driver's license, and explained what my new role as a driver would entail. "Call the office at eleven am on the days that you're available and we'll tell you which dancer you're driving and give you her schedule. You fill out a billing form for each dancer you drive and hand those in to the office on Saturdays by three pm. It's good to have more female drivers; the girls feel more comfortable with them. There are only two others right now" she said, handing me a stack of forms.

Barb also gave me a list of rules for drivers that included instructions as to what to charge per ride depending on the bar's location, making sure I get the dancers to the bar at least five minutes before show time, and not to watch the dancers' shows without their permission. She elaborated on the "rules" sheet with her own advice: "Be careful. Because you're new, the girls

will try to take advantage of you and get you to drive them to get coffee or whatever for free in between their shows. If you're taking them other places besides the bars make sure you're charging them cash on your own. Otherwise, we'll take it off of their paychecks." I found it rather odd that Barb assumed that the dancers I would be driving would take advantage of me, considering she had just heard me talking to Steve about my project and my past as a dancer.

This information actually turned out to be useful, although not in the intended way. I had received funding for my project at this point, so driving dancers to run errands in between shows free of charge became one way that I was able to build trust with the women I drove, demonstrating that I was on their side and understood the difficulties of working as a dancer (and contrary to Barb's assertion, most dancers offered to pay me cash or buy me coffee/lunch for extra rides regardless). However, as much as I wanted to build trust with participants, it was equally as important to me to not have women feel obliged to participate in my research. Therefore, I did charge them for their regular rides to and from work, as per my job description, in order to not appear suspiciously generous. The pay was not much, but it helped cover the cost of gas with a little left over.

My main objectives for this first year of fieldwork were to become re-acquainted with the industry in Winnipeg and, more importantly, to build rapport and trust with the women with whom I was working. My past work as a dancer played a role in my ability to relate to the dancers I drove, more so than if I had never been involved in the industry before.

Taking the time to build trust and rapport with participants is essential for the success of any anthropological research project. However, I would argue that this is especially the case when researching exotic dancers, or any stigmatized group of individuals, because members of these communities are unlikely to trust outsiders or academics (Shaver 2005; Agustin 2005;

Chapkis 2010; Sanders 2006; Wahab 2003; Parrenas 2011; Benoit et al. 2005; Benoit and Shaver 2006; Sloan and Wahab 2004; Crowley 2007). This is with good reason. Sociologist Francis Shaver (2005, 297) explains “that associations between sex work and victimization are still strong and dichotomies remain prevalent” in social sciences literature and that sex work “is commonly treated as an identity category rather than an income generating activity.” Similarly, anthropologist Susan Dewey (2011, xix) notes that “binary distinctions between ‘agency’ and ‘victimization’ that are often so important to policymakers and social scientists alike often have very little meaning for the vast majority of women who sell sex or its simulation in order to survive.” I, too, found this polarizing approach to exotic dance still being utilized by other researchers in the literature that I encountered throughout the course of my fieldwork. I sought to challenge this perspective by approaching stripping as a complex form of labour and set of social and intimate relations that cannot be reduced to simple binaries. Additionally, as I learned throughout my time in the field as a driver, many dancers did not trust the other drivers who worked for our agency. Here is an excerpt from my field notes describing an interaction I had with a dancer from British Columbia who occasionally travels to Winnipeg for work that highlights this mistrust:

Marley told me about how another driver, Matt, was supposed to be picking her up at the end of the night when she was done at Secrets, and she wasn't looking forward to it. “He's TOO nice,” she said, and it was getting creepy, even though she was sure he meant well. She then told me how he had cut her a key to his house and said that she was welcome to stay there. When she said no, that she was fine staying at the Gilded Cage, he felt insulted or rejected or something and said to her “I'm just trying to be nice and help you out.” Marley told me, “I know people might mean well, but I know what my expenses are when I come to work in Winnipeg, and I WANT to stay at the Gilded Cage. I don't want to stay at other people's houses.” “Nothing is ever free is it?” I said. “Exactly, nothing is free. And I'd rather pay and have my own space.” She also told me that this Matt guy kept talking about her coming over to see his cat and how she would totally connect with his cat. She told him “oh, maybe sometime” and he really took it to heart and keeps asking when she's going to come over and see it. “He thinks that

I'm really into cats. It's like, does your door lock from the outside?" she said laughing.<sup>12</sup>

Another participant, Lucy, expressed similar frustrations to me. This is my description of a conversation that we had while I was driving her:

"It's interesting how the other drivers ask nosy questions all the time, and you don't. Yet you're doing research," Lucy said. "Oh really? Like what do they ask?" I said. "How long have you been dancing, what do your parents think, what do your friends think, do you like it?" she said imitating a man voice. I laughed and said that I didn't want to be too nosy because I realize that dancers need me to drive them, so if they don't want to talk I don't want to pressure them. She said, "But they probably wouldn't mind with you, just not creepy middle-aged guys."

Thus, my identity as a woman who was not the typical "creepy" driver played a significant role in my ability to access this community of women, much like my identity as a former dancer helped me to overcome any suspicions women might have had about me being a researcher. These interactions also reveal the ubiquity of male violence in the lives of women, which underscores their mistrust of drivers. Although said in a joking tone, Marley's reference to threats of violence towards women when she says "does your door lock from the outside" is not taken lightly in reality. For her, "probably meaning well" and having a free place to stay while she works in Winnipeg is not enough of a guarantee for her to take the risk of staying at this driver's house. I explore issues of violence from men in dancers' lives further in Chapter Five.

I made it a priority to communicate my intention to conduct a study that was centered on their perspectives as dancers to the women that I drove, making sure to emphasize that their decision to participate or not participate in my research would have no impact on our working relationship. I also had Scarlett and Billie working with me to ensure that the project remained mindful of these goals. Additionally, I bought each woman who participated in an interview a twenty-dollar gift card for Tim Hortons (a frequent stop for exotic dancers when everything else is closed) and lunch or coffee if they wanted it, to thank them for their time.

Driving not only provided me with an opportunity to get to know the women who would eventually participate in my study through interviews and collaboration but also gave women an opportunity to question my motives and ask for details about the study in the privacy of my car. I had originally planned a basic script that I would use to introduce myself to the women that I drove; however, whenever I was assigned to drive dancers that I hadn't met before, the women usually initiated the discussion about why I was working as a driver before I had the chance. The beginning of the conversation usually went something like this: Dancer: "Oh! Why are you driving? You're a pretty girl! Usually we get old guys." Me: "Well, I'm a Ph.D. student doing research on the stigma of exotic dance. I used to work as a dancer myself, actually, and the way people treated me because of it always bothered me. So that's why I'm doing this research for my Ph.D." I didn't want to immediately bombard the women I drove with details about my project, so from this point forward, I would let the dancer lead the way in terms of where the conversation went next. If the woman I was driving showed no further interest in my reasons for working as a driver, I dropped the subject and assumed that they did not want to participate (unless they approached me about it at a later date). If the woman I was driving showed interest in my project, I told them more about it, following a set of principles described below.

The first thing I did was explain that driving was my way to meet people that might want to participate in my project by doing an interview about their experiences as an exotic dancer, but also that they did not need to worry about any negative consequences if they chose not to. I also explained that I would be taking notes about my experiences as a driver, but if they chose not to participate, then I would not be writing about them in my dissertation. If they were still curious, they would usually ask me about the types of questions that I would be asking in the interviews. In response to that question, I would explain that interviews were open ended;

however, because I was particularly interested in how the stigma attached to dancing affected their relationships with boyfriends/partners/dating, most questions would be related to that topic.

Anthropologist Laura Agustin (2005, 627) suggests that, in relation to any research project about erotic labour, “Reflexivity on the part of the researcher will be an essential element of the work, a continual questioning of where moral reactions come from and a humble attempt to leave them aside.” Following Agustin’s (2005) reasoning, I made it a priority to communicate my respect for the women I worked with by sharing my own past experiences as a dancer and explaining how this motivated me to pursue this line of inquiry as an anthropologist. I was very open about my personal life when it was appropriate (not every dancer showed interest in me or my study), my past work as an exotic dancer, and my own struggles with the stigma I had experienced and how that stigma had impacted my interpersonal relationships. Sociologist Teela Sanders (2006, 462) explains that her research on sex work in the United Kingdom was “a two-way exchange of intimate details,” so I was prepared for women to ask me personal questions. And most of the time I was comfortable answering them. The majority of the women I drove were enthusiastic about my project, even if they ultimately chose not to participate (this was for a number of significant reasons, which I address below), and would almost always ask me why I was not working as a dancer. This is a question I will return to in the next section of this chapter.

In addition to assuring women that I would be approaching my research topic with respect and nuance, building trust with participants was important because of the risk involved if a dancer’s identity were to be revealed through the publication of my dissertation. Sex work researcher Frances Shaver (2005) highlights participants’ confidentiality as one of the key challenges that anyone who researches any form of sex work should be aware of. This is “because membership in hidden populations often involves stigmatized or illegal behavior” that

can have negative effects on an individual's life should anyone discover their involvement (Shaver 2005, 297). Although exotic dance is legal in Canada, "there are always issues of stigma and deviancy to consider" when writing about any form of erotic labour, as Sanders (2006, 454) points out. This is particularly relevant to my research, not only because it is with a marginalized population, but because we work in a relatively small and isolated city where it is regularly acknowledged by citizens that "everyone knows everyone through someone" (see Chapter Three). Therefore, protecting the identities of participants in my research was one of my primary concerns. I wanted women to know that I would do everything that I could to protect their identities if they chose to participate. Part of that was communicating to them that no matter what precautions I took, a minimal degree of risk was nevertheless involved.

One of the drawbacks to this study is that I was unable to include the experiences of women who were not "out" or at least "semi-out" as exotic dancers. This was because, as some women explained to me, they were too afraid of the consequences of their identities being revealed, regardless of the minimal risk of this actually happening.

As Shaver (2005) mentions in her study of the methodological challenges of sex work research, this is a common problem that is difficult to overcome. Clearly, the potential fallout of publicly identifying as an exotic dancer cannot be underestimated and speaks to the fear and threat of violence that underlies the stigma attached to this occupation. However, I still felt that the risk of dancers' identities being revealed in my dissertation was minimal for those that chose to participate. Each dancer who participated in my project chose a pseudonym and was at least fairly open on social media about her work in this industry. Many often used social media as a way to challenge stigma and confront stereotypes. I was assured by the participants that any threat to their safety, should their identities be revealed, was unlikely and no more significant

than if their identities were revealed through other sources, which had happened fairly frequently throughout my fieldwork.

While acknowledging that researchers must be as fully cognizant as possible of the damage our research could do to individuals working in stigmatized occupations (and to mitigate these risks to the best of our ability), we must also endeavor not to victimize these individuals by assuming that they do not have the ability to judge whether participation in a project that interests them is worth the risk involved. I am satisfied that I provided women with enough information about my project for them to make an informed decision about their participation. Furthermore, through participant collaboration with Scarlett and Billie, who gave me feedback on the rough draft of my dissertation, I am confident that my writing does not give away anyone's identity.

I have described the benefits of conducting my first year of fieldwork as a driver for exotic dancers, including meeting each woman individually and building rapport and trust with them by having participant-lead conversations about my research in the privacy of my car, as well as becoming re-acquainted with the day to day operations of the exotic dance industry in Winnipeg. All of the women involved in my project became participants through my role as a driver during my first year of fieldwork. Additionally, when I was able to enter the bars with the dancers that I drove, I would often sit amongst patrons and bar staff and get insights from these interactions as a non-dancer; an experience that I had never had before. During these interactions I would frequently be questioned by customers about why I was not working as a dancer, and sometimes even received a few tips from patrons that I sat with to "help pay for gas," something I felt was not likely experienced by the majority of other drivers, who were mostly middle-aged white men.

As productive and ethical as these strategies were in the first year, there were a few downsides. I found driving extremely stressful. Even though my car provided a safe and quiet space to have conversations, I found it very difficult to give my complete attention to these interactions. My first priority was to focus on the road and ensure that the dancers made it to their destinations on time since both of us could be fined by the agency for late arrivals.

My field notes from the first year of participant observation are full of frustrating incidents describing getting lost on the way to a dancer's house, battling rush hour traffic, getting stuck in snow banks during the winter, navigating construction in the summer, getting irritated with dancers who wanted to smoke in my car, having my car break down, and trying to find parking outside the bars. Taken together, these factors would sometimes fluster me, taking my attention away from my fieldwork and decreasing my ability to listen to what dancers were saying. At times I also found it difficult to negotiate interactions with patrons in the bar as a non-dancer, as I desired to protect my privacy and did not want to tell them my actual name. I did not know how to go about navigating these relations without the security of a dancer's stage name. As a former dancer, I could not help but feel that these men were stealing my time by sitting and chatting with me for free, something I never did as a dancer unless I believed I would be compensated. These frustrations, combined with several other significant developments in my personal life, led me to shift the location from which I would do fieldwork in the next phase of my research, from working as a driver to working as an exotic dancer.

### **Participant Observation: Working as an Exotic Dancer**

I went into the closet of the spare bedroom and pulled out the container that has been holding my costumes and shoes for the past eight years. I pulled out each costume, piece by piece, to see if anything was salvageable for a possible comeback. Underwire had come out of bras. Thongs and other small pieces were missing. Anything white had yellowed, and the plastic of my favorite glow in the dark platforms had cracked. Maybe three or four costumes would be usable, I

decided. I gave them a good wash with an extra rinse cycle and then tried them on...Did my boobs shrink? Did my waist expand that much? I'm maybe only five pounds more than I was eight years ago... Could it really make that much of a difference? I guess my weight has been redistributed from my chest to my belly. "I need to work out more before going back to dancing for sure," I thought. Body image issues aside, I'm not used to seeing myself in neon blue glitter anymore. I actually laughed out loud when I looked in the mirror while trying on the costumes. "How can I wear this?" I thought, imagining myself dressed in glittery pink chaps and clear six inch platforms presenting a paper at a conference or teaching a class; and I laughed out loud again. Going back to dancing would be harder than I thought. Or maybe I just need new costumes.

After several months of contemplating the pros and cons of changing the particulars of my participant observation method and consulting with other dancers, I returned to stripping in July 2013, exactly one year after I started my fieldwork as a driver.

As I mention in the last section of this chapter, many of the dancers that I met while driving would ask me why I was not working as a dancer for my project instead of driving. Questions like these from participants seem to be common when young women researchers enter field sites where erotic labour takes place (Dewey 2011; Maia 2012; Wahab 2003; Chapkis 2010; Sanders 2006; Egan 2006a). A number of researchers discovered that dancers were curious as to why an attractive woman would not want to take advantage of the money that could be made by working there (Dewey 2011), and also wanted to know if the researchers "had the guts" to do what they do (Sanders 2006, 462). Furthermore, as Wahab (2003, 630) notes, her "decision to actually engage in a sex work venue (limited as it was), was informed in part by the women in the study who frequently suggested 'if you want to understand sex work, why don't you do it yourself?'" Participant observation methods support the idea that the researcher can get a much better understanding of the lives of research subjects by experiencing what they experience (Dewalt and Dewalt 2002). Indeed, in some cases, access is nearly impossible unless the researcher takes the same employment as the research subjects, especially when the occupation is

stigmatized and/or misunderstood. This was the case with anthropologist Rachel Parrenas (2011) in her ethnographic study of migrant hostesses in Tokyo, where all of the hostesses she met while attending clubs as a customer refused to participate because they were wary of the many journalists who misrepresented them as trafficking victims. Eventually, Parrenas (2011, 15) decided that she would need to become a hostess in order to earn the trust of participants, explaining: “Working as a hostess was just what I needed to gain access... I was struck by the complete shift in attitude of the hostesses toward me. Before I worked as a hostess, my offers of money could not lure one single person to an interview.”

Parrenas’ (2011) experience in the field speaks to the difficulties associated with researching stigmatized occupations that the researcher is not familiar with. Had I not worked as a dancer in the past, I am not sure that I would have had access to the exotic dance industry at all.

A number of researchers have worked as exotic dancers and in other forms of sex work as a methodological strategy (Frank 2002; Egan 2006a; Parrenas 2011; Colosi 2010; Ronai and Ellis 1989; Berson 2016; Bradley-Engen 2009). Additionally, there are also a smaller number of researchers who had experience working in the exotic dance industry before entering the field. Sociologists Rachela Colosi (2010) and Carol Rambo Ronai (1992) are two examples.

Importantly, Ronai and Carolyn Ellis’ (1989) study of table dancers’ interactional strategies with customers is the first ethnography in which the researcher (Ronai) engages in participant observation as an exotic dancer. Although reflexivity is only somewhat evident in this ethnography, Ronai is explicit about her positionality as a full participant in the field site and emphasizes “the point of view of the dancers and the dancer as researcher,” a radical move at the time. In their critical review of strip club literature, Egan and Frank (2005) argue that the lack of introspection/self-scrutiny in Ronai and Ellis’ (1989) writing may be explained by Ronai’s

relatively vulnerable position as a novice scholar and the unfortunate dominating perspective in academia at the time that reflexivity indicates bias or means that the research is less rigorous. Indeed, Egan and Frank (2005) note that Ronai's (1992, 1998) later works are some of the most reflexive pieces in exotic dance literature to date.

Like me, Colosi (2010) began working as an exotic dancer while she was completing an undergraduate degree and did not expect to study stripping for her Ph.D. Fed up with the misrepresentation of exotic dancers in academic literature, Colosi (2010, 7) explains how she arrived at the decision to study stripping in the UK ethnographically: "It was apparent that those attempting to tell *my story* and the stories of all my fellow dancers were outsiders, albeit strangers to *our world*." Her words reflect my own decision to study exotic dance for my Ph.D.

While some researchers decided to try dancing at participants' suggestions (Wahab 2003; Chapkis 2010), other researchers have eschewed that option, citing "shyness" or lack of dancing skill as the reason (Dewey 2011; Maia 2012). Dewey (2011, 9) explains how she perceived her timidity as a quality that helped with her ability to secure positive relationships with participants: "My shyness eventually worked to my benefit in that it helped me function in a work environment where I had to find strategies for interacting with dancers without competing with them for tips from clients." Competition with other dancers was one of the factors that I considered before I decided to return to dancing for my fieldwork. After consulting with several dancers about this issue, I was assured that this would not impede my relationships with participants. This might be because the exotic dance industry in Winnipeg does not foster the degree of competitiveness described by Dewey (2011). Nevertheless, since I had already worked as an exotic dancer, shyness or lack of skill was not the reason why I decided to work as a driver instead of dancing at the outset of my fieldwork. As I explained to the women who asked, when I

first began my Ph.D. program, I *had* planned to do participant observation as an exotic dancer for the entire duration of the fieldwork. However, the consequences to my personal life at the time would have been disastrous.

My romantic relationship at the time would have been threatened by my involvement in the exotic dance industry; therefore, I decided to work as a driver until this relationship dissolved in May 2013. While I find it somewhat embarrassing to admit that my personal life had so much influence on the direction of my data gathering methods, it reveals the very personal nature of ethnography in general. More specifically, the difficulties I faced in my interpersonal relationships show how stigma manifests as violence in the lives of women who work as exotic dancers. Moreover, it is extremely important to note that my relatively privileged position as a Ph.D. student did not always protect me from this violence. As Colosi (2010, 2) contemplates in her ethnography of lap dancing in the United Kingdom, “Although I no longer work as a lap-dancer or stripper, it still forms part of my identity: I will always be an erotic dancer in my head.” Ronai (1992, 107) similarly writes of her experiences as a former dancer, “Sabrina [stage name] is not a separate self, nor some kind of alternate identity to be blamed, like one of the faces of Eve, but is a culmination of all my dark potential. There is no safely isolating this, cordoning it off from the rest of my identity. Having been/being a dancer is part of what I am.” This is a sentiment that a number of women I know who no longer work in the industry can relate to. Even when this identity is no longer significant to an individual former dancer, it is often filed away as a damaging piece of information by others to use against them at a later date. When women who have worked as exotic dancers say “once a stripper, always a stripper” they are speaking to this reality; changing careers or getting a formal education is no guarantee of a stigma-free future once you have worked as an exotic dancer.

Much like ethnographer Wendy Chapkis (2010, 494), “I found that my identity and my research were now closely tied.” Thus, I ultimately felt that shying away from writing about and reflecting upon my own encounters with stigma in my interpersonal relationships would be to miss an important dimension of anthropological research; namely, I want to draw attention to the “emotional toil” of ethnographic data gathering, particularly while working in a stigmatized occupation (Sanders 2006, 462). Sanders (2006, 462) explains that, in the case of sensitive topics like sex work, “the researcher is expected to apply emotional labour to manage the feelings of others as well as their own responses” and that “the emotional investment in the endeavor is significant and needs to be reflected upon and managed.” I certainly found this to be the case throughout every stage of the Ph.D. program.

As other feminist scholars have argued, I maintain that reflexivity on the part of the researcher is an important methodological tool that helps to contradict the positivist claim of objectivity and scientific indifference (Wahab 2003; Chapkis 2010; Boris, Gilmore, and Parrenas 2010; Hubbard 1999; Sanders 2006; Agustin 2005; Shaver 2005). Instead of focusing entirely on maintaining objectivity, exploring the lives of our interlocutors requires what anthropologist Susan Dewey (2011) calls “anthropology of the heart” where “the premise of objectivity becomes secondary to the deep and often emotional issues that ethnography cannot help but expose.” Anthropologists “must also recognize the anger, fear, frustration, and feelings of naïveté that can result from living among people in situations of real structural violence” (Dewey 2011, 19). Undoubtedly, these were all issues that I contended with.

Watching the women that I had gotten to know throughout my fieldwork encounter abuse from romantic partners, and hearing their stories about shaming by family members, was not only uncomfortable for me sometimes, but very emotionally draining because they reflected my

own experiences (Southgate and Shying 2014). At the same time, sharing our stories with each other provided a feeling of relief that we were not alone in our suffering. Moreover, we used humor to manage many of these situations and shared a great deal of laughter while working together, hanging out, and during interviews (Sanders 2004). Indeed, some of the things people said to us, while extremely serious to them, seemed outrageous to us, such as the accusation by Scarlett's cousin that she was "one step away from becoming a trafficking victim, and two steps away from slavery." We laughed at the suggestion that choosing to work as exotic dancers made us slaves or trafficking victims; and we were sobered by our awareness that these are things that many people, including some very powerful organizations and governments, actually believe to be true despite mounting evidence to the contrary (Agustin 2007; Jeffery 2005).

Human lives, even those of researchers, are messy, complicated, and contradictory, and become even more so when they intermingle with other messy, complicated lives. Ronai (1992, 107) reflects on the complicated emotions she experienced while completing her master's research rather poignantly: "The world I desperately want to understand assaults my reality system and my identity. The roles-dancer, wife, and researcher-often clash with one another. Things become muddled when I try to explain why I am willing to disrobe in front of strange men in the name of research. What is it with me that I am able to do this when others in my culture find the concept untenable? Good wives certainly don't do this to their husbands. Or am I in fact just another dancer with a good line of bullshit, playing the marks?" Therefore, as I mentioned in Chapter One, practicing reflexivity was a significant part of my project. My return to dancing as a research method was enabled by the demise of a romantic relationship, much like some of the women I worked with who returned to work after breaking up with a boyfriend who

had been opposed to them stripping. Our labour is intimately linked to our personal lives and social networks, and it would be a mistake to overlook this connection.

Unlike my first entry into the exotic dance industry, I was entirely prepared as to what I should expect upon embarking on my second journey as a dancer, and I had some time to mentally and physically ready myself. Before approaching my agency about switching from driver to dancer, I talked it over with some of the women I was driving, as well as Scarlett and Billie, the dancers who volunteered to collaborate on this project. My key concern was making sure that a return to dancing would not negatively affect the relationships I had already built with the women I worked with as a driver. Even though many dancers had asked me why I was not working as a dancer, I had also heard many women complain about not getting enough work because the agency was more inclined to give more bookings to the new dancers or “new girls,” as they were called. Technically, I was not a “new girl,” but my extended absence from the exotic dance scene made it likely that I would be perceived as one and booked accordingly. I expressed this concern to some of the dancers I was driving, and the resounding consensus from the women I consulted was still, “Do it.”

Although Dewey (2011) ultimately decided that working as a dancer would not help facilitate positive relationships with the dancers in her study because she would then be in a position where she would be competing with them for money, I did not find this to be the case. Indeed, given the many successful studies carried out by women who worked as exotic dancers during their research, competition for customers or shifts does not seem to impede building trust with participants. In fact, there is evidence to the contrary (Parrenas 2011; Frank 2002; Colosi 2011; Egan 2006a; Bradley-Engen 2009). Still, it was vital for me to consult with dancers in order to ensure that this would also be the case for this particular situation since the level of

competitiveness amongst dancers seems to be based on the nature of the business in each geographical location. While working as a dancer in Winnipeg, I never felt that I was competing with other dancers for tips. Even though dancers complained that “new girls” were getting more work than the more experienced women, it was also widely accepted as an inevitable part of working in this industry. New dancers were usually warned about the eventuality of their work “drying up” after a few years.

After being reassured by dancers that I would not be stepping on anyone’s toes by returning to stripping, I decided to invest in pole dancing classes to prepare my body for the physical rigors of dancing. When I first starting stripping in the early 2000s, no pole dancing studios existed in Winnipeg. In the past, then, pole dancing could only be learned from other dancers and practiced while working in the clubs. At the recommendation of my agents, before I started dancing in 2002, I went to several strip clubs and watched how the dancers moved their bodies so that I could mimic some of their choreography when I began working. But the real training was on the job. I found an individual style that worked for me while also incorporating some of the moves that I had seen other dancers execute. Although this is still a significant part of learning how to dance, there were far more women entering the exotic dance business in Winnipeg after taking classes at a local pole dance studio instead of taking this apprentice-like approach.

At first, I was very skeptical about taking pole dancing lessons from a professional studio because many have a reputation for appropriating the skills of strippers while distancing themselves from the exotic dance industry, and thus, contributing to their marginalization (Bahri 2012; Roach 2007; Attwood 2007; Evans, Riley, and Shankar 2010; Whitehead 2009; Deveraux 2012; Egan 2006a). Related to this concern, I also had an aversion to giving my money to

women who had never worked as exotic dancers to teach me a skill that was invented *by* exotic dancers. Despite my misgivings, I eventually chose to take a few private lessons at a pole studio that I knew was friendly towards exotic dancers because it was recommended by a few of the women that I drove.

Pole dancing requires a great deal of physical strength and cardiovascular stamina. Taking these classes absorbed some of the shock to my body that I knew I could expect from returning to dancing. However, I also found that most of the moves I learnt in these classes did not translate well to working in bars; every stage I worked on was different, and performing in front of an audience of patrons in six-inch platform heels was far removed from practicing bare foot in the clean, well lit, safe space of the studio. Still, I was glad to have taken a few classes before going back to dancing, as my knees and legs were now somewhat desensitized to “pole burn” (bruising and red marks caused by the pole), and I re-developed the calluses on my hands that had never completely disappeared after my first round of stripping.

When I felt ready, I approached my agent, Steve, about returning to work as a dancer. In July 2013, I walked into the office to drop off my driving paperwork for the last time and sat down to talk to Steve about dancing again. Just as he had been happy to hire me as a driver, he was pleased to hire me as a dancer, only asking about my availability, “can you start today?” he asked, and we laughed. Thus, I began two years of participant observation working as an exotic dancer in Winnipeg.

Even though some of the frustrations of working as a driver that I mention in the last section of this chapter were also part of driving myself to work as a dancer, the level of stress that I felt during that part of my fieldwork subsided significantly while working as a dancer. This was mainly because I was responsible only for getting myself to work on time. If I was late, I

only had myself to blame, and only I would be fined a late fee. Additionally, even though customers would ask me similar questions about my personal life while I was working as a dancer, I found my interactions with bar patrons to be less frustrating than when I was working as a driver because I was more at ease with forming dancer/customer relationships from my prior experience in the industry. Furthermore, I did not feel obligated to talk to anyone that was not tipping or buying dances from me. The increase in pay was also a motivating factor, as my graduate student research funding was due to run out soon and I would have no other source of income to facilitate my study.

With the support of my advisor and committee members, I revised my research protocol and was approved by the research ethics board to proceed with my project while working as a dancer. While I was dancing, I followed a similar research protocol to the one I followed while driving; that is, I approached the dancers that I worked with in a similar way. When it was appropriate, I told new dancers about my project. I did not tell them in front of customers. I approached them when they had some time and were not dashing off to do a show. I did not press anyone to participate.

Unfortunately, although many showed interest, no dancers volunteered to participate in an interview in my two years of fieldwork as a dancer. I believe this is due to several factors. The first is that I found it far more difficult to build relationships with dancers that I had not driven before because we were constantly moving show to show, which meant it could be weeks before I would see the same dancer again, depending on where I was booked. Most of the time our interactions with each other were limited to a quick “Hey, how are you” before dashing off to the next gig or getting ready for a night of working the floor together (see Chapter Three). Therefore, one downside to this methodology was that I no longer had the time and privacy that my car

provided for me to talk to women at length about my research. Second, even with the women that I had built friendships with through driving, it was difficult to schedule interviews due to the unpredictable nature of a dancer's schedule. I often had to reschedule interviews when a dancer was sent out of town unexpectedly, which occasionally resulted in a dancer not being interviewed at all. However, despite these challenges, working as a dancer had many positive outcomes for this project.

Several changes had taken place in Winnipeg's exotic dance industry since I had last worked as a stripper, including an increasing ratio of our income becoming dependent upon the sale of private dances and on tips, as well as a decrease in the number of bars that booked dancers (which I will elaborate on in more detail in Chapter Three). I was able to experience these changes first hand. This made it easier to relate to the frustrations that other dancers had about income insecurity and the demanding nature of the more emotionally exhausting work of interacting with customers on a more personal level. As I now worked with the women I once drove in another capacity; I was able to build even stronger relationships with them through sharing these similar experiences. Additionally, even though I was unable to recruit new dancers to do interviews through this method of participant observation, several dancers I met through driving and dancing gave me permission to write about our informal interactions, which are the kind of interactions that anthropologists depend on for ethnographic evidence. However, perhaps the most important insights that I gained from the decision to work as a dancer for my project were the ways in which it demanded a constant negotiation of the stigma stemming from this choice in my personal life. The stigma that I experienced as a former dancer or as a researcher studying erotic labour, while certainly very difficult, did not compare to the severity of the

stigma that I faced once I started working as a dancer again, albeit with the thin veil of protection afforded me by my educational status.<sup>13</sup>

One of the topics I had not thought to address in my dissertation when I first proposed this research was the intensity and nature of stigma as it was embodied and played out in dancers' relationships with their family members. As I continued to keep my employment as a dancer hidden from certain friends and family, I also started to realize that many dancers also felt conflicted in their emotions about keeping their jobs hidden from their loved ones. Like the women in my study, I too struggled with these conflicts, albeit with the thin veil of protection afforded me by my educational status.<sup>14</sup> Once again, the connection between my personal life and my research became apparent and steered the direction of my focus.

### **Coding and Analysis**

After I completed my fieldwork, I began the analysis by coding my field notes and interviews for themes, following the process outlined by anthropologists Kathleen and Billie Dewalt (2002). Over my three years in the field, I wrote 419 pages of field notes and transcribed seven interviews verbatim that were each thirty to fifty pages in length. I did not take handwritten field notes, as this was not practical for my field work. However, I did occasionally jot observations down on my phone to include later when writing my field notes in a word document. I also kept a field journal in a word document to record my thoughts and feelings about my field work, which was fifty-five pages.

Anthropologist Raymond Madden (2010) explains that field notes do not only contain facts about the field, but have already been at least partially interpreted by the researcher according to their interests and theoretical perspective. Thus, the process of analysis occurs throughout the entire duration of a research project. However, the data one collects in field notes

also begins to inform theory when the scholar engages in the coding of this data (Madden 2010). In other words, following anthropological methods, instead of searching the data to test a static hypothesis, I saw the analytical process as both inductive and reductive, with theory and data in conversation with each other. Thus, while anthropologists strive to let the data “speak” to us (the inductive aspect of analysis), we also have to make choices about how we will interpret and make meaning of this data (Madden 2010).

Dewalt and Dewalt (2002, 173) explain that during coding “The analyst reads and rereads notes and interview transcripts, on the lookout for recurring ideas and patterns of concepts.” I did this by carefully reading through my field notes and identifying about 100 themes that I thought were relevant to my original research questions about stigma in exotic dancers’ lives and recording them in a separate word document. For example, in my coding document I identify Theme 2 as “Assessing the Situation: Deciding when it is safe/appropriate/comfortable enough to disclose one’s work as a dancer to strangers and/or acquaintances in casual situations or contexts where one is asked about their occupation,” Theme 7 as “Stay away from Peeler Pounders: Referring to men who date strippers for sport,” Theme 23 as “He doesn’t know what I do, just that I work in bars: A dancer’s reference to her child and how he understands her work,” Theme 64 as “They’re supposed to be agents: Technically, dancers work as independent contractors, but the agents often treat us like employees,” and Theme 68 as “Breaking us down to body parts: Emphasizing the most visceral aspects of stripping as a way to communicate disgust about what we do. Often involves describing our body parts as a substitute for the whole person or the entirety of our work. E.g. ‘All you do is spread your legs for money.’”

There were several overarching themes that kept arising during the coding of my field notes that were of particular interest to me. According to Dewalt and Dewalt (2002, 173)

“Gradually (or quickly in a “eureka” moment), the analyst begins to abstract a number of ideas and words contained in text into a single concept, or a small set of related concepts.” For me, these themes were related to money, family, romantic partners, and concerns with labour rights- and became the “first order” themes, or general themes, on which second and third order themes, or more specific themes, were derived from (Madden 2010). The examples I provided from my coding process are related to these themes, and assisted me in their development, as well as the refinement of my research questions.

My coding process changed when it came to interview transcripts. Since I had interviewed a small number of participants and had read the transcripts of these interviews many times, the coding was not as complex as the coding of my field notes. I was already very familiar with the themes that had arisen in these interviews, and they were very similar to the themes I had coded in my field notes. Madden (2010, 142) explains, “This familiarity with your data is the key to unlocking what meaning the field notes will have for your particular project.” Therefore, after coding my field notes and realizing where I wanted to focus my analysis, I carefully searched each interview transcript for statements related to these themes. Keeping the themes of money, family, romantic partners, and concerns with labour rights at the forefront of my analysis, I re-organized my data into these categories. I then cut and pasted interview transcript excerpts into separate word documents for each theme, as I had done with my fieldnotes. I read and reread each of these documents, making notes where there were overlaps, as these themes were not mutually exclusive. Second and third order themes came to light throughout this process as well. For example, re-reading and comparing the data in the “money” category to data in the other categories is what led me to start considering more specific themes, like “dirty money,” and eventually, “stripping money,” which contributed to building theory.

I also kept a physical notebook where I jotted down ideas for analysis whenever they came to me, either while reading through my data or at other points throughout the day. I did this on my phone as well if I did not have my notebook nearby. When I was ready to write my thesis, I consulted these notes often. Scarlett and Billie, the women who collaborated on this project, also influenced where I choose to focus my analysis, as I communicated the themes I was thinking about to them regularly, which I will explain further in the following sections in this chapter.

I am transparent with this process because data collection and analysis is a messy, subjective activity and should be acknowledged as such. While some scholars might be alarmed by the level of subjectivity in the analysis of ethnographic data, as Madden (2010) points out, much of this concern can be remedied with a high level of reflexivity. Reflexivity is a key part of my methodology. As I mentioned in the first section of this chapter, my thesis follows a feminist anthropological approach to data analysis, which emphasizes the importance of reflexivity and doing away with the pretense of claims to objectivity.

## **Participants**

### **Billie**

Out of all the women who participated in my study, Billie, at the age of thirty-three, had the most experience working in Winnipeg's exotic dance industry. Athletic, energetic, and theatrical, Billie was a well-known favorite of strip club patrons in the city. She is the only dancer that I met throughout my fieldwork, from my memory, who had worked here at the same time I started stripping in 2002. When one of Elegant Entertainment's office assistants, Barb, first assigned me to drive Billie to work in 2012, I remembered her as soon as Barb said her name because she had been so helpful to me when I was a novice and embarrassingly unfamiliar with the customer

service aspect of my job. “You have to smile and be cheerful. Sometimes you’ll have to be so fake you’ll make yourself sick!” I remembered her saying.

Billie and I shared much in common. We were both raised in the same north end neighborhood of Winnipeg, were around the same age, valued post-secondary education, and had worked as dancers in the early 2000s. Billie identified as straight. She lived with her boyfriend, Chris, whom she had been with since they were in high school, and we both still called the north end of Winnipeg home. As I explain further in the next section of this chapter, one significant aspect of identity I did not share with Billie, or with any of the women who participated, was race. Billie was white, like all of the women I interviewed, whereas I am half white, half East Indian.

After experiencing life as a “starving student” during several years in university, and witnessing the large sums of money her boyfriend’s sister was making as an exotic dancer, Billie decided to start stripping at the age of twenty. Billie still works in Winnipeg, but because of changes in the adult entertainment industry here, which I will address in the next chapter, she also frequently works in other provinces, and even other countries, such as Australia, to make ends meet. When Billie showed interest in my research, I asked her if she would like to collaborate on my project because I felt that her knowledge of the adult entertainment industry and her years of experience working as an exotic dancer would be invaluable.

### **Scarlett**

I first met twenty- three-year old Scarlett when I was working as a driver in 2012. Her former roommate had dated someone who worked as an exotic dancer. She had always been curious about stripping, and so, after asking her roommate’s partner how to go about it, Scarlett started stripping part time for Elegant Entertainment at the age of twenty-one. At the time, Scarlett was

attending university to pursue a degree in psychology. After a great deal of consideration, much to her middle-class family's apprehension-which I will elaborate upon in Chapter Four-she later decided that a career in psychology was not for her, and started dancing full time.

Like Billie, Scarlett took a great deal of pride in her stage shows and was an avid pole, burlesque, and contortion enthusiast. The pursuit of stagecraft required a significant amount of her time, money, and bodily sacrifice, and her efforts were evident in her shows.

When we first met, Scarlett had recently moved into her own apartment in a newly gentrified part of the downtown area that was located in close proximity to many of my academic colleagues. Eventually, Scarlett saved enough money to buy herself a house in the west end of Winnipeg. Like Billie and other full-time exotic dancers here, while she primarily works in Winnipeg, due to the dry spells of work that are frequently beginning to occur, to make a living in this industry she also regularly works in other provinces.

While Scarlett identified as straight and was in a relationship with a man towards the end of my fieldwork, she also told me that she occasionally has sexual encounters with women.

When I told her about my research, we connected instantly, as we had taken some of the same classes and shared similar feminist perspectives on sex work, referring to ourselves as sex workers some of the time. Her interest in my project prompted me to ask her if she would like to collaborate with me, along with Billie, and she agreed.

### **Kat**

Kat grew up in a conservative Christian home in Falcon Cove, a small rural town located in Southern Manitoba. When I first met Kat, she was twenty-six and living with her boyfriend (at the time) in a house located in the south end of the city. She moved several times throughout the course of my research, but at the end of my fieldwork, she had lived with her husband and step-

daughter in the west end of Winnipeg for several years. Kat identified as bisexual, and both she and her husband did not believe in adhering to traditional monogamous norms.

My first impressions of her were that she was independent, creative, and original. Her shows proved that to be true, as she was a master at utilizing a variety of props and costumes. Unlike myself, and many other dancers, who are determined to keep our stage sets as short as possible, Kat cared more about how her music matched her mood and artistic goals on any particular day.

She moved to Winnipeg at the age of eighteen and held a variety of jobs in the service industry before beginning her career as an exotic dancer when she was twenty, first starting out freelancing for cash as a cage dancer at Metropolis (a strip club which has been closed since 2009). Surprised by the amount of money that she made, she decided to pursue stripping full time with Elegant Entertainment. She loved that she was able to make a living while having an outlet for her creative energy. Unfortunately, however, at the time that I interviewed Kat at the end of 2014, our agents at Elegant Entertainment had stopped giving her bookings, and she had not worked for many months. Unlike Billie and Scarlett, due to concerns about her family's lack of support for her dancing, which I will discuss in Chapter Four, Kat did not feel that she had the option to travel to other provinces for work. Thus, Kat sought other employment and was working as a bartender at a local pub.

### **Ivy**

Like Kat, Ivy also came from a rural town in southern Manitoba, Walkersville, a predominantly Mennonite community. At twenty-one years old, Ivy was one of the youngest dancers that I interviewed, yet her self-confidence and maturity sometimes made me feel childish in comparison.

When we first met, Ivy was living in a house with two other dancers in the south end of the city. But at the time that I interviewed her in early 2015, she was living with her mother in the west end of the city and was no longer dancing. Ivy began dancing at the age of eighteen, freelancing at Kisses when it was still located in the south end of the city. Ivy was looking for work and was beginning to become concerned as her rent was almost due. A friend of hers who was bartending at Kisses suggested that she work there selling private dances for cash. At first, Ivy was hesitant but decided to try it, and fell in love with dancing and the amount of money she was able to make. After Kisses closed and relocated, she started working for Elegant Entertainment.

Ivy's story was similar to Kat's, in that our agents began to give her less and less work, eventually prompting Ivy to quit dancing and go to school to become a hairdresser. At the time that I interviewed her, she was close to graduation. While she did graduate, she also continued to use stripping strategically, working whenever she needed the money, and doing other things when the work dried up, or she got fed up with the working conditions (see Chapter Three).

When I interviewed her for this project, Ivy had only ever been in relationships with men. However, towards the end of my fieldwork, she informed me that she now identified as lesbian and was dating a woman.

### **Lucy**

Lucy was twenty-one when I first met and interviewed her in 2013. When I interviewed her she had only been dancing with Elegant Entertainment for approximately four months, thus, over the years that I've known her since, I've witnessed changes in her feelings about her working conditions. At the time, as a new dancer, she was receiving many bookings and had not yet been fined or in conflict with our agency. After a while, she became a vocal critic of our working

conditions. Two things that did not change over the years, however, were her strong belief that stripping was legitimate labour and her pride in her ability to do her job well. Lucy was an excellent pole dancer and, like Ivy, was self-possessed and mature for her age. Unlike most people her age, her manner of speaking was eloquent and concise.

Her entry into stripping was similar to Ivy's, in that she first started by freelancing at Kisses, selling private dances for cash. However, at the time, Lucy was living at home and working full time in a retail position, so she was not experiencing the same kind of income insecurity as Ivy. Her parents were divorced, and she was living with her father and her brother in a suburban home in the south end of Winnipeg when she first started working at Kisses. Lucy's discovery of stripping as an option was almost accidental. She went to Kisses with friends one night and was encouraged to climb onto one of the platforms and start stripping. People tipped her, and the manager invited her back to work whenever she wanted. Lucy learned that stripping was much more lucrative than her current retail job, and quit to pursue dancing full time. After earning enough money, she was able to move out of her father's house and live comfortably on her own in an apartment in the south end of the city, where she was living when I met her. When Kisses closed and relocated, Lucy began working for Elegant Entertainment.

Lucy identified as straight, and at the time of my interview with her, was in a relationship with a man.

### **Misty**

When I interviewed thirty-one-year-old Misty in 2014, she was working full time as an administrative assistant for an accounting firm and was occasionally dancing on weekends.

Misty, who identified as straight, lived with her then boyfriend, now husband, and two children from a previous marriage in a home in the east end of Winnipeg. I first met her when she

returned to dancing after a several year absence. Like me, Misty started stripping when she was nineteen. She had worked on and off over the years, depending on when she needed extra money, and paused to attend college for her administrative assistant's diploma.

Misty got her introduction to stripping by casually participating in several wet t-shirt contests with her friends, contests that used to be held at the now closed Metropolis. One day, while looking for jobs in the paper, Misty came across an ad posted by Elegant Entertainment that said they were looking for exotic dancers. She decided to give it a try since it wasn't far off from the wet t-shirt contests she had done for extra cash in the past. Although she had done so in the past, Misty did not travel to work out of town, as her family commitments and other occupation did not allow her that kind of flexibility. However, stripping was described by Misty as a good part time job option for her because, unlike stripping in other locales, she did not have to work full time or travel if she did not want to.

### **Participant Collaboration**

As I discussed at the beginning of this chapter, participant collaboration with two of these participants, Scarlett and Billie, was essential to the development of my project. I contacted them relatively frequently during my fieldwork through text or email to ask questions, update them on my progress, and sometimes just to express my frustration in regards to the stigma we shared as dancers. We also met for lunch or coffee to catch up whenever we had time. Thus, they also became a source of support for me whenever I encountered hostility towards my research.

The collaborative process was beneficial to my project in many ways. Before I started interviewing dancers, I showed Scarlett and Billie a copy of the guiding discussion questions that I wanted to ask. One of my concerns at the start of my fieldwork was how to talk about violence from men in the lives of women who work as exotic dancers without suggesting that dancers

“always” have abusive romantic partners, that they somehow “deserve” violence or that violence from men is only damaging to women if it is physical. Scarlett shared this concern and expressed it to me after reading the questions I had about violence in romantic relationships. We decided that I could ask questions about violence as long as I made it clear to the women I interviewed that I was not intending on reproducing this victim-blaming stereotype. As I discussed previously in this chapter, I am confident that I was able to achieve this goal by being open and honest with the women I interviewed about why I was asking certain questions and my own experiences with violence from men.

We also discussed recruiting dancers for interviews. I had initially planned on putting up a few posters at some of the strip clubs in the city with my contact information but decided against this after checking with Scarlett and Billie. They expressed concern about my privacy and the difficulty of getting bar managers to understand what I was doing. Furthermore, they did not think it was necessary since I would be meeting many dancers throughout my fieldwork in other ways.

One of the most interesting parts of the collaboration was how Scarlett and Billie were drawn to different aspects of my thesis after reading the rough draft. I met with each of them individually when they finished reading it to discuss their thoughts and feedback.

Scarlett was particularly encouraging when it came to supporting my theory that stigma is a form of structural violence that manifests itself in the way dancers are treated in their interpersonal relationships. “That’s exactly what it is,” she said. I was relieved to hear this, as I had been worried that she might think I had been too harsh in my analysis of how our family members have treated us. I told her that I was afraid of suggesting that our family members were participating in our stigmatization and abjection, and she said, “But that’s kind of the point. As

women, we're expected to do that work. To be understanding. To protect our family's feelings and manage our own. They might not mean to hurt us or stigmatize us, but they do. I think it's important that you talked about that."

Billie's feedback focused on the recent changes in the industry and the future of stripping in Winnipeg (many of the concerns she expressed to me are addressed in the next chapter). As we talked about how stripping is moving away from stage performances and towards the sale of private dances, as well as the potential practical applications of my research, Billie became teary eyed "They took away the job from the dancer. No one signed up for private dancing." As I mentioned in the last section, Billie is an experienced and talented dancer who loved performing stage shows, "now I dread having to look busy on the floor and everything is so disorganized. We have solutions, but they don't listen to us," Billie lamented.

Scarlett and Billie both had theories about the future of the exotic dance industry in Winnipeg, which I discuss further in Chapter Seven. Here, I wanted to briefly outline their role in my project and how they contributed to my analysis.

### **Class and Race**

Dewey (2011), Maia (2012), and other exotic dance scholars emphasize the importance of the researcher acknowledging shared aspects of identity with participants, as well as the privilege inherent in our position as scholars and other markers of privilege like class and race (Bruckert 2002; Frank 2002; Egan 2006a; Brooks 2010; Parrenas 2011; Wood 2000). As a dancer/former dancer/exotic dancer and Ph.D. student, I was at once both an outsider and an insider. The majority of dancers that I worked with in Winnipeg appeared to be white, with a small minority of women who identified themselves as Indigenous, part Indigenous, Black, or another ethnicity. As someone who is part East Indian, part white, I did not appear to share the

same race or ethnicity with any of the participants. Possibly because of an aversion to acknowledging racism in Canada, unlike exotic dancers who work in the United States, most dancers did not talk about race as being significant to their work (Hugill 2010; Brooks 2010; Bruckert 2002). None of the non-white dancers I spoke with during my time in the field ever mentioned not being booked or hired because they were not white; nor did they suggest that customers preferred to tip or buy dances from women who were white. These findings on race reflect the findings of Bruckert's (2002) study of exotic dance in Ontario, and, to a certain extent, my own experiences as a non-white woman who often, but not always, passes for white. However, while I did not experience anything close to blatant prejudice based on race, customers certainly commented on my ethnicity and nationality relatively frequently. The majority of patrons that I interacted with appeared to be white, and I was often asked by customers if I was Greek, Italian, Portuguese or another "off white" nationality. On the other hand, visibly white customers would occasionally make negative comments about non-white individuals if they assumed I was white.

Scholar Sherene Razack (2002) points out that white men will often seek out "zones of degeneracy," such as strip clubs, in order to have a "safe space" to enact hegemonic white masculinity. Razack (2002) suggests that white men can visit these spaces, whose inhabitants are often stigmatized non-white women, and then leave without becoming stigmatized themselves. It was evident in my interactions with white male patrons that strip clubs were indeed sometimes thought of as safe havens for racist attitudes and commentary.

The six participants that I interviewed did not specifically comment on my ethnicity, although Scarlett and I talked about it when she brought up how she was conflicted about how certain white dancers used Indigenous and "Punjabi" costumes for their shows. However, even

though participants and I didn't talk much about race, I consider the culture of whiteness as having an impact on how the stigma of stripping was experienced by the women who participated in my study.

As I discuss in the next chapter, Winnipeg's white European colonizers held strong ideological positions on morality and womanhood, which were violently enforced by agents of the state (Friesen and Jones 2009). This discourse about "respectable" femininity, which is a white social construct, persists as a part of Manitoba's dominant culture and is backed by the state (Deliovsky 2010).

According to sociologist Katerina Deliovsky (2010, 12), white Canadian women are expected to adhere to traditional feminine practices in order to "demonstrate their loyalty to whiteness and patriarchy." Deliovsky (2010) also argues that the families of white Canadian women play a key role in coercively regulating women's behaviour when this behaviour appears to be in conflict with white patriarchal interests. Therefore, part of the experience of sex work stigma for white women, particularly in their relationships with family members, is their perceived violation of middle-class conceptions of traditional femininity, which I understand as a part of the dominant patriarchal white culture. For women of colour and mixed race women, notions of traditional non-white femininity may differ, and so may their experiences of stigma in interpersonal relationships. However, women of colour who work as exotic dancers do so in a culture and legal system that seeks to discipline their bodies based on white notions of respectable womanhood (Deliovsky 2010).

As a mixed race dancer who was raised by my white mother after my Punjabi father died when I was very young, I experienced much of the same pressures as white participants to conform to traditional white femininity. Race was rarely discussed in my home or mentioned by

my white family even though it was obvious that my skin and hair was much darker than my mothers. It was generally accepted that race “didn’t matter” and that my father was just my father, not an Indian immigrant. Furthermore, race was seen as non-whiteness. This left whiteness invisible as a distinct cultural or racial category, even though scholars have shown that race significantly shapes the lives of white women (Frankenberg 1993; Deliovsky 2010). My experiences with stigma in my interpersonal relationships were no doubt impacted by the erasure of my Indian-ness and my personal struggles with negotiating a mixed race identity. These intersections of race and stigma are hugely important and remain to be explored in further studies of the exotic dance industry in Canada. Since Winnipeg has developed a reputation across the country as a “racist” city, in particular, because of its inability to protect Indigenous women and girls from heinous violence and murder, we must endeavor to understand comments about dancers’ ethnicity in this specific socio-political context (Macdonald 2015; Ferris 2015; Gyepi-Garbrah, Walker, and Garcea 2014; Silver 2010; Seshia 2010; Thobani 2007; Brown et al. 2006; Comack and Seshia 2010). However, a more extended discussion of how non-white race intersected with dancers experiences of stigma is beyond the scope of this study. I was unable to interview non-white dancers, an issue I mention in Chapter Seven when outlining the limitations of my research. Therefore, the issue of racialization and racism is not fully explored in this dissertation but remains a critical issue to be further examined in the future. Furthermore, whiteness studies have much to offer this line of analysis as well, which also remains an issue for future research.

Just as race is a muted conversation in Canada, class is also an issue that most Canadians do not see as an important societal structure, and thus it is assumed that most Canadians fit somewhere in the middle class (Hugill 2010; Bruckert 2002). Based on my observation of some

dancers' consumption practices, education, and the areas of the city in which they lived, many dancers would fit the Winnipeg understanding of middle class. Yet, because exotic dance itself is considered a working class occupation in North America, and because Winnipeg is often described as a working class town, it is essential to take the local political economy into consideration and discuss the unique geographical understanding of class and race (Bruckert 2002; Ross 2009; Brooks 2010; Friesen and Jones 2009; Thobani 2007; McClintock 1992). This is something that I address in more depth in the next chapter.

### **Ethics: A Woman Driving at Night**

In many ways, my project is a very traditional anthropological study that utilized ordinary ethnographic research methods. As I have explained throughout this chapter, my research methods have precedent in other successful and ethical studies of erotic labour where the investigator was employed at her field site (Frank 2002; Colosi 2010; Egan 2006a, 2006b; Parrenas 2011; Ronai and Ellis 1989). Yet some of the hurdles that I encountered before I was ultimately given approval for this project by the research ethics board at the University of Manitoba show how the research locale was marginalized. This is important because, as I reveal below, their initial criticisms about my research ethics protocol were rooted in negative stereotypes about exotic dance, rather than being leveled against my methodology as unethical.

Just as I had been upset with the unfair adjudication of my proposal to study exotic dancers that I received from CIHR, as I explained in the Foreword, I was also disappointed by the changes to my ethics protocol that were suggested by my university's Research Ethics Board. In particular, I was troubled because some of the reviewer comments actually went *against* what I had read in the Tri-Council Policy Statement for Ethical Research Involving Humans (TCPS), as well as the American Anthropological Association's Code of Ethics (AAA), and many other

additional ethical considerations particular to feminist sex work research (Sanders 2006; Agustin 2005; Chapkis 2010; Shaver 2005; Wahab 2003).

For example, the REB stated that, while I would be permitted to work as a driver for my fieldwork, this would only be allowed if I did not collect any data during this time, or inform the women that I drove that I was also a Ph.D. student doing research until I was ready to conduct interviews. The reviewers suggested that when I was ready to do interviews, I would then be required to quit driving after informing one or two of the women I drove who I really was. The reviewers then wanted me to ask these one or two dancers to recruit other potential interview participants for me. In other words, they were suggesting a form of covert research, which I found not only surprising, but also completely unacceptable.

I had been taught throughout my undergraduate and graduate training that covert methods should be avoided except in very specific circumstances related to immediate threats to safety (such as research that takes place in war zones). Their reasoning for this suggested change to my protocol included concerns that the women I drove would feel coerced to participate in my research if I told them who I was. Moreover, and I quote from the reviewer's comments here, "both the study participant and the researcher are at significant risk of violence to property or person" from "men in positions of power," such as customers and boyfriends, were they to find out about my project. Reviewers also felt that women working as exotic dancers were a "uniquely vulnerable population" for which my research methods were "entirely unacceptable." This accusation of unacceptable research methods, of course, had no bearing since, as I have explained throughout this chapter, such methods have been used successfully by anthropologist and sociologists who have carried out similar studies in similar communities.

In my initial response to the REB's suggested changes to my ethics protocol, I argued against the stereotypes that patrons of strip clubs and boyfriends/partners of dancers are more violent than other men and that exotic dancers are "uniquely vulnerable" women. I also argued against covert research, providing citations from many studies where the anthropologist was employed for the duration of the project, as well as the TCPS and AAA manual, which all supported my assertion that my research was safe and ethical. However, I received a second response from the REB that was still insistent upon the suggestions they had made in their first response to my ethics protocol. In my second response to the REB, I again explained the importance of full disclosure about my true purpose as a driver and why this would not endanger participants or me.

I also confronted the REB about the assumptions they were making in regards to our presumed lack of safety at bars and the locations where I would be dropping off and picking up dancers while working as a driver. In the ethics board's second response, I was asked: "At what times of the day does the driving take place? What are the conditions at pick-up and delivery points? Please provide information regarding the potential dangers of driving dancers to and from their workplaces in Winnipeg." I responded thoroughly to this question:

While I understand that JFREB is concerned about my safety and the safety of participants, I must emphasize again that there is no evidence to suggest that driving to bars that feature erotic entertainment or to the homes of dancers is any more dangerous than driving to "regular" bars or to the homes of women employed in other occupations. People often drive to bars and to the homes of their friends and family throughout the course of their daily lives without incident, yet JFREB seems to be suggesting that women who work as exotic dancers do not live in the same neighborhoods as individuals employed in other occupations or that they live in areas that are somehow more dangerous. I feel that this perception is heavily influenced by stereotypes about women who work as exotic dancers and suggests that they are a homogeneous population without complexity or diversity. Again, I would ask JFREB to take into account the abundant literature that I cited in my last response, which disputes the many misconceptions about exotic dance. Sociologist Teela Sanders (2006, 452) similarly explains that,

while the concerns of research ethics boards in regards to the safety of sex work research are understandable, they are often “fuelled by assumptions about the type of people who organize and work in the sex industry.” In light of this, Sanders (2006, 453) asks research ethics boards to consider that “the plethora of successful work in this field is a testament to the appropriateness of the sex industry as a fieldsite.” Therefore, I want to repeat that my research as a driver will not cause any harm or risk to participants, or to me, that is not already present in our daily lives. This is in accordance with the Tri-Council Policy (2010, 23), which explains that for ethical human research “the probability and magnitude of harms implied by participation in the research is no greater than those encountered by participants in those aspects of their everyday life that relate to the research.”

It was after this second response that I attained approval for my project with my originally proposed research methods unchanged.

Although it may be uncommon to cite interactions with research ethics boards in a doctoral dissertation, I felt that it was essential to include these in a project that analyzes how stigma affects the lives of women who are often marginalized, dismissed, and stereotyped as victims without agency because of their occupation. My experience with attaining approval for my project demonstrates one of the insidious ways in which this stigma can play out and the contexts in which stigma is actually and socially constructed and produced. Research ethics boards are not exempt from perpetuating and creating stigma against marginalized communities through the use of risk discourses. Concern for the safety of the researcher and participants—supposedly the main concern of research ethics boards—should not be based on suspicions and rumors about these populations; it should be substantiated by scholarship.

Although never explicitly stated, I felt that the image of a relatively young woman researcher driving late at night to bars and clubs made reviewers uncomfortable; I would be doing research in places “good girls” shouldn’t go. I want to be careful to stress that I am certainly not the only sex work researcher to encounter resistance from ethics review boards. Literature from scholars who wrote about their negative and sometimes outright hostile reactions

from their university's ethics review boards were crucial to the success of this project and informed my responses to the REB's concerns (Egan 2006a; Sanders 2006; Rambo 2007; Israel 2002). Since my advisor, Susan Frohlick, and my committee members, Shawna Ferris and Janice Ristock, all had experiences with ethics review boards that were wary of research on sexual nonconformity, I was also able to seek out their advice on how to approach these issues. Ultimately, with their invaluable assistance, my project was approved, and I was allowed to move forward with my field work methodology intact. I was fortunate to have access to these resources.

However, I think it is imperative for those of us who do research with stigmatized groups to acknowledge the ways in which stigma permeates and is produced by academic institutions. One way to acknowledge the stigma embedded institutionally, then, is by discussing these instances of resistance to stigmatized locales and aversion to the stigmatized people with whom we study. Furthermore, we must draw awareness to how certain aspects of our identities such as race, class, sexual identity, and gender, can affect perceptions of our competence as scholars and to challenge these perceptions when we encounter them.

In this chapter, I outlined my research methodology. Following traditional and reflexive feminist anthropological praxis, I conducted participant observation, where I worked as a driver for exotic dancers for one year, and then as an exotic dancer for two years. Additionally, I carried out interviews with six women that I met during the course of my fieldwork. Two of these women, Scarlett and Billie, assisted me with formulating scripts for interviews, analysis, and the editing of my thesis. I also described the drawbacks and benefits of my methodology, including the fact that some women felt that it was too risky to participate in my research and that I was only able to recruit participants from the first stage of my fieldwork. Furthermore, I drew

attention to the problematic ways in which stigma still permeates academic institutions by describing my experience with my university's ethics review board.

In the next chapter, I go into more detail about what it is like to work as an exotic dancer in Winnipeg, Manitoba, linking this to local cultural norms, history, laws, and regulations.

## Chapter 3: Working in “Winterpeg”

### The Day Shift

*It's late March in Winnipeg, and I'm driving to work in the snowy rain.*

*Winnipeg doesn't really have spring. It's winter for what seems like an eternity, and then it's summer for a very brief interlude.*

*Spring is the few weeks in between Winnipeg's two main seasons where everything is covered in a layer of dust and grime. The Red River, which divides the city into north and south, begins to defrost, overflowing its filth onto park pathways, forming stagnant pools that will provide breeding grounds for mosquitoes and threaten to flood the homes located on the riverbanks.*

*Even though I know it can't possibly be true, I imagine that all of the other cities in the world are experiencing hopefulness and rebirth right about now. Flowers blooming, grass turning green, chickadees and bunnies flitting about, children playing outside in cute little pastel-coloured outfits. And here I am, cursing the potholes and the puddles of dirty water from the half melted sandy snow that splash up onto my car, necessitating frequent sprays of windshield washer fluid, just so that I can spend my day sitting in a dark bar.*

*Suddenly, I hit what looks like a puddle, but turns out to be an icy patch. My car does a 180. Luckily there are no other cars around, but my heart is racing nonetheless. I pause, gripping the steering wheel with both hands, and take a deep breath before continuing on my bumpy journey.*

*“Stripper Dies in Car Crash.” That could be a headline in a local paper on a slow news day if I died on my way to work. “She shouldn't have been driving to work at a strip club. She shouldn't have lied to her family. She brought this on herself.” My parents would be so ashamed. But never mind that. I'm still alive, my car is alright, and I won't get fined for being late or missing work. “What the hell are my tax dollars going towards?” I think to myself as I continue to navigate the dangerous terrain. Then I laugh because I realize that the older I get, the more I'm starting to sound like my mother.*

*After successfully managing to dodge the potholes, I finally arrive at Kisses to work my eight-hour day shift. Ugh. I'm early. I sit in my car and play games on my phone until exactly noon. I don't give them one more minute of my time than I'm required to. The only thing worse than being late for work is being early.*

*At noon, I grab my purse and my heavy black Lululemon bag that contains all of my stripper gear and drag it out of the dust covered car, accidentally rubbing up against it as I do so. Great. Now my parka is dirty. Why do I even live here?*

*I pull back the heavy door to Kisses and walk into the darkness, waiting in the entrance a few seconds for my eyes to adjust. There's no one here except the DJ, Mike, who is seated at his booth watching youtube videos on his phone while eating spring rolls, and one bartender, Chrissy, who is reading a book while leaning up against the bar. Barely looking up from his screen, Mike waves at me,*

*and I wave back as I walk to the changing room behind the stage to don my uniform of white lingerie and stockings.*

*White is the WORST colour. All of the dancers complain about it because it's unflattering on most people and gets dirty so easily. Maybe if they bothered to mop down the stages every once and while we wouldn't have to worry so much about our costumes getting grubby.*

*The floor of the change room is covered in the same sandy layer that covers my car and my parka. A youngish looking dancer I've never met before is sitting on a chair curling her long blond hair in front of the full-length mirror. She greets me and introduces herself as Janine. "I'm Jessica. I've never met you before... how long have you been working?" "Um, maybe like a month?" "Ah, ok. Well, welcome to the shitty day shift at Kisses." "Oh, I've done it once before. It's not so bad!" she says, laughing. "Give it some time," I say. After four years in the industry, I'm turning into a bitter lifer.*

*We don't say much else to each other the rest of the shift. They don't like it when the girls who are working the floor sit together and chat. They want you to mingle with the customers, regardless of whether or not they are buying dances. There aren't many customers right now, though, so I relax at a table near the back of the bar near the front entrance, while Janine positions herself at a table near the DJ booth. Now we wait. And wait and wait.*

*Several hours (and several levels up on Bejewelled) later, I see Garry walk in. He's a regular at Kisses, and always good for at least one dance. Sometimes more if the DJ plays Metallica or Selena Gomez. "Hi, Garry!" I say as he approaches me. He's always really pleased when the dancers remember his name. We exchange pleasantries before he finally says "Well, let's get some dances then!" We make our way to the private booths at the back of the club. He sits down in a ripped up beige coloured chair, and I close the curtain and step up onto the one-foot high square platform in front of him. Privacy is just an illusion of course since I know Mike is monitoring everything through the tiny cameras set up in the corners of the booth.*

*Selena Gomez starts playing over the speakers. I guess Mike recognized Garry. Sure enough, Garry pulls out another thirty dollars after the first song is done and places it on the little stage. "Keep going," he says. Every time I'm facing him I smile brightly, but whenever I turn around while dancing for him, my face goes blank. I do this with every customer. Gotta conserve your fake "happy" energy, even if it's just for a few moments. Sometimes my face actually hurts from fake smiling so much at the end of a shift.*

*When our time is up, I throw my robe on and step down from the platform. Garry grabs my hand, kisses it and says "thank you, dear." "Oh, you're welcome!" I say, beaming, even though I'm internally disgusted by the moist feeling of his lips against my skin. I walk over to the DJ booth to give Mike the bar's cut of my money. He marks two little ticks on a piece of paper under my name, where he keeps track of our private dance quotas. I immediately head to the bathroom to wash my hands, rinsing away Garry's germs from his kiss and the dirt from his money in my hands. I go sit down in the same spot. The rest of my shift passes in much the same way. Play bejeweled. Wait. Sell a dance. Repeat.*

## **Winnipeg, Liquor, and Women: A Brief History**

In this chapter, I cover the intricacies of working as an exotic dancer in Manitoba's unique political economy and argue that the regulation and organization of erotic entertainment in Winnipeg is informed by stereotypical assumptions about the industry, rather than legitimate concerns for dancers' safety and labour rights. These troubling stereotypes and regulations ultimately contribute to the stigma that exotic dancers experience in their daily lives, an issue I return to in Chapters Four and Five (Dewey 2012; Sanders and Hardy 2014; Frank 2005; Alemzadeh 2013; Fogel and Quinlan 2011; Hayward 2015; Law 2015; Clamen, Bruckert, Mensah 2012).

Before 1874, when it officially became incorporated as a town, Winnipeg was a small prairie outpost that was primarily used by British colonizers to advance the political and economic interests of the Hudson's Bay Company (Friesen and Jones 2009; Artibise 1974; Cavanagh 2011). According to historians, by 1874 Winnipeg had many Métis and Indigenous residents, as well as single male migrants from Europe, who made up the majority of the population (Friesen and Jones 2009). The city had also developed a reputation for criminality and debauchery, a characterization that has persisted into the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Friesen and Jones 2009; Gray 1971). Post-1874, with the establishment of a town council and police force, more middle-class white families began to colonize Winnipeg, and with them came aggressive social programs that sought to "civilize" the Indigenous and working class population (Friesen and Jones 2009; Valverde 1999; Gray 1971). The Winnipeg police force was principally concerned with regulating alcohol use and prostitution in the city, as these activities were thought to increase criminality, even though evidence shows that crime actually decreased during the first 25 years after Winnipeg's incorporation (Kozminski 2009; Gray 1971).

Before 1956, women and men could not legally consume alcohol together at bars or restaurants (Friesen and Jones 2009). When liquor laws changed to include women in these previously male dominated spaces, apprehension about mixing alcohol with interactions between men and women grew. Friesen and Jones (2009, 14) explain, “The new reality, however, failed to put to rest older anxieties and prohibition type discourses that drew links between alcohol consumption and immorality, illicit sexuality, and prostitution, while at the same time expressing racialized notions of Aboriginal moral weakness and susceptibility to alcohol addiction.” These fears about unregulated female sexuality, particularly when it is combined with alcohol consumption, have persisted throughout Winnipeg’s history, and are personified in the regulatory inspections of bars that are still carried out by government officials.

During the course of my Ph.D., for example, I witnessed community resistance to the opening of a strip club in a predominantly white and middle-class residential area of the city, which I will discuss in more detail later on in this chapter. I mention it here, however, to highlight the historical context of such a reaction and its roots in British imperialism, racism, and classism. Knowledge of this history also contributes to a unique understanding of how exotic dancers who live and work in Winnipeg negotiate stigma in their interpersonal relationships, as all of the women who participated in my study were white, middle-class and grew up in Manitoba (see Chapters One and Four).

The violence of colonization exemplified by the historical precedent of white men policing the bodies of women, and especially women of colour, with authority invested in them by the Canadian state, is particularly relevant to my analysis of how erotic labour is currently regulated in Manitoba. When the state positions exotic dancers on the border of criminality and does not take them seriously as workers with rights, it is difficult to imagine that their friends,

families, and romantic partners would be able to either. Thus, I argue that the violence of the state is stigma that is reproduced in exotic dancers' interpersonal relationships, which I address in Chapters Four and Five.

Today, Winnipeg, or “Winterpeg” as it is often referred to by residents, remains positioned in the Canadian imagination as a relatively small, cold, isolated, and unimpressive urban center with a “bad” reputation, coexisting with a socially conservative population who have working class, socialist political values (Friesen and Jones 2009; Gyepi-Garbrah 2014; Seshia 2010; Silver 2010). Friesen and Jones (2009, 4) cite its cumulative status as a “city apparently in decay.”

Although Jones and Friesen (2009) were discussing attitudes towards Winnipeg almost a decade ago, I would argue that the city still retains this reputation. Lifelong Winnipeggers speak about the city with a peculiar mix of pride and derision that often leaves visitors and recent migrants to the city flummoxed.

The capital of the province of Manitoba, Winnipeg has a population of almost 700,000 and is located in the south of the province, close to the border with the United States (Canada Census 2016). It is also surrounded by many small, religious, agricultural communities that were colonized by white families during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as well as Indigenous reserves. Thus, after the demise of the fur trade, much of Winnipeg's economic activities evolved to support agricultural endeavours. Because of its relative isolation, Winnipeg also developed a dynamic arts and music scene (Friesen and Jones 2009).

Like many cities, Winnipeg's communities are largely divided along class and racial lines, although, like most Canadians, residents are hesitant to talk about race and class (Bruckert 2002; Hugill 2010; Thobani 2007). The north end of the city, including the downtown area, is

mostly populated by Indigenous people, Eastern European migrants, and migrants from Africa, India, the Philippines, or other parts of Asia. It is widely known as the “poorer/more dangerous” and working class part of the city, although the reality of this perception is questionable, as there is much diversity amongst residents. The south end of Winnipeg is predominantly white, Anglo-Canadian, middle-class, and includes the French-Canadian quarter of St. Boniface. The detailed history of each of these communities and further divisions based on their racial/class makeup is beyond the scope of this project. However, it is important to state that erotic entertainment in Winnipeg takes place at bars located in both the north and south end of the city, as this impacted how the community viewed each bar.

### **Setting the Stage**

Although there is convincing evidence that strip clubs in the United States and the United Kingdom are becoming more “corporate,” and therefore more streamlined and ubiquitous parts of mainstream culture, this is not the case with exotic dance clubs in Canada (Berson 2016; Bradley-Engen 2008).

According to dance scholar Jessica Berson (2016), corporate chain clubs like Spearmint Rhino and Ricks Cabaret are beginning to dominate the exotic dance industry in the United Kingdom and United States, buying up locally owned strip clubs and converting them into their respective corporate brands, much like Starbucks took over local mom-and-pop coffee shops over the last few decades. Along with this corporatization, she argues, comes what she identifies as “McStripping,” a business model where dancers’ self-expression and control over dancer/customer interaction is severely curtailed in the service of offering a consistent experience across multiple strip club locations. Instead of traveling to the “bad” part of town to find erotic entertainment, like you might have done twenty years ago, corporate strip clubs in

cities like New York are now located in prime retail and tourist spaces like Times Square.

Berson (2016) suggests that this migration of the once transgressive strip club space to the more mainstream areas of cities has been accepted because of the sanitized version of striptease that is on offer inside these establishments. In other words, when consumers know that they can expect women who are (mostly) young, white, fit, and middle class to dance for them in predictable ways, they are more likely to view their visits to strip clubs as “good clean fun” (Berson 2016; Brooks 2010).

In contrast, in Winnipeg, Manitoba, all strip clubs and strip pubs are privately owned and operated enterprises, each with their own set of rules and regulations for dancer behaviour and dress, in addition to the province-wide regulations set by the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission (MLCC) (re-named Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries (MBLL) in 2014) that apply to all alcohol serving establishments.

Unlike many American strip clubs, all bars where adult entertainment takes place in Manitoba serve alcohol. In contrast to the corporate strip clubs in New York and London, these establishments are not concentrated in one area but widely dispersed across the city. Although many business men (and it is still mostly men who visit strip clubs) passing through Winnipeg may spend a night at Gilded Cage, a strip club located in the heart of the city, the majority of patrons of bars that feature erotic entertainment are local residents. Thus, strip clubs in Winnipeg cater primarily to local male consumers. This means that local dancers can take the time to cultivate regulars, who will patronize bars specifically to see them on stage, buy drinks and dinner for them, and/or buy dances from them, a feat that is difficult to achieve with the corporate model Berson (2016) describes, in which a high turnover of customers and dancers seems to be the norm. Even though several dancers that I knew would occasionally quit

stripping, they would usually return to work after a break had refreshed them, after the birth of a child, or when they missed the financial opportunities and relative flexibility that dancing had to offer.

Most of the women I met at the beginning of my research in 2012 are still currently dancing. High dancer turnover does not seem to be the standard in Winnipeg. Therefore, the majority of bars with erotic entertainment in Winnipeg more closely resemble the non-corporate model of strip club also described by Berson (2016), which features dancers with more diversity and different aesthetic preferences in dance style. Non-corporate strip clubs, though, are also considered “seedier” and not as “high class” as corporate chains (Berson 2016; Bradley-Engen 2009; Egan 2006a). While some bars in Winnipeg were considered “nicer” than others, there are no strip clubs or any clubs for that matter, that could be considered high end by the definitions offered by other strip club researchers, who describe five star dinners, bottle service, VIP sections, and employee manuals for dancers (Frank 2002; Maia 2012; Berson 2016).

Similar to the women who worked at the non-corporate strip clubs described by Berson (2016), the women I worked with in Winnipeg varied in age from eighteen to forty, were a variety of ethnicities and body types, and differed when it came to the style of dance they used on stage or the strategies they utilized to sell private dances. This does not mean, however, that women employed as exotic dancers in Winnipeg did not have to conform to conventional beauty standards or were not restricted in their creativity, but that this conformity was not to the extent of the higher end strip clubs in the United States or United Kingdom (Berson 2016; Bradley-Engen 2008; Frank 1998, 2002; Colosi 2010; Maia 2012; Liepe-Levinson 2002). Women working in Winnipeg were relatively free to choose their own music and costumes, as well as have short hair, tattoos, and piercings, for example, but were still expected to keep at least

somewhat in shape. Indeed, some dancers told me troubling stories about being reprimanded as “too fat” by our agents and were expected to lose weight if they wanted to continue in this line of work.

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, another contrast to the landscape of stripping in the United States described by other non-white ethnographers such as Siobhan Brooks (2010) and Susana Maia (2012) is that, while I observed that the women working in Winnipeg were predominately white, there seemed to be no reluctance to booking dancers of colour, and bars were not segregated by race. Indeed, race was rarely mentioned by dancers, bar owners/managers, or our agents, regardless of their own ethnicity. This result reflects similar findings by other Canadian researchers, like Bruckert (2002), who pointed out that issues regarding race were never raised by participants in her study of stripping in Ontario. When she directly asked non-white participants, they denied that racism was a problem in the exotic dance industry in Canada (Bruckert 2002). While race does not seem to be a barrier to employment in Canada, speaking from my own experience as a non-white dancer, I can say that race does *matter* in other ways that are obfuscated by the popular Canadian cultural myth of colour blindness, which I touch on in Chapter Two (Hugill 2010; Thobani 2007; McClintock 1992).

While other researchers have demonstrated that strip clubs, at least under certain conditions, may be becoming more acceptable parts of the middle-class entertainment landscape in other parts of the world, stripping in Winnipeg is still very clearly demarcated as belonging to the realm of the transgressive, and concurrently, to the realm of the stigmatized. Canadian scholar Carolina Ruiz Austria (2010, 2) identifies exotic dancing as one of the “3D sectors,” “dirty, dangerous, and difficult,” in the Canadian economy. The scholarship on the exotic dance

industry, when looked at comparatively, highlights the importance of local differences in attitudes towards sexual labour and the ways in which it is regulated.

### **Regulation of Erotic Entertainment and the Role of the MBLL (Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries)**

In October 2010, the Canadian news media reported that the Harper government was quickly working to withdraw a draft proposal that would allow the provinces to post job openings for exotic dancer positions on the federal job bank website. According to media reports, the proposal was drafted by government officials in the Human Resources Department, but after the story broke, knowledge of the proposal's origins was denied by all potential sources (Howlett and Galloway 2010).

At almost the exact same time, the Canadian government appealed Justice Susan Himel's September 2010 Ontario Superior Court decision to strike down three of Canada's anti-prostitution laws. In Himel's view, the laws exacerbated endemic violence against sex workers. These laws included provisions against communicating for the purposes of prostitution, which meant that sex workers could not ensure their safety by screening clients, that one may not live off the avails of prostitution, which meant that sex workers could not legally hire protection like drivers or security, and provisions against "bawdy houses," or sex workers who band together to work on the same premises, which again prevented them from adding another element of safety to their work (formerly Section 210-213 of the Criminal Code of Canada). In 2013, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled against the government and struck down these prostitution laws again, with the stipulation that the government had one year to create new laws in their place that did not violate sex workers' charter rights.

Canada's Conservative government responded with Bill C-36 at the end of 2014, now formalized in law as the PCEPA (Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act). PCEPA carried the rhetoric of the "Nordic Model," which is a highly contested set of laws used in Nordic countries, such as Sweden and Norway, that serves to criminalize the client instead of the sex worker (Ferris 2015; Van der Meulen, Durisin, and Love 2012; Davies 2015). In practice, however, it essentially used new language to re-criminalize all activities related to sex work that were previously struck down by the courts. In 2015, the year of the last federal election, Justin Trudeau's Liberal Party came to power, with one of their campaign promises being to repeal PCEPA. It remains to be seen if the new government will follow through on this promise. Although popular opinion amongst sex worker rights groups in Canada seems to be that with the intense focus on Trudeau's promise to legalize marijuana, repealing PCEPA may fall to the wayside.

Nevertheless, these two recent federal government interventions demonstrate that the Canadian state is far from neutral where the regulation of women's bodies is concerned (Davies 2015; Valverde 1999). Because exotic dance is thought to exist on a porous boundary between theatrical display and prostitution, the Canadian government regulates erotic entertainment through amorphous provincial and municipal by-laws in conjunction with federal anti-prostitution, obscenity, indecency, and anti-trafficking laws (Bruckert and Dufresne 2002; Jochelson and Kramar 2011; Fogel and Quinlan 2011; Law 2015).

Sociologist Crystal Jackson (2011) notes how these tangled webs of law and regulation are difficult to understand because they have the contradictory task of restricting sexual performances whilst upholding the tenets of free market capitalism and expression.

However, while exotic dancers and strip club owners can, and have, been charged in Canada under federal criminal laws such as PCEPA (formerly Section 210-213 of the Criminal Code) and section 167 of the Criminal Code “Immoral Theatrical Performance”, there is no evidence of this happening in Manitoba (Jochelson and Kramar 2011). The regulation of exotic dance in Manitoba, therefore, is most effective at the local level. That is, provincial and municipal authorities monitor the behavior of exotic dancers, agents, bar management, and customers, the MBLL (Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries) in particular.

Formerly the MLCC (Manitoba Liquor Control Commission) pre-2014, or the “LC” as Manitoban’s still refer to it, the MBLL is a crown corporation that regulates and distributes products to all alcohol serving establishments in the province, including bars that offer what the Liquor and Gaming and Control Act (Manitoba 2014a) refer to as “adult entertainment”.<sup>15</sup> The LGCA is Manitoba law that defines adult entertainment as “any form of dancing, or any exhibition, display, competition, or event involving a person who is nude, or partially nude, for any period of time” (Part1, Section 1), and specifies that “adult entertainment may only take place a) in a beverage room; or b) in other licensed premise that has been authorized by the executive director to provide adult entertainment in the premises” (Part 2, Section 18). This is all the current LGCA has to say on the subject of adult entertainment, marking a distinct change from the pre-2014 incarnation. Previously, The Liquor Control Act (Manitoba 1994), clearly articulated the meaning of “nude”, “partially nude”, “stage”, and “adult entertainer”, along with all of the rules bars must follow in order to retain and keep a license, which is does not in its current form (Part1, Section 15).

However, this does not mean that these policies no longer exist. Post-2014, instead of including the more specific regulations pertaining to each type of establishment directly in the

LGCA, the MBLL decided to move the finer points of its lengthy regulatory demands into the Licensee Field Manual (Manitoba 2014b) that is theoretically given to all licensed bars.

Although worded differently, a perusal of the manual's section on adult entertainment reveals that the exact same policies outlined in 1994 remain intact; physical contact between dancers and other dancers or dancers and patrons is prohibited, and patrons and dancers must be at least 18 years of age.

Responsibility for enforcing the LGCA still falls to licensed MBLL "inspectors" who retain the right to visit bars and strip clubs periodically, with or without warning. The Licensee Filed Manual (2014) states that inspectors may also be police officers, but, to my knowledge, this never occurred during my fieldwork. The Licensee Field Manual (Manitoba 2014b) contains a list of the sixteen district inspectors responsible for the Winnipeg area, as well as the inspectors for other cities in the province. Directed at bar owners, the manual describes the role of inspector as simultaneously that of educator; "available to provide formal and informal training sessions to managers, serving staff and security staff" and representative of the State; "conduct [ing] walk throughs of the premises to ensure the conditions of the license are being met, to observe the general operation, and to ensure compliance with the Liquor Control Act and regulations." Further instructing the licensee to maintain "a good working relationship with your inspector and local police authority", the MBLL threatens to switch between "good cop" and "bad cop" based on a bar's reputation for compliance, and will use their own discretion as to what action, if any, will be taken when a violation occurs.

Consequences for violating the LGCA range from "a caution from the inspector" to "suspension of license" and "monetary penalties," depending on the severity of the violation and how quickly and easily it could be fixed. It is widely understood by dancers and bar staff alike

that inspectors are not likely to “look the other way” when confronted with any violation of the law, as they often do in other provinces; and so dancers and bar staff regulate their behaviour accordingly (Macklin 2003).<sup>16</sup> I was told on numerous occasions by DJs before taking the stage during the two years of my fieldwork as a dancer to “be careful and stay right in the middle of the stage” because an inspector was in the bar. I was also warned by one of our agency’s administrative assistants before getting my schedule for the day that “the LC is really cracking down this week.”

This fear of inspections was not unfounded. Even though the majority of dancers working in Winnipeg did not permit contact with customers, we also understood that the LC was infamously strict and could find fault with our behaviour in other ways because “physical contact” was open to interpretation. Could we take tips from a customer’s hand while on stage if we were still fully clothed? What if, while in the midst of a dance move, our foot moved off the edge of the stage? It was common for customers to place folded up bills on stage for dancers to then take by squishing the bill between her breasts; was this strictly legal?

I still don’t know the definitive answer to these questions, as each bar that I worked in had a different interpretation of the MBLL rules. For the most part, when I worked as a dancer, I erred on the side of caution. Thus, my research diverges from the work of other Canadian exotic dance scholars, such as Audrey Macklin (2003, 468), who claimed that in the 1990s there was “a micro-geographical shift in the Canadian job site [for strippers], which descended from the stage to the table-top to men’s laps” and that “because bars that offer direct access to women’s bodies draw more patrons than those that do not, market forces (as personified by bar owners) pressure women to ‘consent’ to physical contact.” In other words, physical contact during lap dances in Ontario has become the norm, even though the law technically prohibits touching between

dancers and patrons. Although other literature on exotic dance in Ontario supports this claim, my research in Manitoba contradicts the assertion that this shift occurred throughout the country (Bruckert 2002; Bruckert and Dufresne 2002; Law 2015). This does not mean, however, that there have not been significant changes to the industry in Manitoba.

Dancers' income has indeed become increasingly dependent upon tips and the sale of private dances, for instance, a point that I will return to later on in this chapter. But the shift to lap dancing that Macklin (2003) seems to suggest as inevitable with an increased reliance on the income generated from private dances does not bear out in Manitoba and does not explain why strip clubs here are still able to function successfully under such strict regulation. In fact, Frank (2005) found that the heavy regulation of strip clubs in the United States was essential to many regular patrons' enjoyment of adult entertainment venues because they desired a sexually arousing leisure activity that would not violate their monogamous relationships. In other words, *not* being able to engage in contact with the dancers was crucial to many customers' enjoyment of the strip club space.

Frank (2005, 494) maintains that "even men who claimed to be interested in purchasing some kind of actual sexual contact from the dancers were satisfied, over and over again, with *talking about doing so* and paying for table dances." My experience with customers in Winnipeg fit this description. Therefore, contrary to Macklin's (2003) claim that physical contact naturally draws more male customers to strip clubs, Frank (2005) argues that this type of assertion is based on stereotypical assumptions about heterosexual masculinity; namely that men are only after "one thing."

Elizabeth Bernstein (2005, 107) similarly criticizes studies of client behaviour in the commercial sex trade, explaining that "typologies are presented as if based on distinct attributes

of a transhistorical and unwavering masculinity.” Thus, even when men appear to be actively searching for a sexual interaction in a strip club or a dancer seems willing to provide that service, this talk needs to be considered as a part of the customer’s construction of fantasy and the dancer’s indulgence in this fantasy by “creating possibility” (Frank 2005). In other words, Frank (2005, 497) argues, customers are not being cheated out of sexual contact with dancers through regulation but “they are purchasing exactly what they want.” That is, a fantasy interaction that also allows them to adhere to conservative monogamous ideals. Moreover, a desire for transgressive adventure and excitement without the risk of sexually transmitted infections may also play a role in the motivations of strip club patrons (Frank 2005). Thus, maintaining the reputation of strip clubs as sites where prostitution or criminal activities *could* happen is more important to customers than whether or not these things *actually* happen. This was the case in Winnipeg, where strip club customers, although occasionally complaining that they could “get way more in Ontario” continued to pay us for no-contact dances.

Municipal by-laws also play a role in the regulation of exotic dance, as they dictate the zoning of strip clubs. The City of Winnipeg zoning by-laws (Winnipeg 2014) pertaining to adult entertainment establishments provides that: “(1) No adult service or entertainment use may be located within 1,000 feet of: (a) any dwelling unit; (b) any Parks and Recreation District or any park use in a Residential District; (c) any other adult service or entertainment use; (d) any place of worship; or (e) any elementary, middle, or senior high school.” These by-laws are common in most Canadian cities as well as for cities in the United Kingdom and the United States. Often, this results in strip clubs being zoned into marginalized areas such as industrial parks or dilapidated city centers because they are believed to heighten the likelihood of criminal activities and cause danger to women and children (Paul, Shafer, and Linz 2001; Linz et al. 2004; Hubbard

1999, 2001, 2004; Hubbard and Whowell 2008; Liepe-Levinson 2002). Ironically, because strip clubs are located in these areas due to zoning by-laws, they become associated with higher crime rates in the surrounding areas, statistics which are then used as justification to prevent the opening of more strip clubs in other parts of cities (Hanna 2003).

Anthropologist Judith Lynn Hanna's (1998, 2003, 2005, 2010, 2012) ethnographic research challenges the perceived link between strip clubs and crime by pointing out the major flaws in studies that supposedly show that strip clubs cause negative effects on neighbourhoods. She claims that most studies on the adverse effects of strip clubs on neighbourhoods do not consider the fact that strip clubs are already located in marginalized areas with higher crime rates. Furthermore, they do not compare strip clubs with the zoning of other alcohol serving establishments or nightclubs, which would likely have similar effects in terms of noise or "rowdy" patrons. In these studies, she maintains, the researchers' "Ideology presumably overwhelms rational thinking" because the link between strip clubs and crime is assumed even when evidence to the contrary arises (Hanna 2003, 179).

This was the case in Winnipeg in 2010 when a local university bar in the south end of the city, Charlie's, was converted into a strip club, Kisses. Residents in the area protested the opening of the club claiming that it would draw drug dealers, rapists, and child molesters to the area, even though erotic entertainment had been featured at Charlie's part time for the past thirty years without incident (Halstead 2010). Kisses closed in 2012 and then re-opened at a new location in 2014 in a mostly industrial area in the city's North End. Although some strip clubs like Kisses have recently been pushed into more marginalized areas of the city, it is also true that Winnipeg's strip clubs and strip pubs are dispersed across the city, including middle-class neighbourhoods in the South End. Many of these bars have existed since the 1970s or earlier,

long before residences, schools, parks, or other businesses built up around them, and it is this longevity that has ensured their survival throughout the decades. In other words, NIMBY (not in my back yard) arguments against strip clubs from concerned citizens have rarely occurred in Winnipeg because many residents were not even aware that adult entertainment took place in their local bars.

In any case, it seems that residents of Winnipeg are much more enthusiastic about protesting the opening of a new strip club than to demand the closing of one that has already operated successfully in their neighbourhood over the past thirty or forty years. Because of this, contrary to some of the findings in other cities discussed above, Winnipeg has been able to maintain an industry that has not been largely pushed into marginalized and dangerous areas, thereby circumventing restrictive by-laws.

However, the community reaction to the opening of Kisses in a wealthy area of the city should not go unnoticed; the virulence towards women who work in the exotic dance industry demonstrated by some community member's responses was disturbing. Most notably, however, the exclusion of these women as members of the community by city residents told a troubling, but not surprising, story. Exotic dancers were not seen as members of the community who needed to be protected from the "negative effects" of strip clubs but were considered to be in collusion with rapists and child molesters.<sup>17</sup>

### **Strip Clubs vs. Strip Pubs**

Beginning in the 1970s, women would shuttle around Winnipeg performing their shows in a variety of hotel lounges or "beverage rooms"; a form of entertainment that the bars eventually termed exotic dancer "jamborees" (Barnard 2009). The adult entertainment industry in Winnipeg is unique in Canada because of this style of labour organization, called "jamming"

by women working here, that refers to their constant rotation between bars in the city. Therefore, as I mentioned in Chapter Two, exotic dancers in Winnipeg are not employed by the bars they work in but are considered independent contractors who are booked and paid a weekly pay cheque by the city's only stripping agency, Elegant Entertainment, minus the agency's fee. Travel is a significant component of working as an exotic dancer. While many dancers who work for Elegant live in Winnipeg, there are also some dancers who come from other parts of the country to work here temporarily. Elegant also books dancers in small town bars across Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario for anywhere from one to six nights. The dancer is responsible for finding transportation to the town and paying for any costs incurred for the duration of the booking (lodging, food, plane/bus tickets, etc.).

While working in the city, dancers who work for this agency may move between several different locations in a single day, performing a show at one location, and then driving, or being driven, to the next bar for another performance. Thus, dancers must own a vehicle or ask the agency to provide them with a driver to take them to work. This system of labour is still practiced today.

As I explained in Chapter Two, during the first year of my ethnographic fieldwork I was employed by Elegant as a driver for exotic dancers here, and then as an exotic dancer for the remainder of my time in the field. Currently, there are seventeen bars, or what I call "strip pubs" (different from the United Kingdom version of pub stripping described by Colosi (2010)). Strip pubs feature adult entertainment in Winnipeg on a part-time basis and serve multiple purposes for the communities in which they are located, often acting primarily as local watering holes where a mix of male and female patrons gather to eat, watch sports, play pool, or have drinks after work. Strip pubs are clustered in neighbourhoods all over the city. These venues differ from

the smaller amount of dedicated strip clubs that offer adult entertainment on a full-time basis, which at the time of writing were Kisses, Secrets, Gilded Cage, and Silhouettes. Kisses is located in an industrialized area of the North End, while Gilded Cage is situated in a gentrifying downtown area. Secrets and Silhouettes are located on busy main thoroughfares in Winnipeg's south end neighborhoods. If you are employed as a dancer in Winnipeg, you will be booked at all of these strip pub and strip club venues at some point during your career.

Different from the "strip pubs," the strip clubs in Winnipeg resemble the typical model of club you might find anywhere in North America: a raised stage with a pole (or multiple poles), sectioned off private dance areas, a cover charge, security, door girls, and higher drink prices than other bars in the area. While some of the strip pubs may have a number of these features as well, the main difference is that the pubs do not offer private dances to their patrons, and thus do not book dancers for "floortime." When dancers are booked for a "shift" at one of the strip clubs (usually 12-8pm, 2-8 pm, or 8pm-2am), they will normally do two stage shows spaced out over the shift that the agency will pay them for in their weekly paycheck. During the time in between their shows, dancers will be required to "work the floor," in other words, sell dances to patrons. Several dancers that I spoke with who had started working at the same time I did in the early to mid-2000s lamented the transformation from relying on an income based solely on the number of stage performances to a job scene where mandatory floor time and fewer stage shows have become the norm. During my past tenure as a dancer from 2002-2004, there were at least twice the number of pubs booking exotic dancers in Winnipeg, which meant that our incomes were not as dependent upon customers' spending whims as they are now. Tips and the sale of private dances are now an essential part of a dancer's income here. Dancers have had to adapt and learn new strategies for making money, with some faring better than others.

### **Mandatory Floor Time, Fees, and Fines**

While booked together for an eight-hour day shift at Silhouettes one day, Lucy and I began talking about our rights as workers in this industry. We sat together at a table just outside the tiny make-shift changing room that the bar had finally given us after months of complaining about having to change in the storage room. There were never many patrons at Silhouettes on a Friday afternoon, so we chatted to kill time in between our stage shows. We vented to each other about having to sit in the bar for eight hours despite a lack of patrons. “Well, what do they care? They don’t have to pay us an hourly wage, so they aren’t losing any money by having us here just in case people come in,” Lucy said. “Right? We’re the only ones losing money right now. Day shifts are so pointless,” I say. “Can you believe they had us changing in a *storage room* for months until a bunch of girls kept complaining to Elegant? Hello, this is a strip club. Strippers have costumes. Yet when they were remodeling the place, they didn’t even think to give us a place to put our stuff or get ready. We’re the main draw, yet we’re an afterthought,” Lucy said. “Oh, I know. It’s ridiculous. Even now, there’s no door on the change room, just a curtain, and there’s no lockers or anything to secure my stuff. Sometimes I’ve seen customers walk through there by accident because they think it’s the exit,” I say. “It hasn’t happened to me yet, but our stuff could easily get stolen. And, God, all the RULES. Every time we come in, new rules. I don’t want to socialize with customers when they aren’t spending money. It’s such a waste of time. Yet, apparently, we’re always supposed to be mingling with them regardless,” Lucy says. Just then, I remembered something I saw online the other day, a patch that was made by a fairly well known exotic dancer/artist known as Jacq the Stripper. The patch was embroidered with the words “If you ain’t throwin’ it, I ain’t showin’ it.” I found it on my phone and showed it to Lucy, and we laughed. “That’s awesome!” she said. “You know, sometimes I do think about reporting

some of the bars to the LC or whoever you go to for reporting labour rights violations. But I never do because I know that it would just turn out badly for us because they think strippers are a joke. They don't take us seriously," Lucy lamented.

Stripping in Winnipeg has transformed from a job that was primarily based on the physical labour of the dancer (getting paid per stage show, plenty of stage shows, minimal one on one interaction with customers) to an occupation that requires elements of both physical *and* emotional labour. These days dancers are paid per stage show, doled out a highly variable amount of shows, and expected to perform a high amount of one-on-one interaction with customers. Most dancers I spoke with identified the current conditions as much more demanding than even five years ago. Although a similar transformation took place in other parts of the country much earlier (Macklin 2003; Bruckert 2002; Ross 2009; Austria 2010), the process in Manitoba has been slower. I argue that the industry here is still experiencing growing pains arising from the changes that have taken place over the last few years.

Because change has happened so recently, many dancers currently working in Winnipeg still remember a time when stage shows were their bread-and-butter and mandatory floor time was non-existent. Thus, mandatory floor time is currently a point of contention amongst all of the exotic dancers I worked with. They view it as an unfair and illegal labour practice because they are not classified or paid as employees of the clubs they sell dances in. Numerous incidents related to disputes over mandatory floor time occurred throughout the course of my fieldwork, with dancers attempting to resist some of the ways that management would try to exploit us through fees and fines.

On one such occasion, I was booked for mandatory floor time at Secrets on a Friday night. Most of the time, dancers took their bag full of costumes and other supplies and purses on

stage with them as they performed, or would have to leave them unguarded in change rooms or bathrooms. At Secrets, there were lockers available for the dancers to use, but only if you paid the five dollar fee to the bar to rent a lock.

As I walked into Secrets that night, Janice, one of the bar's employees, greeted me. She was angry. With a red face, she proceeded to tell me how a dancer, known as Daisy, had refused to work her mandatory floor time that night because she did not want to pay the fee to rent a locker yet did not want to worry about the security of her belongings while she was working. Janice was extremely perturbed by Daisy's attitude and could not understand why she would not just pay the five-dollar fee. "You don't think five dollars for a locker is unreasonable do you?" Janice asked. "Well...um...I don't know. I can see both sides I guess." I replied, trying to appear neutral, something I had become accustomed to throughout the course of my fieldwork.<sup>18</sup> In this case, my own personal feelings about the locker fee aligned with Daisy's, but I was afraid to say it, at least to Janice. After this exchange, I went backstage to change into my costume for my first show of the night and overheard Justin, the DJ, say over the microphone "apparently Daisy thinks she's better than everyone else." Clearly, Daisy's refusal to pay the locker fee had struck a nerve with everyone, and I was a little surprised that Justin, a DJ I enjoyed working with most of the time, would take the side of the bar over the dancer's. The next time I spoke to Daisy a few days later via Facebook, I brought up how I had been barraged by questions about locker fees at Secrets and asked her what happened. She replied, "They shouldn't be charging girls five dollars a day for lockers when they're supposed to be there for us to use regardless. I called Elegant the next day and complained." Later on, during an interview with Scarlett, who is Daisy's best friend, Scarlett gave her view on the locker fiasco:

I love Janice. She's like my mom. But it's not right. That's like extortion. That's like, "well, you can get your stuff stolen, or you can put it in a locker for five

dollars.” I’m happy to give her five bucks for a tip, but to *have to* is a different story.

Obviously, most dancers would easily be able to afford the five-dollar rental fee. But from these conversations, it is clear that Daisy’s refusal to pay the locker fee and dancers’ solidarity with her on this issue stems from much more than a stubborn desire to be frugal. It was about resisting at least one of the many little ways in which her income was skimmed by other individuals working in the exotic dance industry and asserting her right to a safe work environment that should not be dependent upon the payment of a fee, regardless of how low or high that fee was. The fact that this skimming was done through threats, either to a dancer's personal belongings, or to her income through the myriad other potential fees and fines a dancer could incur throughout the workday, was infuriating to the women I worked with.<sup>19</sup>

Fines could range anywhere from twenty-five dollars to two hundred dollars and were taken off a dancers paycheck, usually without any warning. The enforcement of these fines was inconsistent and depended on several factors, including the individual dancer’s reputation and her relationship with bar staff. It was far less likely that a dancer would receive a fine if she was known as a “good girl” who would consistently show up on time, didn’t consume too much alcohol at work, and didn’t argue with bar staff. Offering tips to the DJ when we had a particularly profitable haul of tips during a stage show was also a good way to avoid fines, and indeed, some DJ’s could be “paid off” for allowing us to do a short show or go on stage early.<sup>20</sup>

Individual bar rules tended to change relatively frequently, and it was easy to forget things like which bar wanted which costumes for floor time. Kisses required all white lingerie for floor time for example, while Silhouettes required stockings. Additionally, the quota for private dances at Secrets changed from at least two to at least five over my three years in the field. Fines and frequent rule changes are not unique to strip clubs in Winnipeg, as other researchers have

reported that dancers who worked in Ontario had similar perplexing experiences with fines (Austria 2010; Bruckert 2002; Lewis 2006), which caused one surprised scholar to call some of the bar rules she encountered “quite bizarre” (Austria 2010, 15) (Image 1).



**Image 1: No Glitter Sign**

Even though the strip clubs would post signs backstage outlining their own rules and the rules of the MLCC, they often sent contradictory messages that just seemed to cause more misunderstandings (Image 2).

essed on stage. No Booze on stage. Be fully covered when crossing to oth  
 contact = \$500.00 Fine.

c: Be at DJ booth 5 min prior to show. All sets 17-18 minutes.

o RAP music or hard core music. We reserve the right to change show time

uality: Shifts: Mon-Thurs, Sat: 3-8, Friday: 12-8, Night Mon-Sat: 8-2.

ust be on the floor no later than 8pm. Be here 7:45. 2AM = when the lights o

We guarantee 2 shows, but only if you stay all night. If you do 1 show & leave

will be paid for neither.

Late = \$75.00, Leaving Early = \$125.00, No Show = \$125.00 + Show Price.

ss: You have to wear proper attire.

Stage: All Dancers must wear Sports Jerseys on stage. High Heels at all times.

exceptions. No Wal-Mart bra & panties. We have Jerseys and Stockings for sale

Floor: Lingerie, High Heels, Stockings are to be worn on the floor at all times.

Thongs or See-Thrus allowed. 2/3 butt coverage. No blankets or bath robes.

Improper Attire = \$25.00-\$100.00 Fine.

oor Time: You are expected to mingle & sit with the customers.

Try to stick to the center of the room. No cell phones when working the floor. D

sit by yourself, and don't sit all together ignoring customers, this is not consid

floor time.

Always order a drink when sitting with a customer if offered, but do not get total

wasted where you cannot perform your job. Leave drinks on a table if need be.

Professional behavior: Be respectful, be friendly & approachable, have great

attitude, with co-workers as well.

➤ Notify DJ for breaks, 10 min. max. Change room: No more than 2 dancers at a time

➤ Costume lady is only allowed here before 9PM or after 2AM.

➤ Floor Time = \$50.00-\$75.00. Unprofessional Conduct/Drunk & Disorderly = \$125.

Private Shows: Booth = \$30.00, Shower = \$40.00 PER SONG, NO MORE, NO LESS.

➤ There is a quota of 4 private shows, per evening, from Monday to Thursday. Frida

Saturday the quota is 5 shows per night. No Contact. See rule #1.

➤ Get paid before. No mandatory tip, customers are not required to. Do not charge

more for extra customers in the booth. Wait for the start of a new song to start.

➤ Pay the DJ \$10.00 for every song you are naked. Pay right after show.

Security: If a customer is being rude or belligerent, please notify the nearest staff

member immediately. We believe in a safe and comfortable work place for everyone.

Note: Do not leave valuables or money lying around in the change area. Trade in Fives

Send Instagram Pics to Dave. AIR VENT SCREEN. DO NOT BLOCK: FINE + FIRED

Owner, Management or DJs will not notify of any fines.

0. SMILE! Have Fun & Work As A Team! Let's Make Lots Of Money!

**Image 2: Bar Rules**

Being scheduled for floor time, then, was a minefield in terms of increased fine potential for dancers, as there were far fewer rules that could be broken while jamming at strip pubs. Indeed, instead of the bar paying the dancers for mandatory floor time, the dancers could potentially end up breaking even or even owe the bar by the end of the shift. As can be seen in

Image II, any concern on the part of management for the safety and security of the women who work in their clubs is last on the list of bar rules, thus reinforcing our feelings that our labour is not valued. This signage created a hostile work environment, where dancers were constantly made aware of their vulnerable position through messages that told us getting glitter on the stage would have more severe consequences than stolen property or an assault perpetrated by a customer.

Nevertheless, this was all understood as part of the “bar bullshit,” as Billie and Scarlett called it, that dancers had to accept as part-and-parcel of working in a stigmatized occupation. Another one of these consequences is that managers and agents were more likely to trust the word of bouncers and DJ’s over the word of a dancer when any sort of alleged rule breaking took place. Here, Scarlett describes what happened at Secrets when a bouncer accused three dancers who were doing a private show together of engaging in physical contact with each other:

It’s really easy to have a questionable reputation in the industry. This incident, in particular, there’s three girls doing a dance. And one of them, Carrie, was like “no I didn’t fucking touch anybody, and I don’t know why you would accuse me of this.” I was like, Carrie, you’re good. People know you. Beyond a shadow of a doubt. They know that you’re not going to be touching another dancer. But the other two didn’t have that unquestionable reputation, so they had to pay a fine because this bouncer just said so. He said, “well I saw it.” But it’s dark. The curtains are filmy. If we’re doing a double or a trio, we’re going to look like we’re touching, but we’re not. People should know this. But there’s just nothing you can do about it. Then to get fined because of it is bullshit.

The conversation that I had with Lucy about our rights as workers that I outlined at the beginning of this section highlights this struggle; while filing a complaint in other industries under such conditions might incite change that benefits employees, for those of us working in a stigmatized occupation as independent contractors, it is understood that taking such actions could do more harm than good. While recent and numerous court challenges brought by exotic dancers attempting to achieve employee status in the United States often resulted in the judge ruling in

favor of the dancers, clubs firing the women who had challenged them in court or instituting new employee contracts that infringe upon dancers' rights is also a common occurrence (Gira-Grant 2016; Aimee 2012; Hoops 2012). Thus, even in situations where dancers' claims of workplace abuses are taken seriously, their career prospects are at considerable risk. Not to mention that the autonomy and flexibility offered by working as an independent contractor are significantly diminished. In other words, when exotic dancers become employees, the clubs now have more power to exploit their labour than they did previously when their mistreatment was technically illegal (Aimee 2012).

Canadian historian Becky Ross (2009, 139), who interviewed women who had worked in Vancouver's erotic entertainment industry during the mid-late 20<sup>th</sup> century, came to the conclusion that, "For dancers, satisfying themselves, bosses, and patrons was never easy; it was contingent on physically, creatively, and emotionally demanding *work*." Expanding on Ross' (2009) point, I argue that the work of an exotic entertainer does not only include physically demanding stage shows and emotionally demanding private dances. It also includes what is hidden from public view; dancers must negotiate a complex matrix of confusing laws and regulations that are frequently in flux, as well as interactions with patrons, bar staff, and agents whose needs and wants are often at odds with each other, all within a culture that devalues their labour and does not take them seriously as workers with rights. While these kinds of negotiations may be common for women working in other geographical locations, women who work in Winnipeg experience the contradiction of working in a conservative province, which undergirds their experiences of stigma in their interpersonal relationships, while also offering them some physical protection through no-contact laws. The rigorous enforcement of Manitoba law that prevented physical contact between dancers and patrons benefited dancers who were not

comfortable with performing lap dances. However, the rationale behind upholding these laws was not to respect the bodily autonomy of women working in the exotic dance industry, but to protect the conservative values of the community. Furthermore, when strip club patrons in Winnipeg cross the line and touch a dancer, the dancers are often blamed for breaking the rules, which speaks to the true purpose behind no contact laws.

Additionally, as I explain further in the next chapter, the element of travel that is required for dancers who work in Winnipeg, which does not seem to be a significant part of stripping in other geographical locations, impacted how dancers negotiated stigma in their relationships with family members. While dancers who work in other locations might be able to more easily hide their occupation from relatives, dancers who work in Winnipeg must find ways to explain their extended absence from the city when they work out of town. Thus, the organization of stripping labour in Winnipeg influenced how exotic dancers here experienced stigma in their lives.

In this chapter, I outlined what it is like to work as an exotic dancer in Winnipeg, Manitoba's current social, legal, and political culture. The status of stripping in Winnipeg as a stigmatized occupation is reflected in laws and regulations, as well as our treatment as independent contractors. This all contributed to dancers' stigmatization, positioning them as abject bodies, which in turn, impacted the ways in which exotic dancers negotiated stigma in their interpersonal relationships. In the next chapter, I discuss how the stigma of stripping operated in women's relationships with their relatives.

## Chapter 4 “Bad Parents make Good Strippers”: Stigma in Dancers Relationships with Family Members

### The Family Gathering

*My phone rings while I'm working a night shift at Gilded Cage one Friday evening. I see that it's my mom, so I let it go to voicemail. It's been two years, and so far I've successfully been able to prevent her from finding out that I work as an exotic dancer, and she isn't about to find out now. Plus, the bar doesn't like it when you answer the phone while you're on the floor. A few minutes later, I see that she's also texted me: "call me back immediately. Love, Mom." I roll my eyes. "Jeez mom, I know it's you. You don't have to sign a text message," I think to myself. I figure I better call her back before she gets worried. She worries a lot. I leave the floor and go upstairs to the change room, where the club music won't give me away, and call her back. "Hi, mom, what's so important?" "Aunty Jocelyn wants to have a family get together at her house next Sunday; do you think you can make it?" My mom says. "Oh, I don't know. I'm pretty busy with school stuff these days. I probably won't be able to," I reply. "But it's been ages since they've seen you!" Two years, to be exact. "And you missed the last few gatherings that Aunty Jocelyn had. She really wants you to come. She's making perogies." I sighed. I really did miss everyone. But was it worth the risk? I love my family, but I knew I'd have to lie to them when they asked me about my Ph.D. How do you explain to your Christian mother, aunts, uncles, and cousins that you are working as an exotic dancer as a research method? No, I couldn't tell them the truth. But I couldn't lie to them either. I almost give in and say yes to the invitation, but... "I'm sorry Mom. I'd love to go, but I really can't make it. Apologize to Aunty Jocelyn for me." I shed a few tears after hanging up the phone before pulling myself together for the rest of my shift. I choose to remain floating somewhere in between truth and lies.*

### Daddy Issues

During my fieldwork for this project, I came across a meme on social media that was shared by Tits and Sass, a sex worker advocacy website, which was originally posted by the actor George Takei. It depicted a shadowy outline of a woman gripping a pole with the words “without bad parents, there'd be few good strippers” written across it in bold (Image III).



**Image 3: George Takei Meme**

As I discussed in the first chapter of my thesis, conceptualizing stigma as systemic violence in the service of maintaining social boundaries, as Parker and Aggleton (2003) do, means appreciating that, in addition to the laws and regulations I discussed in Chapter Three, the media plays a key role in reproducing, communicating, legitimating, and normalizing stigma (Johnson 2006). Moreover, understanding stigmatized communities as abject bodies that society fears and rejects means that analyzing a variety of media, including memes, can be an effective way to learn more about entrenched social anxieties surrounding erotic labour (Kristeva 1982; Jiwani and Young 2006; Hallgrimsdottir, Phillips, and Benoit 2006; Johnson 2006; Hugill 2010; Grant 2008). From my perspective, George Takei's meme conveyed several implicit messages about women who work as exotic dancers and their parents.

First, in order for this meme to operate as a vehicle for humour, working as an exotic dancer must be understood as an inherently undesirable career choice for women, and the women who work as strippers must be understood as “damaged” or “broken.” Second, the parents of women who strip are positioned as deficient in some way, either as individuals who did not give their daughters enough care, perhaps even physically or sexually abusing them or as having failed to exert enough control over their daughter’s sexuality. In relation to these messages, there are also underlying middle-class values at play, where it is hinted that perhaps “good” parents would’ve invested in their daughter’s education in order to “keep her off the pole” (Frank 2006). Zelizer’s (2011, 90) theory that the ways in which one spends money does “relational work” can help us understand the class implications of the meme’s message.

According to Zelizer (2011), when parents set aside money for their children’s education instead of spending it on themselves, for example, they are solidifying their relationship to their children. I would also argue that parents who invest in their children’s education are establishing themselves as “good” according to middle-class values, and thus, in theory, preventing them from taking lower class jobs that might bring shame to the family or threaten their social status. The two equally popular stereotypes that “dancers are unintelligent” and that “dancers are working their way through college” are both perpetuated by this meme. It is assumed that dancer’s parents were either too irresponsible to pay for their daughter’s education, or they could not afford it, thus driving the daughter into stripping as a last resort.

In other words, this meme not only tells us that the parents of strippers are “bad” because their daughters traversed the boundaries of feminine propriety, but that “good” strippers are, in fact, “bad” women and the inevitable result of a dysfunctional “low class” family, who have

themselves used money in morally reproachable ways. The dancer is understood to be earning “dirty” money because her parents spent their money in a “dirty” way.

In reality, of course, the role that economics play in women’s relationships with their parents, and the impact that this has on their decision to work in the exotic dance industry is much more complex than this meme implies. My mother paid for most of my education, for example, yet I still chose to work as a dancer. Nevertheless, the women in my study were cognizant of these tacit cultural messages about exotic dancers, which were often couched in jokes and media portrayals. Dancers are also aware that people might perceive them as coming from a “fucked up” family whenever their occupation is disclosed, as much as it angered them. This is a perception that their families were aware of too, which had the potential to cause a considerable amount of tension between dancers and their family members.

Indeed, the exotic dancer who shared the George Takei meme on the Tits and Sass website noted how her own mother, who was supportive of her choice of work, was saddened by the meme. I considered showing it to my mother to hear her thoughts on the matter as well, but ultimately decided against it because I did not want to draw attention to the fact that I was working as a stripper. Although my mother knew that my research project was about exotic dancers, I was always very vague on the details, leaving her to believe that I had worked as a driver for the duration of my fieldwork. The rest of my family knew even less. I found maintaining this level of secrecy exhausting, causing me to avoid family gatherings and social events, lest I am asked about my doctoral research. Thus, my experience of stigma and its impact on my relationships with relatives was similar to other dancers who participated in my study, which I discuss throughout this chapter.

As I discussed in Chapter One, most studies on exotic dance mention managing stigma as a problematic and inevitable aspect of working as a stripper, but, as other exotic dance scholars have pointed out, the majority of these studies do not unpack the meaning of this stigma in women's relationships with their families (Dewey 2011; Bradley-Engen and Hobbs 2010; Frank 2007). Bruckert (2002, 133) points out that even when studies exclusively address stigma in exotic dancer's lives, scholars tend to interpret dancers' methods of managing stigma as "an indicator of self-delusion or loss of dignity" (see Thompson, Harred, and Burks 2003; Thompson and Harred 1992; Phileratou 2006; Wesley 2003). Instead, as Bruckert (2002, 133) argues, "there is a wide range of possible responses to stigmatization" and it cannot be assumed that all dancers will manage or understand their stigmatization in the same way, or that their understanding of the stigma of erotic labour will not change over time. This complexity was evident in the way that the women in my study discussed their negotiation of stigma in interpersonal relationships. Importantly, Bruckert (2002, 133) points out that stigma has a very real material impact on the lives of women who work as exotic dancers, so that the management of stigma is not just theoretical, but is also the "negotiation of consequences." These consequences touch all areas of a dancer's life and can be economic, psychological, physical, and social (Bruckert 2002; Hannem and Bruckert 2012; Parker and Aggleton 2003).

As Parker and Aggleton (2003) contend, a conceptual framework for understanding stigma as systemic violence must include an analysis of the ways in which it operates to isolate individuals from supportive social networks, such as friends and family, linking this to the broader economic and political implications of such isolation. Parker and Aggleton (2003, 21) postulate that "stigmatization and discrimination must be reconceived as less a matter of individual or even social psychology than as a question of power, inequality and exclusion." Or,

as Kristeva (1982) might argue, dancers represent the abject body or “the Other,” which society reacts to with repulsion, thus seeking to distance themselves from them. Indeed, this aversion is evident in the stories exotic dancers told me about their experiences negotiating the stigma of stripping with their relatives, particularly when dancers felt their parents might disown them unless they quit stripping. Here, Kat and Ivy tell me about their parent’s reactions to the revelation that they worked as strippers:

Kat: My dad didn’t talk to me until he found out that I wasn’t dancing anymore. He just straight up refused to even acknowledge my existence. My mom would call me once in a while, but there were a good four or five months that I just did not talk to my parents at all. And that was really hard because I’ve always been pretty close to my parents.

Ivy: Oh God, she hated it so much at first. She was just like, “you have ruined my life I can’t believe you did this to me.” She cried herself to sleep every night. She hated it. It was like I killed her. Or I tried to kill her or something. She just thought it was the worst thing that any daughter could ever do to their mother. Like I betrayed her in the worst way.

For the women in my study, relationships with family members were fraught with confusion and frustration because the pride they took in their labour was diminished by negative reactions to their occupation from the people they cared about. Many women, myself included, when confronted by family members, found themselves making excuses for choosing to work as a dancer, perhaps emphasizing through moral reasoning that they did it to pay for school, to pay off debts, or that there was no physical contact involved in their work. Even if they did not personally feel that physical contact during private dances was “wrong” or that someone needed a particular reason to dance, they were also aware that their family members might find these details relevant.

The knee-jerk responses to confrontation that many dancers described to me, I argue, are indicative of the power of socio-cultural condemnation related to the “taint” of money. As I

mentioned in Chapter One, by this, I am referring to the impurity associated with money when money is used in morally reproachable ways and is connected to eroticized emotional labour (Zeilizer 2000, 2011; Weldon 2010; Bott 2006; Brennan 2004a, 2004b; Dewey 2011). But their responses to condemnation also demonstrate women's keen awareness of the potential fallout of expressing opinions that contradict this narrative, such as possessing a sense of pride in one's skill as an exotic dancer (Bruckert 2002; Jeffrey and MacDonald 2006; Dewey 2011; Weldon 2010; Willman 2010).

Bruckert (2002, 140) notes that it was difficult for her to ascertain exotic dancers' enjoyment of their occupation in her study because "to identify the job as pleasurable would render the dancer truly disreputable." In other words, to cite anything other than purely economic motivation for her choice of work would be viewed as taboo, and render her more susceptible to judgement and derision (Bruckert 2002). For the women I worked with, the need to minimize any potential damage that might be done to familial relationships was often prioritized over personal feelings of solidarity with other sex workers and expressing their positive feelings about the work that they do (Bruckert 2002; Dewey 2011). Dancers were very adept at deconstructing and analyzing the stigmatizing messages they encountered on a daily basis. However, they also had to assume that their family members had not done the same, and would revert to stereotypes as a means of protecting themselves when they felt threatened or judged, a common and practical tactic for stigmatized individuals, as I discussed in more detail in Chapter One (Bruckert 2002; Goffman 1963; Dewey 2011).

While there are no studies that specifically address stigma in exotic dancers' relationships with parents, siblings, cousins, and other family members, anthropologist Susan Dewey's (2011) ethnographic study of women who work as exotic dancers in upstate New York focused on how

women navigated the difficulties associated with motherhood. The role of family was also discussed in anthropologist Suzana Maia's (2012) study of Brazilian women who migrated to New York City to work as exotic dancers. However, negotiating stigma did not seem to be a significant issue in these relationships, as many women came to work as exotic dancers through women in their social networks, including sisters or cousins who had worked as exotic dancers themselves. The women in Maia's (2012) study certainly had to contend with stigma when they started working as exotic dancers in New York. However, they did not appear to experience this stigma in the same ways that women in my study did in Winnipeg, i.e., as damaging relationships with family members and requiring the careful management of information for fear of relatives discovering where they worked.

Additionally, sociologist Catherine M. Roach's (2007) study of stripping in popular culture briefly considers how the adverse impact on dancers' relationships with family members is one of the most significant "costs" of stripping, although she does not use the word stigma to describe this phenomenon. She states, "Alienation from family may, in fact, be the most painful cost of stripping. Family relations are almost inevitably strained around the issue of a daughter's stripping," indicating the need for more qualitative research in this area (Roach 2007, 58). Although Roach (2007) identifies the impact on family relationships as a "cost" of stripping, it is important to question the normalizing of this stigma in dancers' relationships with their relatives. In other words, researchers must interrogate the assumption that involvement in erotic labour should ultimately result in strained or violent relationships with family. Instead, we should be asking ourselves why we should accept any form of violence in women's lives at all. As I suggested in Chapter One, one of the most significant drawbacks to past studies of erotic labour is their suggestion that stigma is an inevitable set of consequences to individual choice, rather

than a form of normalized systemic violence against women. My research findings problematize the idea that violence should be “expected” for some individuals, and not for others.

Although this topic has not been directly addressed in the academic literature, personal accounts of the effect of stripping on women’s relationships with their family members exist in the multitude of biographical novels, short stories, and autoethnographies written by current and former sex workers, thus demonstrating a potential research gap, and indicating one of the ways in which women resist stigma by presenting alternate narratives to the pop culture tropes that are often used in the mainstream media (Queen 1997; Eaves 2002; Ray 2014; Van Lissum 2012; Sterry and Martin 2009; Cody 2005; Egan, Frank, and Johnson 2006; Blissbomb 2010; Burauna 2001; Nagel 1997; Matsson 1995).

Initially, I did not intend to explore how the stigma of erotic labour affected dancers’ relationships with their parents, siblings, and other relatives. When I first proposed this research, my primary focus was on how stigma might impact dancers’ romantic relationships. The ways in which stigma is experienced by dancers in romantic relationships remains an important part of my dissertation that I discuss in the next chapter. However, after several interviews with participants, talking with Billie and Scarlett, and my personal struggles with what to tell my family about my methodological switch from driving to dancing, it became apparent that I would need to address this new line of inquiry.

During interviews, women would describe their struggles with what to tell their families, and parents in particular, about their occupation. While the extent of their parents’ reactions varied, there was not one woman that I interviewed who did not experience some conflict with her family when it was revealed that she worked as an exotic dancer. I found this to be the case even with women who were otherwise “out” and proud about working as exotic dancers. Indeed,

Bruckert (2002, 134) found that “even the most defiant deconstructors are sensitive to the fact that disclosure may require others, particularly parents, to engage in identity management.”

Additionally, two out of the six dancers that I interviewed had children, adding another layer of complexity to this negotiation. Kat had a teenage stepdaughter, while Misty had a son and daughter both under the age of twelve. Because parenting, and motherhood, in particular, is seen to be at odds with sex work, Kat and Misty faced various dilemmas, not only regarding what to tell their children about their occupation but also controlling what other family members told their children (Dewey 2011). Thus, negotiating stigma with relatives was also about maintaining a sense of autonomy when it came to parenting their children. As this chapter shows, many women in stripping work agonize over how to tell their families about the job they have chosen and worry about their parents disowning them, their children being ridiculed, or co-parents threatening to use stripping against them in a custody dispute.

Bruckert (2002, 139) states that “the taint of occupational location is not restricted to exotic dancers” or other sex workers. There are certainly other forms of labour that society tends to deem unimportant and/or degrading, especially other jobs in the service industry (Hood 1988; Bergman and Chalkey 2007; Grandy 2008; Hannem and Bruckert 2012). However, the extremity and particular manifestations of stigma attached to sex work and its gendered nature is distinctive (Pheterson 1993; McClintock 1993). Research has shown that sex workers are frequent targets of physical and systemic violence globally, especially if they are women or transgender (O’Doherty 2011; Panchanadeswaran et al. 2010; Ngo et al. 2007; Orchard 2007; Day 2007; Dalla 2001; Scambler 2007; Wesley 2002, 2006; Kinnell 2013; Monto 2014; Buschi 2014; Hudson and Van der Meulen 2012; Anderson et. al. 2015; Allan and Bennett 2000; Kelly and Dewey 2011; Wirtz et al. 2015; Thaller and Cimino 2017; Hugill 2010; Ferris 2015; Potterat et al. 2004; Maticka-

Tyndale et al. 1999; Sanders and Campbell 2007; Kurtz et al. 2004; Sallmann 2010; Brown et al. 2006; Comack and Seshia 2010).

In this chapter, I explore how stigma played out in exotic dancers' relationships with their families. Throughout my thesis, I contend that understanding stigma as violence is about more than the uncomfortable conflict exotic dancers have in their interpersonal relationships. It is about the social exclusion, isolation, and the violent societal view of dancers as disposable that is reproduced in these relationships that causes women to suffer deeply. With this in mind, what are the strategies that women used to negotiate this stigma and how do these strategies link to the broader argument of my dissertation? Specifically, how does the stigma that dancers experience in their relationships with relatives support my argument that the stigma of erotic labour stems from the idea that "stripping money" is tainted because mixing erotics and commerce in blatant ways amounts to the combination of the sacred and the profane? Furthermore, how does this contribute to my argument that stigma is a form of systemic violence against women more broadly? Additionally, I argue that the stigma experienced by dancers in their relationships with relatives is one of the many ways society disciplines women who do not deploy their sexuality in ways that are deemed "appropriate" or "legitimate," specifically when these ways are "tainted" by capitalist economics (Pheterson 1993). In other words, I maintain that the stigma that comes with working as an exotic dancer operates to isolate women from their social networks, especially family members, which severely curtails their economic and social mobility and limits future opportunities, leaving them vulnerable to oppression and exploitation (Parker and Aggleton 2003; Wardlow 2006; Scambler 2007; Campbell, Nair, and Maimane 2006).

When women were neglected by their families, they often tried to find ways to return to the fold, either by quitting dancing for a period, or at least telling their family that they left, even when they hadn't.

The way parenting is perceived in North American culture as one of the most significant factors in whether or not a child is "successful," rather than intersections of oppression such as class, race, and gender, is relevant to this analysis (Dewey 2011). Because of this cultural perception, the families of exotic dancers also experienced the label of "bad parents," something that the women in my study desperately wanted to avoid.

### **Understanding Stigma in Family Relationships**

In order to understand this stigma, I draw on the work of sociologist Hazel May (2000), whose ethnographic research looked at the impact of stigma on the relatives of individuals convicted of murder, as well as linking it to Parker and Aggleton's (2003) theoretical framework for understanding stigma as systemic violence. Although drawing a comparison between working in the exotic dance industry and murder might seem extreme, when dancers described the reactions of family members to me, I found the stigma of both stripping and murder striking in their similarities. While the general public would most likely objectively consider a murder a far more heinous act than participation in the exotic dance industry, the way some dancers in my study described their family's reaction to stripping revealed that comparisons to how family members in May's (2000) study reacted to their murderer relatives are not as far-fetched as one might imagine. Several dancers described how some family members reacted with shock and repulsion. For instance, as in her above statement, Ivy described her mother's initial reaction to her dancing using the words "it was like I killed her." Scarlett's cousin imagined deeply exploitative, violent, and agency-less labour when she told Scarlett that stripping was "two steps away from slavery."

Billie also mentioned how her now deceased mother would “roll over up there” if she had known Billie was working as a dancer. Furthermore, much like the stigma attached to stripping, May (2000, 199) argues that “stigma is derived from commonsense notions” about certain behaviours or identities.

The dancers I spoke with mentioned how outsiders, including non-dancer friends and family, judged and stereotyped them because they just “didn’t get it” or “could never really understand” what stripping is and what it entails. Ivy explained to me how she perceives how individuals who do not work in the exotic dance industry, including her family, misunderstand stripping. In her words: “I don’t think they take us seriously. I think that they, like my family, looked at it as I said ‘I’m a stripper.’ But what they heard was ‘you’re a hooker.’ That’s what they heard. And I think that that’s the way that people, when they’re not from that world, that’s what they think.” Billie also described why she never told her mother that she worked as an exotic dancer before her death, telling me, “I don’t think she would even understand at the time because she just wasn’t of that [pause] *world*.”

The reactions of family members, much like the reactions of other people in dancers’ lives, to a dancer’s disclosure of her occupation reveals simplistic narratives that are clearly informed by “commonsense notions” of what dancing is or what exotic dancers are like (May 2000). As Frank (2002, 38) has pointed out, “there is a lot of misinformation about exotic dance, and the sex industry more generally, circulating in the public sphere,” which is something that the women in my study were well aware of. However, beyond this misinformation, my research shows that dancers’ family members’ reactions also reflect deeply ingrained cultural beliefs about women’s ownership of their bodies and sexuality, as well as patriarchal views about what a woman’s role in the family and society should be. Thus, it is not only negative stereotypes about

exotic dancers that inform women's relatives' reactions to stripping but the perceived violation of traditional womanhood and familial obligation that involvement in this occupation entails. The fear of being "tainted" by association with a family member who exchanged sexualized services for money seemed to be a significant factor in how dancers relatives subsequently decided to manage their relationship to them. Especially with parents, sometimes this meant cutting ties with their daughter and refusing to speak to her until she quit dancing to distance themselves from the unexpected stigma they now faced as supposedly "bad parents." Parents' attempts at forcing women to quit their occupation through such drastic measures is indicative of how stigma manifests violently in dancer's relationships with family members.

Even in cases where women were able to quell some of their parents' fears about their work by giving them information that contradicted negative stereotypes, for example, dancers still sensed their parents' shame when they were pressured to lie about their occupation to other family members or their parent's friends. This shame is reflected in an excerpt from the interview that I did with Lucy:

Lucy: I tell everyone about my job, I'm not embarrassed about it. My mom doesn't like me telling people though.

Jacenta: Oh really?

Lucy: Like when we went out with her friend last night, she's like, "if she asks what you do, just stick with the story we use for grandma and grandpa." And I'm like, "ok."

Jacenta: What's the story you use for grandma and grandpa?

Lucy: I work as a secretary slash taking care of accounts for my boyfriend's company.

This excerpt was taken from the very beginning of our interview. Lucy was aware from prior conversations that we had while working together that I was interested in researching the ways in which stigma impacted the lives of women who worked as exotic dancers. It was apparent that she wanted to make it clear from the beginning of the interview that she took pride

in her work by asserting that she was not embarrassed to tell people what she did for a living. However, she also immediately countered this by explaining the exceptions she made to this rule at her mother's request. Specifically, not to tell her grandparents or her mother's friend about her work as an exotic dancer, but instead, to invent a cover story that would put Lucy in a more "respectable" (relatively low paying) job that is frequently filled by women, while simultaneously positioning Lucy as a supportive girlfriend.

How the women in my study characterized their feelings about dancing, then, was not straightforward. All of the women that I interviewed and interacted with for this project took pride in their work and stood behind their decision to work as a dancer, no matter what their reasons were for it. However, the consequences of the stigma attached to that labour made it risky for them to always openly express this pride. Telling people what they did for a living in casual conversations was a source of anxiety for dancers, but this was exacerbated with their loved ones whose opinions and feelings they cared about, even when these views were contrary to their own.

Many Canadian women who do not work as exotic dancers have also "broken the rules" at one time or another when it comes to the societal definition of proper feminine comportment or family duties. Indeed, many of the stereotyped behaviours associated with exotic dancers, when taken together, are quite encompassing and could describe almost any woman. However, women who do not work as exotic dancers can more easily distance themselves from much of the violence that comes with engaging in these behaviours because their identity is not stigmatized. Similarly, in May's (2000) study, even when confronted with statistics about murderers, who are usually close friends or relatives of the individuals they kill, the general public still tends to understand murderers as monstrous strangers who lurk in the shadows

waiting to kill anyone who crosses their path. The relatives of murderers, then, who were logically the most at risk for violence against them, were often blamed for the murderer's actions, rather than seen as potential victims. Even when the family members of murderers stayed out of the public eye, they were often subjected to "abusive telephone calls, damage to property, or passersby who peered into their homes" (May 2000, 208). In other words, the stereotype of the murderer is so entrenched that facts and statistics about actual murderers are not enough to ease fears or uncouple the stigma of the murderer from the murderer's family.

Stereotypes about exotic dancers are also deeply entrenched in western culture, as reflected in media depictions of women who strip that have hardly changed in several decades (Johnson 2006). Sociologist Merri Lisa Johnson (2006, 161) argues that "stripper bashing" frequently occurs in the media and that, "how people think about strippers and how strippers are represented in film and television constitute significant elements of the stripper's work environment." According to Johnson (2006) "stripper bashing" in the media includes jokes about violence against women who work as exotic dancers and comedy about their murders.

In 2017, I would now add social media memes, videos, and posts, to television and film representations of "stripper bashing." The prevalence of stripper bashing on the Internet is important because every dancer that participated in my study had some form of social media and a smartphone with which they could access social media twenty-four hours a day. As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, I argue that media can also be understood as a "symbolic system" that disseminates, reinforces, and normalizes discrimination and violence against stigmatized communities (Parker and Aggleton 2003, 18). Kristeva's (1982) theory that the abject must be eliminated in order to maintain social order applies here as well. Violent "comedy" like this is tolerable, or sometimes even encouraged, in our culture because exotic

dancers are “the Other,” and their blatant combination of money and eroticism is considered “disgusting” because it disrupts the sacred divide between “dirty” capitalistic interest and the “purity” of intimate human relationships (Illouz 2007; Zelizer 2000, 2011; Kristeva 1982).

During my fieldwork, I came across countless memes, posts, and videos that made “jokes” about strippers that included elements of violence, coercion, and repugnance, along with accusations of bad parenting (whether it was the dancer who was the presumed parent or the parents of the dancer). Aside from the “bad parents” meme posted by George Takei that I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, one of the most memorable social media posts I came across during my research was about a Mother’s Day card made by Hallmark in 2015. The outside of the card read “I’m not a stripper. I’m not in prison.” And the inside stated, “Nice work, Mom! Happy Mother’s Day.” (Image IV) I saw pictures of this card posted by several participants and other dancers that I know who also included a critique of the card’s message.



**Image 4: Mother's Day Card**

While these women received many comments on their posts supporting their perspective that the card was insulting (usually from other dancers), they also had numerous others that took offence at their offence. “It’s supposed to be funny” “learn to take a joke” “don’t take it so seriously” were all common responses. Some dancers who had a wider following received far more vicious responses to their critiques of the card. These responses demonstrate that violent comedy about strippers is not only considered tolerable/desirable culturally but that defense of this kind of comedy will be used as an excuse to perpetrate more violence.

While what one finds funny is certainly subjective, Johnson (2006, 178) argues that “the ubiquitousness and extremity of stripper bashing needs to be cataloged because strippers move through the world with the burden of these images in our minds and the ideas they plant in our customers and family members.” The words on that Mother’s Day card are far less humorous to women who confront stigma, negative stereotypes, and “jokes” like these on a daily basis, and for whom conflict with the people they love due to this stigma is a lived reality. Even the more serious news items that I’ve encountered over the years about the deaths or victimization of women involved in adult entertainment contained headlines that drew attention to the victim’s occupation, as if to suggest that violence is an expected consequence of sexual labour (see Mitchell 2006; Singh 2010; Edmonton Journal 1996, 2011, 2012; Toronto Star 1985; Seymore 2011a, 2011b; Moncton Times 2009). Thus, dancers’ family members, like most people, likely had well developed pre-conceived notions of stripping and exotic dancers before being told that one of their relatives was involved in the industry, and their reactions were filtered through this lens.

In the next section, I describe how the women in my study navigated the stigma associated with stripping when their family members initially discovered that they were working as exotic dancers.

### **Finding Out**

Jacenta: When you first started dancing, did you tell your parents?

Kat: Hell no. Oh god, no.

Jacenta: So how did your mother find out? Did you tell her?

Ivy: No, no, no, no, I didn't tell her.

Out of the six dancers that I interviewed for this project, only Misty told her parents that she was working as a dancer from the beginning of her career, and this was because she needed them for childcare. For Scarlett, Billie, Kat, Ivy, and Lucy, their parents' knowledge about their involvement in the exotic dance industry was a far more convoluted process. Most women did not plan on telling their parents that they were working as exotic dancers when they first started their jobs. Instead, Lucy, Ivy, Kat, and Billie's parents found out about their daughter's jobs when they were "outed" by another family member, friend, or acquaintance. Ivy describes how her mother discovered that she worked as a dancer:

There was a guy at Kisses when I first started. I found out he worked with my mom. I never knew what he did for a living, so I asked him 'What do you do?' He's like, 'I work at Salesmart.' And I went 'Oh, fuck.' He's like, 'Why?' I said, 'My mom works at Salesmart.' He kinda looked at me, like, [gasp] 'is your mom Tammy?' I said, 'Yeah that's my mom.' It was game over from there. He promised me he wouldn't tell her, but he did.

Kat, who initially told her parents she was working as a waitress at the now closed strip club Metropolis in order to account for the similar hours she would be working as a dancer, describes how her parents found out that she worked as an exotic dancer in a similar manner:

This guy Cory, I went to school with his younger brother, he saw me on stage at Metropolis. So Cory goes and tells his dad. I told him, 'Do not say anything to your parents. Your brother knows. I don't even care if your sister knows. Just

don't tell your fucking parents.' So his mom called my parents, but they didn't answer. She left a message on the answering machine and didn't say who she was. She just called and said, 'I just called because I'm a concerned neighbor. I just wanted to let you know that your daughter is running all over the city showing men her naked body. I'm worried for your mortal souls. I'll pray for you.' And then that was the end of the message.

Billie, on the other hand, confided in her sister about her new job as an exotic dancer:

Nobody knew at first. My sister did. My sister and I, we were never really close. We still aren't. It would be nice if we were, but she's a different person than I am. We've always been like that. She was like, 'Oh I can get Billie in trouble now. Yay!'

Lucy also describes how her parents, who are divorced and do not live together, each found out about her dancing:

I didn't have a job at the time, and my dad was getting suspicious because I lived with him and my brother and I kept taking cabs to work and back from work. It was winter when I started, and it was cold. So he was like, 'Where are you getting all this money? I thought you didn't have a job. Where do you have money to take cabs?' I'm like, 'Oh, I saved my money.' Meanwhile, I'd be going and working at Kisses. Then my dad found out because I left a schedule in my room when I moved out. I moved out one day when he wasn't home because we were arguing. I found an apartment, and my mom helped me move. So I just left, and I didn't talk to him for a while. He found out because I left one of my dancer schedules in my room with little odds and ends that I left there. Then my mom found out because my brother's friend told her. Like, what an idiot.

For Lucy, Kat, Billie, and Ivy, control over information about their lives was eroded when individuals who were either trusted with this knowledge betrayed their trust, or other members of a dancer's social network discovered this information and used it against her wishes by telling her family that she was working as a dancer when they were specifically asked not to. This angered these women because they felt that it was not anyone's place to tell their families but their own. They expressed frustration that the individuals who outed them to their family members did not seem to comprehend the consequences of their actions. No longer able to decide when and where, or even if, they would tell their families about their occupation, they

were put on the defensive and forced to confront their parents, whose only knowledge about stripping was likely negative.

Scarlett and Misty were the only women who had the opportunity to tell their families that they were dancing themselves, probably because they informed them early on. Misty was the only dancer who told her parents from the very beginning, and Scarlett told her family soon after she began dancing.

Jacenta: When you first started dancing did you wait a while to tell your family?

Misty: No. I told my parents because I needed a babysitter.

Scarlett: About five weeks after I started, I believe, I told my family that I was dancing and it was just the worst EVER. It was awful.

None of the women I interviewed were able to successfully hide their work as exotic dancers from their families for the entire duration of their careers.

As I discussed in the previous chapter, Winnipeg is a mid-sized city, yet it is relatively isolated and has a small town feel. This means that it is far more difficult to keep secrets and hide information from social networks, which is a significant factor as to why the dancers in my study were not able to hide their work for long periods of time. Eventually, someone would find out, word would spread, and the news would ultimately reach their family members. Furthermore, as I noted in Chapter Three, Manitoba is considered a socially conservative province. Contrary to popular cultural mythology that suggests that women who become dancers do so out of desperation and always come from poverty, the dancers in my study, like many white Manitoban women, were raised in at least somewhat conservative, middle class, and/or Christian homes, as I discuss in Chapter Two. This is reflected in other ethnographies of erotic labour that identify the presence of women in the industry with a variety of class backgrounds, even though exotic dance

is considered a working class occupation (Bruckert 2002; Maia 2012; Frank 2002; Trautner and Collette 2010; Trautner 2005; Roach 2007; Colosi 2010; Egan 2006a; Bradley-Engen 2008).

Because Ivy and Kat both came from small religious and agricultural communities outside of Winnipeg, news of their involvement in the exotic dance industry in their hometowns was fodder for gossip and an easy excuse to shame these women and their family members.

Ivy told me how her sister and brothers felt about her working as a dancer, which seemed to be heavily influenced by how other individuals in their community taunted her siblings with this information:

Jen was disgusted by it because her friends go to strip clubs. I don't know which ones because I've never seen them, but apparently they've seen me. She was like, "My friends have seen your vagina. That's disgusting, I'm disgusted." James was living in Walkersville. You know Walkersville, small town. They were like, "Your sister's a stripper," and that was embarrassing for him to hear. And Aaron was just embarrassed. So they were all kind of embarrassed of it.

Although the other dancers I interviewed were originally from Winnipeg and did not mention religion as a factor in their families' responses to stripping, their explanations demonstrate that their families were clearly impacted by the deeply conservative middle-class values that are pervasive in Manitoba's dominant European culture. Thus, each dancer's difficulties in hiding her work and the family disruption that ensued after discovering this work must be understood in this context.

Ivy and Kat describe how they felt religious/conservative culture and values played a role in their families' reactions to their choice to work as exotic dancers:

Ivy: I came from a very religious background. My family is Christian Mennonites. Stripping is prostituting. That's it. There's no difference. That is how it is. You are stripping, you are having sex for money. So when my mom found out that I was dancing she didn't talk to me for a year. I kept telling her, you know, mom, you don't understand. This isn't having sex for money. I'm trying to make money to live. I kept trying to explain it to her.

Kat: My dad is very straight and narrow. We just did not see eye to eye on anything. He's got a heart of gold. He's a wonderful man. He's just very set in his ways. He's the youngest of four children, and they're all girls. His dad was born in 1919, raised on a farm. We're a homesteader kinda people. His mom, her father, was a preacher in town and could carry fifty lbs of flour on his shoulders all the way across the town. I come from a line of hard men. And then there's my dad, who is the fourth child out of three girls. His parents clearly had children until they had a boy, so he was the shining glory. My dad could do no wrong.

Jacenta: I guess for his background it's kind of a very hyper-masculine "boys will be boys" kind of attitude?

Kat: Yep. That's the thing, too. Strippers are no better than whores. So it's just like, I'm showing these men my body, I might as well be fucking them.

These statements demonstrate the pervasiveness of powerful stereotypes about stripping that could not be overcome by simply explaining that working as an exotic dancer was "not prostitution," as well as the apparent incompatibility of working in any form of sex work while remaining a "good" daughter. According to Ivy and Kat, the intricacies of stripping and the differences between diverse occupations that could be held under the umbrella of sex work were lost on their family members. Or, if the diversity of jobs available on the continuum of sex work were not lost on women's family members, they did not care to know these differences because they considered stripping to be equally as shameful as any other occupation available in the milieu of sexual labour. Thus, Kat and Ivy's voices are silenced after their occupation is revealed to their family members. No longer "good" daughters whose word could be trusted, Kat and Ivy's lived experiences of stripping are rendered invisible under the powerful sense of disgust for sexual labour experienced by their family members.

As I have argued in previous chapters, women are reduced to abject bodies when they are revealed to have traversed the boundaries of feminine propriety, a process of symbolic violence. Women's family members are complicit in this violence, but they also grieve their daughter's abjection because they, too, are now stigmatized as "bad" parents by association. The family members of exotic dancers must reconcile the love they have for their daughters with the disgust

they feel for stripping, which, according to the women I interviewed, was an ongoing process fraught with many struggles.

At the same time, Ivy and Kat's statements reveal how women might endeavor to distance themselves from other forms of sex work where a greater deal of physical contact, and thus stigma, may be involved (Dewey 2011; Bruckert 2002).<sup>21</sup>

Scarlett offered an analysis of the reasoning behind distancing oneself from prostitution:

When it comes to stigma it's kind of unfortunate because I feel like the "we're not prostitutes" is kind of just taking the stigma that we feel and being like, no, that's their stigma. We're not prostitutes. We are cool. I still feel very strongly like, no, I'm not here to suck anyone's dick. But that's cool if people want to. Or get that service. That's ok. But I do feel like it can be really divisive and just sort of like passing the stigma buck on to someone else.

Rather than suggest that dancers should not be stigmatized because they are not prostitutes, Scarlett posited that this was only "passing the stigma buck" and that this kind of attitude towards prostitution would not compel people to interrogate the underlying reasons why stigma against sex workers, including exotic dancers, exists in the first place. This understanding of stripping stigma was not a typical perspective held by the women that I interviewed. When I asked women which stereotypes about exotic dancers upset them the most, Misty, Ivy, and Billie immediately responded that they hated that people thought they had sex for money. While Kat and Lucy identified other stereotypes that bothered them the most, they all at least mentioned at some point during the interview that they did not have sex for money, especially when describing confrontations with individuals who disapproved of their occupation. Something like "it's not like I'm having sex for money" was a typical justification made by women when they spoke about negative interactions with friends, family, acquaintances, and strangers. In the past, I have made similar arguments while under pressure to offer an explanation about stripping to individuals in my social networks.

As I have argued earlier in this chapter, reverting to stereotypes or scapegoating other sex workers when dancers are confronted by family members does not mean that dancers are ashamed of their work, or even that they feel that other forms of sex work are “wrong.” What it does reveal is that women perceived the potential dangers of identifying oneself as an exotic dancer, especially if that job is understood to include the same activities as prostitution. It was evident in my conversations with the women in my study that many of them felt that they could potentially get their families to accept exotic dance as a legitimate and worthwhile occupation based on this notion if they could only educate them about the realities of working as an exotic dancer. The practicalities of putting this idea into action, however, were far more complex.

In the next section, I discuss the intricate ways that dancers grappled with their families reactions to their knowledge of them working in the adult entertainment industry.

### **Don't Ask, Don't Tell: Lies, Half-Truths, and Silence**

Scarlett: So many people are like ‘you shouldn't lie to your parents.’ But I think the only reason I would tell them the truth is to make my life easier, and so sort of alleviate my guilt for lying. And they would feel like crap if they knew, so I don't.

As I described in the last section, most of the dancers I interviewed were caught off guard when confronted by their parents about their work, which may have exacerbated negative reactions to it because women did not have the opportunity to explain what stripping entailed before their parents formed opinions about their daughters' involvement. Weldon (2010) and Jeffery and MacDonald (2006) have pointed out in their analysis of other forms of sex work that, in most cases, people are given the benefit of the doubt, in the sense that they are assumed to be the experts on their own occupation. Like the other form of sex work these scholars discuss, this also did not seem to be the case with exotic dance.

As I have demonstrated throughout this dissertation, the stigma of erotic labour is so entrenched in Canadian culture that people are predisposed to believe dominant media representations and mythology about exotic dancers rather than testimony from women who have *actually* worked as exotic dancers (Johnson 2006). Unfortunately, this mythology is often believed over the words of exotic dancers by their family members as well. In the words of Misty, “everyone just heard the negative part about it.” Therefore, in this section, I address the complex ways dancers negotiated their families’ reactions to their work, and how they managed their identities in order to remain a part of their families’ lives.

Initially, Scarlett worked part time as a dancer and part-time as a bartender at the Oak Tree, only telling her family about her bartending job. Here, Scarlett talks about her mother’s negative reaction to her disclosure that she worked as a dancer, and how she decided to handle her mother’s response:

For the first seven months, my mom every day would be like ‘Scarlett, every day I think of you, and I cry.’ And I was just like, ‘mom I don’t know what to do with that. It’s ok.’ Even before I started dancing, we had conversations about how she worries a lot about what people think, and that’s not something that she likes about herself. She knows that it has a negative effect on her life. She is just very concerned about people’s opinions. So when I was dancing, and she knew about it, she was super like [gasps], what will my friends think? What will the neighbors think? What will the family think? It went on for probably the first six months I was dancing. Then I quit because my mom didn’t want to have family dinner at Christmas time. She was like, ‘Oh I just don’t want to see the family and talk about it.’ If there’s something bad in the family, rather than address it we just kind of don’t talk about it.

At first, Scarlett decided to endure her mother’s disapproval and continued to work as an exotic dancer. It was only after her mother threatened to cancel the family Christmas dinner that she decided to quit dancing after one last attempt to get the family together despite their disapproval of her work:

When my family knew I was dancing, I talked to my cousin, who's a social worker. I was like, 'Caleb, I want to talk to you about trying to get the family together because my mom doesn't want to have family Christmas.' This was before I just decided to be like, fuck it, I'll quit. And he goes, 'Well Scarlett, don't you know that stripping is just one step away from prostitution and prostitution is just one step away from slavery?' [laughs]

After this disheartening conversation with her cousin, Scarlett decided to quit dancing, at least for the time being, in order to ensure that she would not disrupt her family's annual Christmas dinner. However, she returned to dancing full-time a few months after Christmas, this time deciding not to tell her parents. She invented a "cover" job, telling them that she was working at Ralph's, a local LGBTQ bar, as a bartender, which would account for the similar hours she would be working as a dancer. Telling her parents she was working as a bartender had several drawbacks, though, as dancing full time also requires working out of town. When I was still driving her, we discussed ways that she could go work in Alberta for the summer without revealing the truth to her family. Scarlett told me that she had already started dropping hints that she might be interested in going tree planting. "It's weird because I'm not an outdoorsy person, but I've already been setting it up. I've been mentioning tree planting in our conversations, so it doesn't look like this idea is coming out of the blue. I'm just worried about how I'm going to come up with two months of fake tree planting stories." Scarlett further explained some of the difficulties that she encountered while lying to her parents:

It's so hard because my cousin, my brother and sister, they know that I dance. I bought a car and all of this stuff. I was out with my cousin and my aunty and I was telling them I'm going to my friend's cabin next week, while I was really going to work in Thunder Bay. Then when my aunty left for a little bit, my cousin was like, 'So how much of that is true and how much of that is just covering up your job.'

Things became even more complicated for Scarlett when the bar she was supposedly working at closed down without her knowledge:

It is pretty stressful because now I'm just bullshitting my parents with zero truthful information. Before it was okay because I'd be like, "Yeah, so I work at the Oak Tree," and I *was* working at the Oak Tree. So there are stories and things you can say. But for a while, I told them I was working at Ralph's. And then I fake lost my fake job because Ralph's shut down.

As much as Scarlett tried to explain to her family that she liked her job and that she made good money, and expressed her agency in her choice to work as a dancer, she still faced disapproval from her family. She ultimately decided it would be easier for everyone involved if she did not disclose her return to dancing, thus necessitating a multitude of lies that she became increasingly uncomfortable with. This continued for some time until she decided to quit going to school for psychology and pursue dancing as a full-time career.

It was at this point that she told her parents that she was working as a dancer, and would be doing so for the foreseeable future. Scarlett's mother, along with the rest of her family, was still uneasy about her daughter's choice to work as a dancer, especially because she would no longer be attending university. Scarlett pointed out to her family that a university education did not always guarantee a secure future, as she had seen friends go to graduate school who were now unable to find work. Her father acknowledged that a university degree did not mean as much as it did when he was in his twenties. Scarlett reassured her parents that she knew that she could not dance forever and had plans to save her money so that she could potentially start a business in the future.

Scarlett told me over coffee one day that her father had taken her aside to tell her he was proud of her for pursuing the career she wanted, although he asked her not to tell her mother he had said that. However, Scarlett still felt that her entire family would be more comfortable with her dancing if she had remained in university. She explained the situation with her family further:

They're doing better, but I try not to be too in their face with it. Like my dad and I go to contortion class together and it's really fun. He's working on trying to touch his toes, and I'm working on trying to sit on my head. So different level, but the same class. When I go by myself, I bring my heels, and I'm like 'I want to work on a backbend that I've been doing in this sequence in my show.' But I don't bring my heels when my dad is there because I just don't want to be that in his face about it.

Scarlett's family had come to tolerate her working as a dancer after much reassurance that she would not be a stripper forever and that she was putting away money so that she could pursue her future goal of starting a business. Interestingly, she also challenged her family's valorization of the pursuit of a formal education, based on her observations that it did not always guarantee a successful career or economic security. Indeed, according to Scarlett, this idealization of "getting a degree" holds almost mythological qualities in contemporary culture. This veneration of education was reflected in Scarlett's family's suggestion that dancing would be more acceptable if she were still in school, despite her father's acknowledgment that a bachelor's degree didn't mean as much as it did when he was in his 20s. In this case, education, rather than a pathway to a viable career, would act almost as an erasure of some of the stigma attached to dancing, at least where Scarlett's family was concerned. In a sense, through a degree, perhaps Scarlett's family thought that she could regain some of the middle-class respectability that was lost through her choice of occupation, which moved her into the realm of the abject.

Sociologists Mary Nell Trautner and Jessica L. Collett (2010) argue that exotic dancers who are also students have higher self-esteem because the "student" identity is positive, socially acceptable, and offers them some respite from stigma. Trautner and Collet (2010, 276) suggest that students who strip "benefit from this alternate identity and the dynamic constructions of both stigma and self-esteem." However, I argue that, rather than benefiting the dancer and/or erasing the stigma of dancing, it erases dancing altogether, rendering it barely visible under the cover of

the normalized “student” identity. Thus, the “benefits” of having an identity that is not stigmatized seem to stem from an individual *not* revealing their stigmatized identity, or minimizing its importance by prioritizing the socially acceptable identity. This is a significant distinction to make because student/stripper reflects the virgin/whore dichotomy; women must walk the tightrope in between the two categories of virginity and prostitution in order to protect themselves from all forms of violence. This is no easy feat, which is evident in Scarlett’s stories about the risks of managing her student/stripper identities and the conflict this created in her personal life.

Scarlett’s struggles with the stigma attached to her labour did not seem any easier for her when she was attending university. In fact, going to school presents new challenges for dancers, such as how to explain the amount of money they have to family and friends when they are supposedly “starving students.” Therefore, it is questionable just how beneficial alternate identities are to women who work as exotic dancers when the actual stigma attached to their work remains intact and unchallenged. We must also keep in mind that academic institutions are not always inclusive spaces for women in sex work (Rosenbloom, Rakosi, and Fetner 2001). Indeed, the classroom is just one of many social settings where dancers must confront stigma and manage their identities (Rosenbloom, Rakosi, and Fetner 2001). Studies that compare exotic dancers to university students, reinforcing the “separate-ness” of these identities, provide further evidence that stigma is reproduced within academia (see Pederson et al. 2015; Downs, James, and Cowan 2006). Scarlett and I spoke frequently about these dilemmas throughout my fieldwork when she was still in school. How much should we reveal to a classroom of our peers when we encountered damaging stereotypes about sex workers?

Dancing might be, at times, rendered invisible through alternate identities, but women are still at risk if and when their occupations are discovered. In other words, it is the social construction of stripping as a “negative” that must be challenged to offer any real significant change to women, rather than suggesting that dancers obfuscate the shame and alleged amorality of their work through another identity that is constituted as culturally positive.

With her family, Scarlett also notes how she tries to not be “too in their face” about her work as a dancer, giving the example of how she does not bring any stripper paraphernalia with her when she attends contortion classes with her father in order to make him feel comfortable. This corroborates my argument that dancers are often silenced by stigma. Even when they are able to achieve some acceptance from their families, the material and economic realities of their occupation are partially hidden from their social worlds so that dancers can remain a part of those worlds.

Misty, who had informed her parents from the beginning of her career so that they could provide her with childcare, recounts a similar form of reluctant acceptance from her parents and other family members:

Everyone doesn't really like it, but they can't really do anything about it because it's not them going up on stage and doing it, it's me. My parents, they've been very supportive of me. They've helped me a lot. They're not going to say 'no you can't' or 'I'm just going to stop talking to you and disown you;' that's not who they are. None of my family was. They just didn't like it. Same with my ex-husband. They still talk to me. They just throw it in my face when they get mad; that's pretty much it.

Misty's parents, like Scarlett's, were not particularly thrilled with their daughter's choice to work as an exotic dancer, but did not attempt to stop her or threaten to disown her, because, in her words “they can't really do anything about it.” Unfortunately, it seems that their support for her choice of occupation only went so far, as her family members would resort to using stripping

against her during arguments about other issues. Thus, again, women's voices are silenced in family discussions. For women's family members, the disgust they felt for stripping, and perhaps their anger that a woman they were related to made them close to abjection by association, would override rational arguments, even in an unrelated dispute. The impact of whore stigma is so powerful that once everyone is reminded of Misty's abjection, her words, no matter how well reasoned, cease to matter. To her family, it is no longer Misty speaking as a mother, daughter, wife, or sister, but "just a stripper," who is no longer worthy of respect. Through this process, she is dehumanized, and the words of "just a stripper" become worthless.

Reluctant acceptance from family was true for Billie as well, who initially told her father she was working as a part of an all girls wrestling group when he confronted her after hearing from Billie's sister that she was working as a stripper. Ultimately, she decided to tell her father the truth when she got home from working in Thunder Bay, several weeks into her dancing career. Billie explains:

About three or four weeks later I came home, and I think that's when I said, 'Dad, I decided I'm stripping. It's just gonna be like that. Sorry, but I'm my own person. I can do what I want.' He was mad at first a little bit. I could hear it in his voice. But, I said, 'Dad, I'm paying my bills. I don't want anything from you financially. You've taken care of me this far. I'm good.' I should've just let him pay my bills and stayed in school, but I wanted to be my own person.

Both Billie and Misty talk about asserting their independence as a way to manage confrontation from family members. Interestingly, Billie also highlights the importance of economics to family relationships by talking about how she should have let her father pay for her education. Even though Billie could afford to be on her own at a relatively young age, this was uncommon for her age group and class location. Many middle-class children have financial assistance from their parents while attending university. Thus, she expressed regret that she had not let her father pay for her education. Billie could not

have known the trajectory the exotic dance industry would take at that time (an issue I address in Chapter Three). Therefore, denying her father's financial assistance as a way to assert her agency and independence was based on her experience of the industry in the early 2000s, which was far more secure than it is now. However, the income security that stripping offered Billie when she first starting working also allowed her to demonstrate to her father that exotic dance was an acceptable occupation because she could support herself without his help, unlike most people her age. This is an example of how stigma can have a significant material impact on women's lives. Perhaps Billie could have worked as a dancer in addition to accepting her father's offer to pay for school if she hadn't felt like she had to "prove" that stripping was a legitimate job.

Something that I did not expect was that some dancers might bring family members to see them perform a show at a strip club as an attempt to teach them about stripping. Taking relatives to their workplace was a strategy used by two of the dancers I interviewed, Misty and Ivy. As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, all of the dancers I talked to and interacted with during my fieldwork were aware of misconceptions about stripping and strippers and believed that it was difficult for people to fully understand their jobs without being involved in the industry themselves. Thus, it makes sense that dancers might try to provide loved ones with a sense of what working as a dancer entailed by giving them the next best thing; experiencing a strip club as a customer.

Ivy describes how she brought her mother to see her at work after her extremely negative reaction to finding out from a co-worker that Ivy was working as an exotic dancer:

I remember taking her to Kisses one time, and I was like, 'Listen. You need to see me dance, and you need to be here, and you need to understand that this is not what you think it is. You need to understand this, and you need to see for yourself.' So I made her watch one of my shows, and ever since then, she didn't

have any judgments on it. I mean, she didn't love it. She wasn't like [gasp] 'this is my daughter, and she's a stripper.' She wasn't in love with it, but she was proud of me because I was making a living on my own. I was doing what I had to do as a young adult to succeed in life, and she was proud of me for that.

Even though Ivy's mother was incredibly upset when she found out that Ivy worked as an exotic dancer, she was able to allay some of her fears, particularly her fear that dancing was, for the most part, the same as prostitution, by bringing her to one of her shows. Ivy's mother's acceptance was substantiated by the fact that Ivy felt comfortable doing our interview at her mother's house with her there. Ivy introduced me to her, although I do not know what Ivy told her about my presence there. Still, it is evident from Ivy's story that her mother only came to reluctantly accept her daughter's involvement in the exotic dance industry, expressing pride over her initiative rather than her choice of job, much like Scarlett, Misty, Lucy, and Billie's families.

While Ivy, Scarlett, Misty, Billie, and Lucy all eventually told their families they worked as exotic dancers, forcing a sort of reluctant acceptance after a period of turmoil, Kat's situation was slightly different. Kat felt that she could not work as a dancer without lying to her parents, as they had stopped speaking to her when they found out from a neighbour in her hometown that she was working at strip clubs in Winnipeg. Unlike Ivy and Misty, Kat, who was no longer dancing at the time of our interview, did not consider taking her parents to a strip club to see her at work as an option, nor did she think that she could convince them that dancing was tolerable for the time being, even as a temporary occupation, as had the other women with their families.

Kat rather forlornly explained:

My parents have seen me a lot worse off. When I was dancing, I was paying all my bills without asking them for money. I was able to buy myself glasses. I was financially stable for the first time in my life, and everything was fine. I was in a good relationship. Nothing was wrong with my life. But because of the fact that I was taking my clothes off to do it, it was the end of the world. It pisses me off, too, because they don't seem to realize that if they had been a little more accepting, I could've been a feature. I could've traveled the country. Part of the

reason why I didn't go anywhere with my dancing is because I had to hide it from them the whole time. I could be retired by now if I wanted to, if I was competing. I love competing. I love dancing. If I was able to go to Alberta for a month at a time without having to make excuses, I could've done so much more with this job. But I didn't because my family is super important to me. I'm really close to my mom, and I finally have a good relationship with my dad again.

Not wanting to destroy the relationship she had rebuilt with her parents after quitting dancing, Kat ultimately decided it would be best not to return to it, at least for the time being. Even though she felt that stripping had improved her life, she also felt dancing could have enhanced her life even more if she had had the support of her family. Indeed, it just so happened that I interviewed Kat at her home after she had returned from going to dinner with her parents. Thus, the conflict between enjoying her newly re-established relationship with them and her frustration that they had not supported her during her dancing career must have been at the top of her mind. Additionally, Kat's story speaks to the economic violence of stigma that sometimes manifests in familial relationships. It seems that Kat's parents were unaware of how their negative attitude toward stripping may have had substantial financial consequences on their daughter's life. Kat made the sacrifice of quitting a job she enjoyed and made good money at because she loved her parents and wanted to remain a part of their lives.

Like Kat, I did not consider inviting my family members to see me perform at work a realistic possibility. While I am not entirely certain what their reactions would be, I did not feel it was worth the risk to my emotional and financial well-being to inform relatives of my involvement in the exotic dance industry. Like many of the women I worked with, much of my family is socially conservative with middle-class values. My choice not to tell my family speaks to my privilege as a graduate student, as I was able to use my student identity to "cover up" my work as a dancer, although this negotiation was incredibly challenging at times. Also, similar to Kat, fear of my family's abandonment severely curtailed my ability to make more money as an

exotic dancer, as I could not realistically travel for work without worrying that they might find out what I was doing.

The sacrifices that Kat and I made are indicative of the caring emotional labour that is expected of women when it comes to the well-being and stability of the family. We almost instinctually re-arranged our lives and risked our economic security for the comfort of our loved ones and for the other forms of security that came with these relationships. As I mentioned in Chapter One, when I told Scarlett my concerns about protecting my family's feelings while also recognizing the ways that they've hurt me, she said, "It's hard because as women, we are expected to do that work." Therefore, it is unlikely that exotic dancers' family members see their actions as violent because violence is such a naturalized part of traditional femininity in patriarchal societies in general. Indeed, because I was used to navigating this kind of violence, it was a challenge for me to acknowledge the role that my own family played in my stigmatization. Women who work as exotic dancers are on the forefront of this violence and bear the brunt of the consequences because they have drawn attention to the economic value of their emotional and sexual labour, which marks them as abject bodies. It is precisely when women recognize their worth that they become "worthless" to society, which speaks to the patriarchal structure of capitalism. Women are made abject when they choose to work as strippers so that the gendered unequal distribution of resources that capitalist economies foster can remain intact. Furthermore, the abjection of exotic dancers poses a warning to any woman who might think to explicitly charge for sexual labour.

Again, as I discussed in regards to Billie's refusal to have her father pay for her education, the stigma of stripping can have severe economic consequences on the lives of individual women in a number of ways. Thus, even though stripping allows us access to the kind

of income potential that many of our peers would envy, the “costs” of a career in the exotic dance industry can be quite literal, an issue I will return to in Chapter Six.

However, Kat’s choice not to return to stripping was also influenced by her recent marriage to a man who had a teenage daughter, which leads to the next topic in this chapter. In the next section, I discuss the complications that arise from negotiating the stigma of erotic labour in women’s relationships with their families when they have children.

### **Children and Negotiating Stigma**

For Kat and Misty, managing stigma in their relationships with their family members was complicated by the fact that they also needed to consider how the stigma of erotic labour would impact their relationships with their children and step-children.

Misty did not tell her twelve-year-old daughter that she was working as a dancer. It was Misty’s sister who decided to inform her niece (Misty’s daughter):

My daughter didn’t know about it until my sister decided she was going to tell my daughter that I dance, so I didn’t actually get to tell her. Then she just heard negative, negative, negative, about it. I just asked her straight. I’m like, “You want to know? You ask me, and I’ll tell you.” So we talked about it. I told her about it, and she asked me questions, and I answered them. I’m not going to sugar coat it. Telling a twelve-year-old that you get naked on stage is not something that they really think is fun [laughs], but she understands why I was doing it. That’s what’s important. It was a job. That’s what it was. Just a job. So she understands it was just extra money that I needed to make. It was just me working and taking care of my kids.

Misty was frustrated by her lack of control regarding the information that was given to her daughter about her job without her consent. After her daughter had been told inaccurate and harmful information about stripping by her sister, Misty was compelled to give a more balanced explanation to her daughter, who was not terribly receptive after her aunt’s disclosure. Her daughter seemed to start accepting her mother’s choice to work as a dancer after Misty emphasized that this was how they were able to not only survive but afford little luxuries, like

going out to eat. While I interviewed Misty at her house, her two children played outside while her then-boyfriend (now husband) watched them. She did not seem concerned that they might overhear what we were talking about, although she did speak in a hushed voice at certain points during the conversation. Usually, this was when she spoke negatively about her ex-husband, her children's father, not an uncommon tactic of divorced co-parents regardless of their occupation. In this instance at least, it seemed that Misty was able to speak relatively freely about stripping as labour in her home because she had been encouraging an open dialogue with her children about her work. Thus, although she had not been able to choose when, or even if, she would inform her children about her work as a dancer, she was able to regain some control over this information by carefully explaining the full context of her choice to work as a stripper. Misty's experience speaks to the importance of sex workers' knowledge in attempts to de-stigmatize erotic labour. As I mentioned previously in this chapter, misinformation about exotic dance continues to proliferate in Canadian culture. However, listening to the experiences and expertise of women who actually work as exotic dancers can help challenge dominant stigmatizing narratives (which I will discuss further in Chapter Seven). This is easier said than done since such an intervention requires ears that are willing to listen. As I discussed throughout this chapter, women's expertise about their work as exotic dancers was very rarely taken seriously by their family members.

According to Dewey (2011), extolling the virtues of providing for children, rather than focusing on how this was achieved, was a common tactic among the women in her study who worked as exotic dancers in the United States. She explains that, for the dancers who had children, "money and consumerism became weapons with which such women can combat stigma, even from their location outside the boundaries of social acceptability" (Dewey 2011, 93). In other words, "good" motherhood could be re-claimed somewhat through the morality of

money; turning “dirty” money from stripping into “clean” money because of the way it is used, i.e., to provide a good life for one’s children (Dewey 2011; Brennan 2004a, 2004b; Zelizer 2011; Zalwango et al. 2010). While this strategy might help an individual dancer mitigate the impact of stigma in the short term, much like the strategy of “passing the stigma buck” that Scarlett described, it ultimately fails because creating a moral hierarchy related to how one spends the money one earns from stripping leaves the stigma of erotic labour unchallenged. In other words, asserting that working as an exotic dancer is legitimate because the ends justifies the means, further stigmatizes those who do not conform to what is considered morally appropriate ways to spend money in a capitalist patriarchal economy, which is something I expand upon in Chapter Six (Zelizer 2000, 2011; Dewey 2011; Weldon 2010). Unfortunately, Stigma simply gets “passed around” rather than challenged.

Kat’s step-daughter was informed about her work as an exotic dancer in a similar manner to Misty’s daughter:

Carly’s mom’s mom told her. Basically, we had told Carly the same thing we had told my mom and my dad, that I was a waitress. Then Nick’s ex- mother in law took it upon herself to tell Carly that I was basically a whore. So Carly got all upset, obviously. How fucking dare you? No, I’m not a prostitute. Why would you tell a fourteen-year-old girl that her future stepmother is a fucking prostitute? What is wrong with you? I’ve been outed very nastily. Twice.

At the same time, similar to how Kat felt about being outed to her parents, she was almost relieved that someone else had told her step-daughter so that she no longer had to hide it.

Kat also decided to use this as a teachable moment:

I mean the thing is, what’s cool about it is Carly knows how shitty it is. She knows that there are some good parts. But in the end, from my standpoint, and also too for someone like her, she’s growing up to be a really pretty girl. She probably could dance if she wanted to. But hearing all of my stories about how much I hate it and seeing what it did to me, she’s learning by my example. Like, hey, you probably shouldn’t do that.

While Kat's statement might seem contradictory to the positive picture she painted about her past career as a dancer in the last section of this chapter, it is also important to recognize the ways in which working as an independent contractor can foster exploitative working conditions (Sanders and Hardy 2014; Ross 2000, 2006, 2009, 2010; Macklin 2003; Alemzadeh 2013; Fogel and Quinlan 2011; Law 2015). Thus, while Kat loved working as a dancer, she also experienced a significant amount of conflict with our agency. As I pointed out in Chapter Three, dancers who worked in Winnipeg had to navigate a system of labour that classified us as independent contractors but treated us as employees whenever it was convenient for the agency or bar managers. In addition to this, we were also subjected to the whims of our agents, who would sometimes give us work depending on their personal feelings about us. Dewey (2011, 88) mentions this as an issue that the women in her study had to contend with as well. She explains, "management also scheduled dancers according to whims and personal preferences, meaning that if Paul [strip club manager] was angry with a particular woman he might not schedule her to work all week." Indeed, Kat told me several stories about how she had been unfairly treated by our agents, including being told that she needed to lose weight if she wanted work and also being "starved out" of bookings so that her only recourse was to seek other employment at certain points during her tenure as a dancer. At other times, the work was plentiful, and Kat was able to make quite a bit of money, but this was tempered by the dry spells, an experience that was not exclusive to Kat. At the time that I interviewed her, towards the end of 2014, Kat was not dancing anymore due, in part, to her frustration with working for Elegant Entertainment, in addition to her concerns about her family finding out. In her words, "Steve giveth, and Steve taketh away." Thus, when Kat talks about not wanting her step-daughter to work as a dancer because of "how shitty it is," this is what she has in mind, in addition to the stigma that is part

and parcel of erotic labour, which also contributes to our poor treatment as employees/contractors.

Kat also expressed concern about what the consequences would be for her stepdaughter if she were to continue working as an exotic dancer:

I don't know how big her grade twelve class is. If I go get naked somewhere, who's going to see me from her school? And that stops me, basically. If I want to dance, I can't go to anything at her school. If I go to something at her school, and people see her with me, "Oh my god your step moms a stripper," you know what I mean? I don't want that. That's not cool. High school is scary enough, and she's kind of an anxious child. I didn't want that for her. That's not fair.

A desire to be involved in her step-daughter's life, including school activities, stopped Kat whenever she considered returning to dancing. Because I met Kat's step-daughter several times throughout my fieldwork when I was hanging out with her, I had the opportunity to see how close of a relationship they had formed. It was evident to me that there was a great deal of respect between the two, and Kat was clearly a source of advice for her step-daughter when it came to a variety of matters.

Even though Kat recognized that she might not be able to return to dancing while her step-daughter was in high school, she was also critical of the people who would stigmatize her, or her stepdaughter, for any reason. Kat and her stepdaughter identified as bisexual. Both participated in the Dyke March together; an event held every year in Winnipeg the day before Pride in June. I also attended Dyke March, as it was combined with the March for Sex Workers Rights in 2015, and we walked together for a while. Kat also became more vocal about slut shaming and LGBTQ and sex workers rights that had become visible on social media during the last few years of my fieldwork, and thus encouraged her stepdaughter to be socially conscious. Kat's actions in this regard provide more evidence that dancers do not necessarily believe that other forms of sex work are "wrong," even when women occasionally "pass the stigma buck"

when they are feeling threatened or do not know how else to defend their choice of occupation to outsiders. This is especially the case with family members, whom they love and need as a source of social, and sometimes financial, support. Again, these seemingly contradictory feelings about stripping and sex work more generally reflect the concept of “complex personhood,” where inconsistency in behaviour, actions, and emotions is understood as a common human experience (Gordon 1997). In other words, as I’ve argued in previous chapters, our thoughts about stripping are not static. My research, and any ethnography on exotic dance is merely a snapshot of how women felt about stigma, stripping, sex work, and interpersonal relationships at particular times, in specific places, in a culture that is also fluid.

Thus, working as an exotic dancer not only requires a complex negotiation with family members, but an incredibly frustrating matrix of pride, agency, shame, and logic that is tricky to unravel when confronted with the realities of everyday life. Stigma forces dancers to deal with the immediate impacts that could have harsh repercussions in their lives, rather than allowing them to challenge or dismantle this stigma without severe consequences.

In this chapter, I have shown some of the ways in which stigma impacts women’s relationships with relatives. Specifically, I have teased out how “stripping money,” parenting, and erotic labour are entangled in the way that stigma manifested in dancer’s relationships with their family members.

The meme that I presented at the beginning of this chapter exemplifies society’s uneasy relationship with women who make money off of their bodies in particular ways, as well as the social distancing associated with this unease. To blame poor parenting as the reason that women engage in erotic labour takes culpability away from the social, economic, and political inequalities that leave women with limited opportunities, and reframes it as the personal and

moral failings of women and their families (Dewey 2011; Bruckert 2002; Weldon 2010; Zelizer 2011). Unfortunately, whether dancer's family members were consciously aware of this or not, their negative perception of exotic dancers sometimes resulted in financial hardship for women because women would rather stop working than embarrass their relatives. This finding supports my theory that social stigma is systemic violence that manifests itself in particular ways in exotic dancer's interpersonal relationships. Specifically, in this case, in the form of economic violence.

In the next chapter, I elaborate on the violence of stigma in the lives of women who work as exotic dancers by taking a closer look at their romantic and sexual relationships with men.

## Chapter 5: Boyfriends, Lovers, and “Peeler Pounders”

### Just a Bad Mood

*I met Seth right before I graduated from my master’s program. He was everything I thought I wanted in a boyfriend; handsome, tall, smart, and successful. Because he was a young doctor, my friends and family were certainly impressed with Seth too. Most of the time, Seth was caring, funny, and sweet. He was always surprising me with romantic weekend getaways or treating me to fancy dinners. But Seth had a mean streak. I didn’t see it until we were already one year into our relationship. It was around the time I decided to go back to school to pursue my Ph.D. Even though Seth knew that I had worked as an exotic dancer as an undergraduate student for a few years, he had never really said much about it. When I told him about my plan to go back to graduate school to research stripping, he responded with a similar silence. I was a little disappointed that he wasn’t more enthusiastic, but decided to let it go. Maybe he had a tough day at work. But over the next few weeks, he remained sullen and sulky. One Sunday, while we relaxed and watched TV at my apartment, as we did every Sunday, a commercial advertising the controversial video game Grand Theft Auto came on. “I would buy that game just so I could kill strippers and hookers,” he said to me and laughed. Shocked by his cruel words, I said nothing in reply and concentrated on holding back the hot tears that were quickly moving to my eyes. I couldn’t believe that this man who professed to love me could even hint that he would enact violence upon strippers, virtual or not. Instead of confronting him, again, I let it go. Maybe he was in a bad mood.*

In addition to the stigma dancers had to negotiate in their relationships with family members, the women in my study also had to grapple with stigma in their romantic and dating relationships with men.

In this chapter, I explore how women negotiated the stigma of erotic labour in their romantic relationships. As an important part of my analysis, I also attempt to untangle the socio-cultural structures that masculinize and normalize this violence (Valverde 2008; Ross 2010; Hugill 2010; Bruckert 2001; Bumiller 2008; Hatty 2000; Levitt, Swanger, and Butler 2008; DeShong 2015). How do dancers negotiate the stigma of working as an exotic dancer while dating, marrying, or having sexual relationships with men? Why is violence such a common

component in men's heterosexual relationships with women in general and exotic dancers in particular? What are the ways in which the women in my study make sense of this violence?

Dancers' experiences of stigma in romantic relationships have been explored more explicitly in the literature than dancers' relationships with relatives. Dewey (2011), Maia (2012), Colosi (2010), Bruckert (2002), and Barton (2006), all have sections or chapters that discuss the impact of dancing on participants' intimate relationships, and Bradley-Engen and Hobbs (2010) conducted a study on this topic. It is likely that this is the case because, as sociologists Mindy S. Bradley-Engen and Carrie M. Hobbs (2010, 67) suggest, "By definition, the occupation of exotic dance violates heterosexual relationship norms...thus, it seems obvious that women in sex work careers face some formidable obstacles when dating." I agree with Bradley-Engen and Hobbs' (2010) assertion that exotic dancers and other sex workers face unique challenges in their romantic relationships. However, I remain wary of the implication in much of the literature that women who do not engage in sex work are safe from violence in their relationships with men (Philaretou 2006; Wesley 2003, 2006). This is a dangerous line of thinking because it suggests that women can control any violence that is perpetrated against them by their partners by simply not working as exotic dancers, as if the violence is caused by stripping rather than the individual inflicting the violence. Many scholars have challenged the notion that violence is inherent to sex work, and I continue to challenge this idea while attending to the ways in which the current legal and social status of sex work puts certain women at greater risk (Ditmore, Levy, and Willman 2010; Thaller and Cimino 2017; Durisin 2009; Hugill 2010; Sanders and Hardy 2014; Jochelson and Kramar 2011; Gira-Grant 2014; Ferris 2015; Dewey 2011; Bumiller 2008; Maticka-Tyndale et al. 1999; Jeffery 2005; Sanders and Campbell 2007; Lewis and Maticka-Tyndale 2000; McClintock 1992; Valverde 1999; Van der Meulen and Durisin 2009; Shaver et al. 2011;

Sallmann 2010; Hudson and Van der Meulen 2013; Van der Meulen 2010). That said, violence against women, which can be physical, structural, verbal, economic, and/or emotional and psychological, is not unique to exotic dancers but frequently occurs in women's relationships with men (York 2011; Thaller and Cimino 2017; Dobash 1979; Anderson and Umberson 2001; DeShong 2015).

Statistics from Statistics Canada and the Center for Disease Control show us that physical or sexual violence from male romantic partners is an extremely common experience for women in North American, and even these statistics are considered to be an underestimate because they are based on criminal cases (Canada 2013; Jeltson 2017). For example, Lucy told me about a violent situation with an ex-boyfriend she was with before she started working as a dancer. After finding out that her partner had cheated on her, Lucy confronted him about it at his apartment. Frustrated with her yelling at him, and not wanting to offer her any explanation for what he had done, to Lucy's shock, he went to his bedroom and pulled a gun on her. Physically, she was unharmed, but the experience understandably traumatized her. However, Lucy felt that dancing had helped her come to terms with what happened:

It really sets me off sometimes, but I think dancing has actually helped that. I'm up there on stage, and even though I do get comments, some bad ones, I get a lot of love too. So I think it really helped me through that whole situation. I lost all my friends at the time. It really helped me learn how to be alone, which actually I think is the best thing that ever happened to me. I can go eat at a restaurant by myself. I can go to a movie by myself. I can spend all day by myself and not talk to anyone and be alone without any friends. Which a human being shouldn't have to do, but I know that if it ever happened again, I could do it, which makes me feel really happy and confident with myself.

Lucy felt that dancing did not "cause" violence in her life, but instead, improved her self-esteem and sense of independence to the point where she felt she wouldn't be susceptible to an abusive relationship again. However, as Bradley-Engen and Hobbs (2010) pointed out, it is also

important to acknowledge that women who work as exotic dancers must deal with the stigma of their labour in romantic relationships. Although Lucy, to my knowledge, never dated a physically abusive man again, like myself and the other participants, she still had to negotiate negative comments about stripping and other forms of violence from men that she dated, including her most recent boyfriend, which I will address in more detail later in this chapter.

Bradley-Engen and Hobbs (2010) note that because of stigma, the majority of women in their study settled for partners who were financially, emotionally, and/or physically abusive, or they chose to remain single after dissatisfying experiences dating men. Similarly, Colosi (2010, 161) observed in her ethnographic study of a lap dancing club in the United Kingdom that, “it was not unusual for dancers at Starlets to become involved in high-risk relationships. The majority of the dancers during the time in which my field work was conducted were either in or had been involved in abusive or ‘complicated’ relationships.” These findings show us that violence in exotic dancers’ relationships with men is common. However, I also argue that understanding this violence necessitates a more nuanced approach that goes beyond cause and effect explanations that reduce blame to women’s behaviour; i.e., stripping = violent relationships. Thus, instead of implying that violence in romantic relationships would be avoided by women changing their occupations or choosing “better” men, I argue that the structural violence of stigma, and the patriarchal monogamous ideals that contribute to it, should be challenged instead. Parker and Aggleton (2003) have argued that when theorizing stigma, one should take into account the fact that stigmatized groups are usually already at a social disadvantage. Thus, I am arguing for an approach to the violence that occurs in exotic dancers’ relationships with romantic partners that takes into account the prevalence of masculinized violence against women in general.

Bradley-Engen and Hobbs (2010) have suggested that dancers are compelled to choose “low quality” partners because of the stigma of erotic labour, or to choose no partner at all. I am going one step further on their line of reasoning and suggesting that *any* woman’s romantic partner is capable of becoming violent if she were to reveal that she was pursuing a career as an exotic dancer or in another area of sex work. Non-sex working women in patriarchal societies are aware of this, as are women who are former exotic dancers. It was not uncommon for dancers to be approached by women who have never held jobs in the sex industry who tell us that their boyfriends/husbands would never “let” them strip, thus revealing their awareness of their partner’s violent potential.<sup>22</sup>

Part of the larger project of my dissertation is to contribute to bridging the taxonomical divide that currently exists between exotic dancers and other women; violence against exotic dancers is gendered and is thus a feminist issue. How might we bridge this gap without reproducing stereotypes and binary thinking about exotic dancers as unworthy whores or victims in need of saving?

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, many Canadian women may commit acts that conflict with the feminine values of their society. However, it is the label or claiming of a particular identity that makes these acts taboo (Wardlow 2006). Many Canadian women take up pole dancing classes, for instance, or have had men pay for their dinner while on a date, both of which are erotic material practices involved in sex work, but it is the identity of “stripper” or “sex worker” that is stigmatized. Thus, it is the ways in which money is transferred from one individual to another is that which seems to matter most in relationships (Zelizer 2000, 2011).

The story that I present at the beginning of this chapter, and the stories of other dancers in my study, contradicts the assumption that dancers are self-destructive women who are drawn to

“jerks” or to men who are unemployed because we “can’t do any better.” While it is true that the women in my study were sometimes willing to accept shaming from their romantic partners to a certain extent, their willingness to do so must be considered in the larger context of what many women in heterosexual relationships find themselves compromising on so that they can remain involved in the relationship. Exotic dancers are a diverse group of women who date an equally diverse group of men. My observations and experiences demonstrate that most men that women date do not react kindly to women’s involvement in erotic labour, no matter who they are or how they have behaved towards women who do not work as exotic dancers.

Bradley-Engen and Hobbs (2010) found in their study that the men dancers dated were threatened by the fact that their girlfriends commodified certain aspects of their sexuality for other men (flirting, nudity, etc.), behaviours that are traditionally reserved for exclusively monogamous heterosexual relationships. I certainly found this to be true for participants in my study as well. But as I have argued in the first chapters of my dissertation, all human relationships, including romantic and/or sexual ones, are marked by commodification (Illouz 2007; Zelizer 2000, 2011; Swader et al. 2013; Schoenbaum 2016). Therefore, I also argue in this chapter that much of men’s anxiety around dating women, and their violence towards them, whether they work as exotic dancers or not, might better be understood as related to this wider commodification that happens in all intimate relationships, albeit in a more subtle way than the relationships dancers have with their customers (Zelizer 2000, 2011; Bahri 2014; Frank 1998, 2002; Constable 2009; Egan 2006a). What is specific to heterosexual relationships between men and female exotic dancers is that male partners face a very visible commodification aspect. In other words, men might be asking themselves how they are different from the patrons of their

girlfriend or wife (Bradley-Engen and Hobbs 2010; Dewey 2011). What makes them, as a boyfriend or husband, exist outside of the commodification exchanges?

In North American society, as scholars have argued in the past decade or more, our social worlds have tended to disassociate “true love” from financial support (Frank 1998; Povinelli 2006; Zelizer 2000). Romantic relationships are thought to be tainted by the presence of economics or money within the “pure” spaces, and therefore we are left questioning what characterizes romantic love or differentiates it from the logics of cold hard capitalism (Illouz 2007; Zelizer 2000, 2011; Bernstein 2001; Egan 2006a). In addition to this, as Bradley-Engen and Hobbs (2010) reports, the money “taint” is further complicated by the logics of heterosexual monogamy.

As I mentioned in Chapter One, the theory that money and sexuality must only mingle in state-sanctioned ways, such as in marriage and, more frequently, long term monogamous relationships, is key to understanding the reasons why the money made by exotic dancers, or “stripping money,” is considered illegitimate and “dirty.” As Povinelli (2006) has argued, colonized liberal nations, including Canada, constantly produce and re-produce imaginary separations between intimate ties and the economy for fear that economics might contaminate true love defined in homo- and hetero-nationalistic as well as neo-liberal terms. According to Povinelli (2006), then, in neo-liberal diasporas, love has been re-imagined as a great equalizer that erases class divisions, race, and the former restraints of family duty. Povinelli (2006, 191) argues that “love has become the sign of a new liberal mystery, a secular religion. Love leaves people as they were in the Garden of Eden, merely men and women, not dukes or duchesses, not heirs to a title or office, not wealthy or poor.” Egalitarian views of love in late capitalism, like the kind Povinelli (2006) describes, are elucidated in Anthony Giddens’ (1992) utopic vision of

love in heterosexual relationships *The Transformation of Intimacy*, where all things are equal (Jamieson 1999). However, the freedom to simply be oneself in the pursuit of a romantic relationship, Povinelli (2006) also argues, remains the provenance of straight white men. In other words, men do not have to prove their worth as human beings in the way that women, people of colour, or LGBTQ people do, which is important because this has an impact on the ways in which women interact with men in romantic relationships.

Furthermore, the neo-liberal romantic view of monogamous love disguises existing deep seated social inequalities. Similarly, Zelizer (2011) has argued that the way that money is distributed in intimate relationships does indeed dictate the nature of that relationship and the social duties that are attached to that relationship. However, Zelizer (2011) also stresses that this negotiation is not easy, as people constantly think about how money should be transferred in relationships, and experience a great deal of grief when they do not distribute funds in culturally appropriate ways. Zelizer's (2011) theory that money marks the nature of a relationship was evident in exotic dancer's intimate relationships in my study. Parrenas' (2011) study of hostesses working at bars in Tokyo also reveals that women defined their relationships with customers and other men in their lives based on the types of gifts that were purchased for them. Additionally, Cabezas' (2009) research on sex and tourism in the Dominican Republic and Cuba revealed that women would differentiate themselves from prostitutes because of the ways in which money was transferred to them from the men that they spent time with. Anthropologist Susan Frohlick's (2013) research on women tourists who have sex with local men in Costa Rica shows how women are also entangled in the conceptualization of love's separateness from money as consumers of sexual labour. Frohlick (2013) explains how women in her study insisted on giving gifts or "helping out" the men they had sex with, rather than giving the men direct payments of

money. Similarly, the women in my study did not find it difficult to differentiate between their romantic relationships with men and patrons, although their romantic partners would often raise concerns over their apparent similarities. This finding was also true for women who participated in Bradley-Engen and Hobbs' (2010) study of exotic dancers and their romantic partners, where male partners questioned the authenticity of the dancers' performance of intimacy with their patrons. Bradley-Engen and Hobbs (2010, 82) explain, "dancers often strongly believed that their occupation was not genuinely intimate, and thus should not be an issue in their relationships. Nevertheless, many of these same dancers also indicated that they often accepted guilt or ridicule from their male partners." Thus, "dancers experience the club as a space of work that requires a high degree of emotional labor," while dancer's romantic partners view their workplace as in competition for their girlfriend's attention (Egan 2006a, 41).

While I am looking at heterosexual relationships amongst participants, as I mentioned in Chapter One, not all of the women in my study identified as heterosexual. However, all of the women in my study had been in romantic relationships with men at some point throughout their lives, and, like most women, noted experiencing some form of violence from them. Thus, I chose to focus on these relationships. This is certainly not to say that violence does not occur in lesbian relationships or that women are incapable of violence, but that the reasons men engage in violence against women stem from a different set of socio-cultural circumstances and power relations associated with patriarchy, hegemonic masculinity, and the subordination of women (see Ristock 2002).

I make an important distinction between how dancers negotiated the stigma they experienced in their relationships with family from the stigma they experienced in their romantic relationships. As Lucy explained above, dancing had the potential to improve a woman's self-

confidence. Therefore, many of the women in my study asserted that they would rather not engage in a romantic relationship if the person they were with tried to shame them about working as a dancer, and felt that stripping had given them the confidence to reject men who did not treat them with respect. In other words, it seemed that it was easier for dancers to dismiss the opinions of men in their lives who did not accept stripping as a legitimate occupation than it was for them to reject the views of their family members, whom they were determined to convince. And unlike with their families, dancers had much more control over how they told the men that they dated that they worked at strip clubs. Therefore, none of the dancers I met tried to hide their occupation from people that they dated, as they did with their families. Similarly, Bradley-Engen and Hobbs (2010) also found that the women in her study did not attempt to conceal their jobs from the men that they dated, as they did from others in their lives.

Still, many dancers experienced stigma, not only throughout the course of their more serious romantic partnerships but also in casual dating or sexual relationships with men, which made it difficult to start dating someone seriously in the first place.

### **Perceptions of Masculine Violence**

As I explained in the previous chapter, the individuals that dancers encounter on a daily basis, including potential dating partners, may likely have pre-formed unfavourable opinions about exotic dancers stemming from the proliferation of negative dominant media representations of strippers (Johnson 2006; Hallgrimsdottir, Phillips, and Benoit 2005; Jiwani and Young 2006).

The impact of the mainstream media on dancers relationships should not be underestimated. Dominant media representations of sex workers that are disjointed from their lived realities are especially pernicious in the production of ongoing stigma because “for a

significant portion of the citizenry media narratives represent the only sites at which they might interact with sex industry workers”; thus “media narratives in this context become relatively unassailable, at least to the extent that the media audiences lack empirical experience by which to challenge them” (Hallgrimsdottir, Phillips, and Benoit 2006, 267). Johnson (2006, 169) argues that “films that climax with a stripper death or prostitute rape can be seen as a part of a larger framework of violence against and disciplining of sexual minorities.” Thus, the audience makes a morality distinction between exotic dancers and women who are not sex workers (Johnson 2006).

Lucy explained her frustration related to mainstream media representations of exotic dancers and what she felt were the dangerous consequences of these depictions:

Guys just think, they see it on TV, and they see it in movies, and they're just like, it's ok to beat up a stripper. Haha, it's funny. That's what they're supposed to do. Their pimps beat them up, and they get raped, and it's okay if I just give her a slap or if I treat her like shit. She's not a real woman. I've only had a guy come at me once to hit me, and I was on a chair. I screamed bloody murder and security ran over, and they took him out. But I always say to them if they say something rude or really awful, I'm like, you know what? Would you treat me like this if you saw me on the street or the grocery store? Or if I saw you at a dinner party? Would you be talking to me like this? Or would you be different? Then why are you acting this way? Then they usually just shut up or they, go oh, oh no.

Lucy makes sense of a patron's attempt to attack her at work as influenced by the dehumanization of exotic dancers in the dominant media, where violence, rape, and exploitation are not only presented as normalized aspects of strippers' lives but as amusing entertainment and comedy. While physical violence from patrons is uncommon, Lucy also recognizes that when customers speak to her in ways she considers disrespectful, their understanding of her as a stripper also frames how they interact with her as “not a real woman.” She attempts to reclaim her humanity by reminding them that she could be any woman they might run into in their daily

lives outside of the strip club. For the time being, at least, this reminder that exotic dancers also participate in the minutiae of daily life seems to silence her customers.

Lucy's experience echoes my own. There are several occasions where I have had to remind customers that I am human. "You *do* realize I'm a real person, don't you? A human being?" I would also ask patrons quite directly, "would you talk to a woman this way if she was not a stripper?" The answers customers gave me were never entirely satisfying. Much like in Lucy's experience, they would respond with silence, reluctantly admit that they might not treat me that way if I were not a stripper, or insist that they would have spoken in this manner to any woman they encountered. While I have my doubts as to the honesty of this latter reply, I do believe that this response confirms what other researchers have found; that all women are at risk for violence when they are revealed to have traversed the boundaries of what is considered socially acceptable for women (Thaller and Cimino 2017; Reidy et al. 2014; McClintock 1992; Levitt, Swanger, and Butler 2008; Fernandez-Esquer and Diamond 2013; DeShong 2015). Women are particularly at risk when they have explicitly accepted financial compensation for emotional and sexualized labour (O'Doherty 2011; Panchanadeswaran et al. 2010; Lowman and Fraser 1996; Brents and Hausbeck 2007; Seshia 2010; Quinet 2011; Raphael and Shapiro 2004; Sanders and Campbell 2007; Lowman 2000; Muldoon et al. 2015).

Some scholars might be quick to suggest that our experiences as exotic dancers indicate that men are incapable of enjoying the sexual and emotional labour of women without dehumanizing them (see Holsopple 1999; Jeffreys 2010, 2009, 2008; Farley 2004, 2003; Farley et al. 2011, for example). However, the way the researchers I cite above have framed dehumanization is problematic and does not speak to sex workers' complexity of experience with customers in the workplace. Nor does it account for the multiple forms of dehumanization that

are experienced by women who work in other sectors of the service industry in patriarchal capitalist economies. From these scholars perspectives, it is assumed that women are disrespected as soon as men purchase a sexualized service from them and/or speak to them in a sexually explicit manner. But being paid by men to dance nude or engage in erotic talk is not the way that exotic dancers in my study viewed de-humanization.

Contrary to these scholars, I found that men customers' *not* paying us for our services was the ultimate form of disrespect because it was viewed as theft. While we mostly encountered respectful customers, there were also patrons who would sometimes withhold tips or expect us to speak with them for free. Instead of buying dances from the women who were working the floor or tipping the women who were performing on the main stage, men would often spend their money on pizza, beer, pool, or VLTs instead. "I'll just wait until you're on stage so I can watch you for free" was a common response when we attempted to sell dances to these particular patrons. These experiences were frustrating, although they felt mundane because they were a somewhat regular occurrence. Thus, withholding payment was its own form of disrespect because, although they did not necessarily say anything rude, these men did not recognize that engaging in pleasant conversation with them was labour for us, and thus worthy of compensation. This reflects Frank's (2002) and Egan's (2006a) findings in their ethnographic studies of strip club regulars. There are a variety of reasons why men visit strip clubs. These reasons are beyond the scope of my dissertation and have been explored by other scholars (Frank 1998, 2002, 2005; Egan 2006a, 2005, 2003; Brewster 2003). However, I mention exotic dancers' interactions with customers here because looking at these exchanges contributes to an understanding of masculinized violence against women and how understanding this violence is not a straight forward endeavour.

The fact that some men felt that strip clubs were spaces where they could say anything they wanted to women without the social or legal repercussions that might prevent them from disrespecting “real women” is telling, especially when dominant media has literally represented men getting away with the murder of women who work as exotic dancers (Johnson 2006). What I’m also suggesting is that our experiences with customers who refused to tip us or purchase dances yet expected us to interact with them pleasantly indicates a form of economic violence, where feminized emotional and sexual labour is expected for free because it is naturalized as an inherently feminine trait (Frank 2006; Bernstein 2007b). Thus, as some scholars argue, women have been socialized to give this labour for free (or for cheap, and usually only in romantic relationships), and men to expect it for free, even though the prevalence of strip clubs, brothels, massage parlours, and independent sex workers suggests that it is highly valued in the market economy (Bernstein 2007b; Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002; Constable 2009; Bradley-Engen and Hobbs 2010).

Thus, in opposition to the neo-liberal fantasy described by Povinelli (2006) that I mentioned above, traditional romantic love has a dark side with very real material consequences for women. Men’s economic violence towards exotic dancers they are in romantic relationships with is an extension of this patriarchal framework. One of Ivy’s ex-boyfriends, for example, demanded that she quit stripping, even though she made more money than him and even though he would be unable to support both of them on his income.

The only relationship it really affected was my last relationship, and he was really awful to me. Dancing was kind of like my life, and I met him, and he was totally cool with it at first. Then as we became closer and closer, he didn’t allow it to happen anymore, and he told me I had to quit. He didn’t want me doing it anymore, and I quit. I went broke. And then it just got super tough because I felt like I had to choose between two things that I thought that I loved. I thought I loved him, and I knew I loved dancing. I had to choose, and I chose him because I thought, ok, well he’s forever. Dancing I always knew was temporary.

It is evident from the literature on intimate partner violence and my research findings that violence is often a common component of heterosexual relationships, regardless of a woman's occupation (Anderson and Umberson 2001; Fernandez-Esquer and Diamond 2013; Hatty 2000; Levitt, Swanger, and Butler 2008; Muldoon et al. 2015; Reidy et al. 2014; DeShong 2015). Yet, for women who work as exotic dancers, this violence is uniquely understood as stemming from their occupation alone, even though it is only one of many triggers that compels men to enact violence upon women (Bradley-Engen and Hobbs 2010).

Scarlett offered her analysis of the way stripping is often constituted as the “cause” of problems in intimate relationships:

It's like victim blaming of any kind. If somebody gets assaulted, what was she wearing? What time of night was it? It's because of that. Then for dancers, it's just, well, it gets blamed on being a dancer. Even though that would have happened to anybody right? And it does happen to everybody. It's a very frustrating thing. Everyone just assumes the worst, and then blames it on dancing, when really that shit happens to everybody. Often times I think it's an excuse. There would still be jealousy in a relationship no matter what, whether or not you're a dancer. If you're with someone who says 'well what are you doing when you're out?', they'd be doing that anyway. But it's an excuse. It's like well, it's because you dance. If you didn't dance, we wouldn't have these problems. Wouldn't we? Maybe it's because you're an asshole.

In her analysis, Scarlett is speaking to the victim blaming mentality that is so pervasive in contemporary North American culture, where men may use the fact that their girlfriend is an exotic dancer as one of many excuses to justify jealousy and violence. This is significant because exotic dancers and other sex workers, like other women who have not adhered to traditional notions of feminine propriety, are not “perfect victims,” and thus, have little incentive to report instances of violence or seek services that could help them (Thaller and Cimino 2017; Johnson 2006; Hugill 2010; Bumiller 2008; Van der Meulen 2010).

In the last chapter, I focused on the cultural myth of exotic dancers coming from a “fucked up family” and how this myth impacted the way that dancers’ families approached them and their labour. In this chapter, I focus on the popular understanding that dancers relationships with romantic partners are uniquely dysfunctional or abusive, that dancers are deserving of any violence they experience in romantic relationships, and that they are to be used for sex and discarded (“hunted for sport” as Kat, put it). These myths contribute to a “discourse of disposability” when it comes to sex workers, and this informed the way that men approached women who work as dancers (Hugill 2010). Much like the stigma dancers experienced in their relationships with relatives, I argue that the stigma dancers had to negotiate in their romantic relationships with men further substantiates my theory that the contagion associated with “stripping money” undergirds the systemic violence of the social stigma attached to erotic labour.

### **Beware of “Peeler Pounders:” Dating as a Dancer**

When I first heard the term “peeler pounder,” I was working with a dancer named Nina soon after I returned to dancing for my fieldwork in Lockport, a small town about a half hour drive from the city. The gig booked two girls, who would alternate show times. I always liked being booked in Lockport throughout my fieldwork because the bar gave us a room to change in with a couch, chairs, and table so that we could relax there and chat in between shows, instead of having to mingle with patrons. Nina was an experienced dancer who had worked in the industry for twelve years. In between our shows, I told her about my research: how I planned to focus on how stigma impacts exotic dancers’ romantic relationships, and about how my recent break up with my boyfriend led to me dancing again for this research. She nodded knowingly and replied, “Uh huh, beware of the peeler pounders!” “Peeler pounders?” I asked. “Yeah. You know. The

guys that just want to see how many strippers they can get. Strippers are basically their trophies.” I found the term “peeler pounder” interesting because it seemed so vulgar and violent; referring to exotic dancers as “peelers” was not common for the women I worked with and they also did not commonly refer to sexual activity as “pounding.” Thus, I had to speculate that this term was not invented by dancers, but by the men who pursued them. When I started doing interviews, other dancers also referred to men who pursued dancers as “peeler pounders,” and even if they did not use this term, the concept behind this label was not foreign to them. The women I interviewed all had experience with men who viewed dancers as objects to be consumed for fantasy fulfillment outside of the strip club.

However, it should not be assumed that all women desire normative monogamous relationships with men. For some women, at least some of the time, casual dating or lovers was preferable to securing a long-term partner, or, as it is for many young women, was considered par for the course on the way to eventually finding a boyfriend or husband. But unlike other women, even when dancers desired a more casual romantic encounter, the stigma of their occupation caused them a great deal of frustration. Scarlett describes her experience with “peeler pounders” before she started dating her most recent boyfriend:

It doesn't happen very often. I think I've gone home with, like, three guys that I've met at work. It's always a mistake because it can't not be *their* story. That they went home with a stripper from the strip club. Even if there was the most personal connection, love at first look, which it never is, you can't help but be that story. And I *hate* that story. I hate that “oh yeah, I had sex with a ‘ripper.” A peeler pounder is what they call them. It's just so frustrating.

In this case, even when both parties desire a casual sexual encounter, Scarlett is aware that a double standard exists where men attain social status through multiple “conquests,” while women, especially those with stigmatized identities, are thought to be devalued through promiscuity. Scarlett's desire to be free to sleep with men that she finds attractive is at odds with

her desire to not be “that story,” and thus her enjoyment of these encounters is lessened by their potential to further stigmatize her as a dancer. Even if she had the most “personal connection” with someone, Scarlett felt that because she worked as an exotic dancer men could not help themselves from bragging about how they “had sex with a ‘ripper” afterwards, thus erasing all other aspects of her identity, and making it “their story” to tell, instead of hers.

As I discussed in Chapter One, dehumanization is part of the process of stigmatization and abjection. One way this occurred in exotic dancers’ relationships with family members (discussed in Chapter Four), was when stripping was used against them during arguments about unrelated matters, turning them from daughter/mother/sister/person into “just a stripper,” whose opinion is no longer relevant. Men who engaged in sexual relationships with dancers could dehumanize them in a similar manner. That is, perhaps instead of telling their friends that they had sex with a woman, with a person, or with Scarlett (or not saying anything at all), they had “sex with a ‘ripper,” thus turning a human into one fragment of her identity. Scarlett is no longer Scarlett. Instead, she becomes a metaphorical projection of all strippers; a void that a man can fill with his own fantasies about who strippers are and what they can do for his masculinity and straightness. Thus, engaging in a sexual relationship with a man is dangerous for women who work as exotic dancers because of the threat of literal and symbolic violence. Turning Scarlett from human to “just a stripper,” or person to abject, by fragmenting her identity makes her life less valuable in the eyes of a patriarchal society and puts her at risk for bodily harm in ways that other women are not. Similarly, Kat offered her analysis of men who pursue exotic dancers based on her experiences:

It’s kind of like if you were to compare it to the rave scene. There’s peeler pounders in the strip club scene, and there’s DJ whores in the rave scene. Now, having been both the peeler in peeler pounder and the whore in DJ whore, I understand the mechanics of both. The thing is I mean, yes, you’re attracted to

dancers because they're limber, lithe, and all that kind of stuff. That's really great. I understand that. But the problem is that there are some people who are in it for the wrong reasons. They think it's like Pokémon where you just have to fuck all of them.

Ivy also talked about "peeler pounders":

There are guys that seek us out just to say 'I banged a dancer. Fucked this stripper last night. Oh yeah, I'm so cool.' No, you're really not that cool. Not really. I'm just a regular person like you are.

Again, like Scarlett, Kat, and Ivy get at the inherent dehumanization in the way that men spoke about their sexual encounters with women who work as exotic dancers. Kat draws a comparison to collecting dancers as one would Pokeman, illustrating how men can objectify women by treating sex with dancers as a game. The "discourse of disposability" surrounding sex workers comes into play here; Kat draws attention to how sex with dancers is not only treated as a game, but by extension, dancers are discarded like inanimate objects with little value beyond the "points" a man might score in his social world. Similarly, In Ivy's view, a man claiming to be "cool" because he "banged a dancer" implies that she is not a "regular person" who is worthy of the same respect as he is. If Ivy is not a "regular person" because she is an exotic dancer, then she is placed in the category of "Other," where she can easily be stripped of her humanity. The way men treat and speak about dancers that they have had sexual relationships with demonstrates how stigma manifests as violence in women's lives. Once placed in the "Other" category, women become more vulnerable to violence, both physical and structural, because their lives are seen as less valuable than others. In other words, they become abject, or those whom society rejects and desires to rid itself of.

Somewhat ironically, Ivy, Scarlett and Kat's descriptions of "peeler pounders," when compared to their descriptions of how men acted towards them when they were in more serious relationships with them, reveals a paradox. Although it appears that men can bolster their

masculinity through sexual conquests in general, especially when those conquests include women who work as exotic dancers, their masculinity seems to be threatened when they engage in a more serious romantic partnership with them. Similarly, Bradley-Engen and Hobbs (2010, 81) summarize this finding with “the old adage, ‘party with the bad girl, but marry the good girl.’” In other words, the man who can claim he “fucked a stripper” is congratulated and perhaps looked upon with envy by his friends, while a man who marries a stripper is thought to be a cuckold and ridiculed by his social network. This popular sentiment needs to be unpacked, as confusion related to this binary line of thinking often arose for the men who dated dancers, according to the women in my study. Unpacking men’s confusion here is important because, as I mentioned above, women who work as dancers are at significant risk of literal and symbolic violence when they engage in sexual relationships with men. Given the amount of data that suggests that husbands and boyfriends are the number one killers of women worldwide, combined with the heinous amount of violence against sex workers, understanding the circumstances that may threaten straight masculinity is imperative.

Women told me how men would express both feelings of pride and shame when it came to dating a dancer. Scarlett describes her experience with a man that she dated:

The impression I had was that he was kind of impressed with himself for dating a dancer, and at the same time intimidated. Like, “oh this is fun and exciting,” which is why he was bringing his friends to the strip club when he never would have gone otherwise. But also because he didn’t want to have a serious relationship with me.

In this instance, Scarlett felt that the man she was dating used her as a sort of conduit to express his selfhood and class identity by bringing his friends to a strip club to see her dance. By bringing his friends to the club where she was working, he ensured that he would not have to take on the “intimidating” aspects of dating a dancer, i.e., the inevitability of his friends teasing

him for getting involved in a serious relationship with a stripper. Regardless of how he actually felt about her, he chose to use his relationship with Scarlett to reify his masculinity and prove his sexual prowess to his friends, rather than continue dating her. In other words, it seems that it was acceptable for him to flirt with the abject by “fucking a stripper” and taking his friends to see Scarlett at work. But if he became Scarlett’s boyfriend, he would cross the line and become too closely associated with abjection. Class identity and whiteness is relevant here. As I discuss in the next chapter, many white middle-class Canadian women choose to flirt with the abject, or consume the “Other,” by adopting elements of stripper culture, such as pole dancing classes, while distancing themselves from actual strippers. Feminist scholar bell hooks (1992) calls this practice “eating the Other.” Similarly, feminist post-colonial scholar Sara Ahmed (2000) calls this consumption practice “stranger fetishism,” where the “Other” is both feared and desired.

According to Ahmed (2000), these “strangers” of Western normality are not considered to have any authorship of their own. Instead, their perceived “strangeness” becomes a consumable object for Westerners, without regard for how this kind of consumption dehumanizes and reinforces difference. In a similar manner, middle-class men may seek out sexual adventure with exotic dancers, but would not consider a relationship with them. In other words, “the ‘stranger’ is the object of desire, or comes to embody ‘the place’ that the subject seeks to inhabit” (Ahmed 2000, 117). The man Scarlett dated participated in this harmful consumption practice. Moreover, he contributes to Scarlett’s abjection and stigmatization by refusing to acknowledge that she is also a complex desiring subject, as he is. Thus, he ignores the similarities between them and chooses to focus on the “strangeness” of her labour and what this might do for his self-image. Once again, a woman is rendered “just a stripper,” who merely exists as a foil for hegemonic masculinity and white middle-class identity.

Kat also talked about her attitude towards dating while working as an exotic dancer:

I haven't really dated that many people, but the ones that I have I'm very upfront. Very like, this is what I do, take me or leave me. I kind of just say, hey, before we get into this, can you date a dancer? Yes or no? I'll give you a minute to think about this, and then we'll go from there. Take away the pink fluffy clouds around it, take away the flashy lights and the "oh my god I'm dating a stripper!" These are the facts of life that you're gonna have to deal with dating me: I sleep late. I'm up late. I don't get weekends off. I have a lot of clothes. Most of them are shiny. There will be glitter EVERYWHERE. There's a lot that they don't get.

Women in my study developed strategies to avoid experiencing stigma in romantic relationships like the one Kat describes above, where they ask potential dating partners to consider the realities of seriously dating an exotic dancer at the beginning of a relationship in order to avoid entanglements that might end up hurting everyone involved. Humanization, or taking away the "pink fluffy clouds" and "flashy lights" as Kat puts it, is part of this process, as Scarlett and Kat both acknowledge the tendency for men to see them as the objects of fantasy consumption they present while at work, rather than as "real" women. This strategy differs significantly from how women chose to negotiate stigma in their relationships with relatives. Dancers were far more upfront about what they did for a living with the men that they dated, almost presenting it as an ultimatum; if you want to date me, you must support my choice of work. Scarlett describes her reasoning behind this strategy:

My thought on it is that there's already so much stigma that I deal with from strangers, from family, from friends, from everywhere. If I'm choosing a partner, I'm not going to bring someone into my life that makes me feel shitty about it. And it's hard. It's a lot to ask for. Like, "you just need to 100 percent accept this", but I just can't have it otherwise.

Scarlett did not feel that it was worth the risk to bring a man into her life that did not wholly support her career since she had to negotiate stigma in every other aspect of her life and relationships with other people. Ivy also attempted to avoid "peeler pounders" through a similar strategy:

I could never dance again being in a relationship if the guy was just excited that I was a stripper. It's weird because it's like, are you dating me because I'm a stripper? Or are you dating me because you like me?

While we could not choose family members who were accepting of our choice of occupation, in theory, we could indeed choose romantic partners who would be a source of refuge from the stigma we experienced in other relationships. However, Scarlett acknowledged, "it's a lot to ask for" because she is aware that most of the potential romantic partners she will encounter in her life will have difficulty giving her the things she needs because of the stigma of her occupation. In other words, Scarlett knows it will be a challenge for most men to see her as human. Moreover, because the literature on intimate partner violence that I cite in this chapter suggests that the respect Scarlett desires from men is in short supply for most women who date men regardless of their occupation, she faces even more of a challenge. Thus, Scarlett speaks to the feminist work that would be required of a man who wanted to date her, as well as the work that would be required of her to make him see her as human and not "just a stripper."

Similarly, Ivy calls attention to the difficulty of knowing if the men she dated actually wanted to get to know her, or if they were only interested in consuming her "strangeness" as an exotic dancer. As I discuss above, when men "fuck strippers" to consume their "strangeness" they contribute to the stigmatization and abjection of exotic dancers. Ivy does not want to date men who are too "excited" about her job because she is aware that this fascination does not mean that they recognize stripping as legitimate labour, or that their interest in her stripping should necessarily be interpreted as support for her choice of occupation. Instead, Ivy knows that men's keen interest in her work is a barrier to them really seeing her as a complex subject. As bell hooks (1992, 366) has argued about white men who seek sexual experiences with women of colour, "The 'real fun' is to be had by bringing to the surface all those 'nasty' unconscious

fantasies and longings about contact with the Other embedded in the secret (not so secret) deep structure of white supremacy.” Much like the white men who seek out women of colour to fulfill “nasty” desires for difference hooks (1992) describes, men pursue sex with exotic dancers in order to “spice up” an otherwise vanilla existence. For the men who pursue exotic dancers, these desires are embedded in capitalist patriarchal structures that establish exotic dancers as abject women. Ivy understands that, had she never worked as a dancer, she would probably not have to question men’s motives for wanting to date her. Thus, Ivy reads men’s desire as not really for her as an individual, but for the imaginary stripper fantasy, or body of the “other.”

Therefore, Kat, Scarlett, and Ivy all acknowledge the great deal of work that is required on their parts if they want to engage in a romantic relationship with a man, as well as the risks that are involved when their efforts to get men to see them as more than fantasy objects fail. Even when exotic dancers do not wish to engage in serious romantic partnerships with men, casual encounters with men present similar challenges, which I have elucidated in this section. However, as I discuss in Chapter Four when I talk about the emotional work that women are expected to do on behalf of the family, the work women do to educate their romantic partners is also normalized. Thus, while it was acknowledged by participants that other women did not have to do this extra work, educating men about stripping was seen as part and parcel of the dating experience for women who work as dancers.

### **Negotiating Stigma in Relationships**

Although most dancers (myself included) took this educational approach to dating, this strategy yielded mixed results because the majority of men that dancers dated eventually revealed that they were not “okay” with their girlfriends or wives working as strippers, even if they told women that they took no issue with their occupation at the beginning of their relationships.

Dancers noticed that when their relationships with men became closer emotionally, their acceptance of stripping or experience of pride in “fucking a stripper” began to wane. Thus, as I argued in the last section, when it comes to dating a dancer, everything seems to hinge upon how her work impacts a man’s selfhood, feelings, and identity, leaving little space for concern about the dancer’s selfhood, feelings, and identity.

Misty talked about her relationship with her soon-to-be husband:

Calvin was okay with it at the beginning. He doesn’t like it, but it’s not his choice. Same with my ex. He didn’t like it either, but I wanted to quit. I think it was more the socializing, because you’re just socializing with men all evening and all day. So I think that was more the insecure part about it. But they’re just insecure. I’m not insecure, they are.

All of the women I interviewed expressed frustration with dating men because of similar attitudes to those Misty expressed; men’s acceptance at the beginning of a relationship often turned into jealousy later on. Additionally, even though Misty was able to avoid some conflict with her ex-husband because she “wanted to quit” anyways for a period of time, this was short lived because she eventually desired to return to dancing. Thus, constantly having to deal with insecure men, both through her emotional labour at work and in the home, contributed to Misty’s desire to quit stripping for the time being. In this way, she could at least avoid some of the fallout from their insecurity, even though she also had to take the economic consequences of losing that source of income.

However, some of the women in my study had mixed feelings about the ways in which their romantic partners expressed jealousy over their occupation. While Lucy, for instance, expected acceptance and respect from her boyfriend, she also understood her partner’s jealousy as an inevitable and expected part of their relationship. While I was driving her one day, we talked about relationships, including the one she had with her most recent boyfriend, Tom. She

had met him while she was working at Kisses, but she told me that he was not a regular and not really the strip club going kind. He came in a few more times just to see her, and eventually, they started dating. She told me how he was beginning to get jealous because other men got to see her naked all day, yet at the same time she “kind of liked” that because she thought that it showed that he cared about her. “I would be jealous, too, if someone were flirting with my boyfriend,” she told me. Lucy gave me an example of a recent argument she had with Tom: “The other day he was asking me what I do when someone puts a tip on stage, and I said, ‘Well, I’ll usually just give him a bit more attention.’ And he was like, ‘Well what does that mean?’ And I said, ‘Well, I just put on a little show for him.’ He got mad and was like, ‘So you put your pussy in his face? I thought you just walked around and you could barely see anything!’” I nodded in understanding since I had had many similar arguments with ex-partners. However, I had never met any of them at a strip club, so I thought it was rather odd that Lucy’s boyfriend did not seem to know what she did while she was on stage. “I’m also having that regular, Jeff, take me to a hockey game tonight. I know Tom would be jealous, even though it doesn’t mean anything to me beyond getting to go to a Jets game for free. I’m debating whether or not I should tell him,” Lucy said. “Oh, well Jeff is harmless. He has nothing to worry about,” I said. I understood why Lucy would want to go to the hockey game, as she was an avid Winnipeg Jets fan, and even had a sequined dancing costume with Jets logos on it. Right after this exchange while we were driving, Lucy saw her abusive ex-boyfriend drive past us, which obviously caused her some distress. She then decided to call Tom. They talked for a while. Lucy ended the conversation by saying, “You’re the best boyfriend I’ve ever had. I just wanted to tell you that.” I assumed that sentiment was inspired by seeing her ex-partner drive past us. When she hung up the phone, she said “I just couldn’t tell him about the Jets game. He sounded too happy, and I didn’t want to start an

argument over nothing.” Billie also demonstrated empathy for her long term partner’s experience of facing ridicule due to her occupation:

I mean your girlfriend is getting naked on stage and everybody knows. That’s the hard part. It’s not like I’m not known in the dancer world now. It’s easier when they don’t know who I am, but now they do. “Your girlfriend is Billie the dancer oooo,” you know.

Much like the dancers in Bradley-Engen and Hobbs’ (2010) study, Lucy had empathy for her partner’s jealousy, and both Lucy and Billie had to constantly put themselves in their partners shoes, so to speak, in order to avoid discord in their relationship. Similarly, Bradley-Engen and Hobbs (2010) observed that dancers in her study would participate in “role-taking” behaviour, that is, taking the perspective of their partners when trying to understand men’s jealous reactions to stripping. However, they also observed that dancer’s partners were more likely to identify with patrons rather than with the women they were in a relationship with. They explain “Thus, although dancers often took the role of the partner, and were able to imagine the feelings and perspective of the men with whom they were involved, their partners appeared either unwilling or able to accomplish this” (Bradley-Engen and Hobbs 2010, 74). My data offers a deeper understanding of this finding and how it contributes to the abjection and stigmatization of exotic dancers. As I explained in the last section, men would often casually date dancers, or consume the “other,” as a way to bolster their masculinity and middle-classness. But in order for dating a dancer to accomplish that kind of identity work for men, it also necessitates a refusal to see the dancers they dated as agentic subjects or “girlfriend material.” Thus, for men like the boyfriends of Billie and Lucy, who did engage in serious relationships with exotic dancers, “crossing over” into close association with abjection caused anxiety over their identity as men. I argue that this anxiety manifested as jealousy and stubbornness when it came to engaging in the emotional work of empathizing with women who had to contend with stigma in their daily lives. Lucy, for

example, understands that her boyfriend cannot give her everything she needs, but does not think that he would be able to demonstrate the same kind of understanding for her were she to tell him that she was going to a Jets game with a customer. Therefore, Lucy takes on the majority of the emotional labour in her relationship, like most women in heterosexual relationships, in addition to the extra work that is required of her because she is an exotic dancer, which is naturalized as part of her role as a girlfriend. Additionally, as I discussed in Chapter Four in relation to the kind of dialogue that emerges for family members during arguments, Lucy may have also felt that her words would have little meaning to him if he was overcome with anger about her working as a dancer. In this case, the fact that she was a stripper would overshadow any rational argument she had for wanting to attend the Jets game with a regular. For the men who engaged in relationships with the women in my study, dancers' voices are not invested with the same importance as male patrons. Thus, divesting their girlfriends of authority on the subject of stripping became a way that men could accomplish the work of regaining the kind of masculinity they lost when they moved from "fucking a stripper" to a serious relationship with a dancer.

Similar to Lucy, Ivy also experienced mixed feelings about men's jealousy after an adverse experience dating a man who was not accepting of her working as a dancer:

Other than that really bad experience, it didn't really affect my relationships with boyfriends. All my boyfriends were kind of like, 'my girl's a stripper, my girl is so hot.' Now that I think back to it, I'm like, that's not cool. Why are you okay with your girlfriend being a stripper? Why are you okay with your girlfriend getting naked on stage for a bunch of guys? Why are you okay with that? But I guess if the guy is confident in themselves and in our relationship then, sure. Great.

In Lucy and Ivy's experiences, men's jealous behaviour in regards to them stripping is understood as such a natural aspect of masculinity that it was confusing to them when it was absent. In other words, if a man they were in a relationship with was not at least somewhat

jealous, they thought that there must be something amiss. Indeed, throughout my fieldwork, whenever I informed a dancer about my research topic, many reacted by suggesting “that’s how men are” or “well men are just insecure,” as if these were the answers to my research questions, which speaks to the normalization of masculinized violence (DeShong 2015). As Ivy pointed out in her statement above, she would want to know exactly why a man was “okay” with their girlfriend working as a dancer, since jealousy was so common. She concluded that one possible explanation, and the most desirable, was that he was confident, secure, and trusting.

According to the dancers in my study, there seemed to be a progression from excitement and pride at the start of a new relationship, to jealousy, sulking, whining, and sometimes emotional or financial violence towards the end. As was common in the family arguments I discussed in Chapter Four, I also discovered that stripping was used against women in arguments with romantic partners, regardless of the original nature of the dispute. As Misty told me, during arguments, her ex-husband would sometimes yell, “You’re just a stripper, shut the fuck up!” The use of this insult by Misty’s ex-husband was particularly odd in her case, since her main occupation was working as an administrative assistant. Insults related to stripping from men that dancers were in relationships with was something that all participants experienced and seems to be a common occurrence for exotic dancers noted by other researchers (Colosi 2010; Bradley-Engen and Hobbs 2010; Bruckert 2002; Roach 2007; Dewey 2011). Billie, for example, who had been in a relationship with her partner since she was in high school, told me how he would occasionally use stripping against her during arguments:

He’s never been too bad about it. Only when we’ve gotten into fights. If we got into a fight and broke up, he’d be like, “Oh you’ll end up on the stripper pole for the rest of your life” or, “Oh yeah, well go dance on that fucking pole,” you know. But for the most part, I think decent enough. I’d say six... seven... well, maybe six and a half times out of ten he’s okay with it. Which is way better than you could ever expect for a serious relationship.

Misty reported similar experiences in her current and past relationships:

My ex-husband still calls me, “Okay MISTY [mocking tone].” He’d always throw that in my face. How are you being so judgmental about something that pays very well? I just don’t find it degrading. A lot of people do, but that’s their opinion on it. Everybody is allowed their own opinion, right? But yeah, he throws it in my face all the time. Only when we fight, though. It’s like they’re hurting my feelings, but they’re not. They’re just being stupid.

What is interesting about both women’s responses to their partners’ behaviour is that they do not seem terribly surprised or hurt by it. In fact, Billie felt that her relationship was reasonably healthy, even though her partner sometimes used stripping as an insult during arguments. In her experience, a six-and-a-half out of ten acceptance level was the best a woman who works as an exotic dancer could hope for. Again, as I have tried to convey throughout this chapter, and throughout my dissertation, women who have dated men will most likely find this behaviour predictable, regardless of their occupation. Many women will have had experience dismissing their partner’s violent behaviour, especially when it is constituted as a “natural” part of masculinity, particularly when it was verbal, economic, or psychological, rather than physical (DeShong 2015).

### **Hoping for More**

All of the women who participated in my study told me that they experienced some form of economic, verbal, psychological, or, less often, physical violence, either in past or current relationships with men. This is a common experience for most women who engage in romantic relationships with men. However, it is much more likely for this violence to surface or become exacerbated when masculinity is threatened (Anderson and Umberson 2001; Fernandez-Esquer and Diamond 2013; Hatty 2000; Levitt, Swanger, and Butler 2008; Muldoon et al. 2015; Reidy et al. 2014; York 2011; DeShong 2015). In this case, it was through men’s reactions to their

partners' choices of occupation, especially when they are unwilling or unable to move past binary thinking (stripper *or* girlfriend) and empathize with their partners.

But dancers were not always forced to choose between having a romantic relationship with a man and their occupation. Kat's now husband, and Scarlett's partner at the time that I interviewed her, rejected hegemonic masculinity in a variety of ways, thus challenging the idea that strippers must choose between celibacy (or brief sexual encounters) or quitting their job in order to secure a compatible partner. In many ways, men who do not conform to hegemonic masculinity by engaging in meaningful and respectful relationships with exotic dancers are committing a revolutionary act; they are respecting women's bodily autonomy and personhood and defending their rights to these things despite being ridiculed for not conforming to traditional masculinity.

I am not claiming that men deserve accolades for treating women with respect, or suggesting that these relationships were always unproblematic. However, unfortunately, because the reality of women's lived experience with men is so often violent, respecting women's bodily autonomy and personhood in a romantic relationship *is* radical. The rarity of this kind of relationship is evident in the way Scarlett described her relationship with her partner:

I keep calling him a magical unicorn because I'm like, he's the man. He's a nice man who's sort of... he's a magical unicorn. They don't exist.

Kat identified as bisexual and had an open relationship with her husband, where any feelings of jealousy were openly and respectfully discussed if and when they came up, and Scarlett told me how her work as a dancer was a non-issue in their relationship. This does not mean that these romantic relationships were perfect; rather, that they are complex and fluid.

Thus, working as an exotic dancer presents specific challenges to heteronormative relationships (Bradley-Engen and Hobbs 2010; Dewey 2011; Bruckert 2002; Maia 2012; Colosi

2010; Barton 2006). However, it should not be assumed that working as a dancer precludes finding a compatible romantic partner, as some women dated men who did not conform to traditional notions of masculinity.

Focusing on stigma in dancers' romantic relationships with men sheds light on the violence of hegemonic masculinity and how capitalist logic that shames women for expecting compensation for sexual labour plays into masculine identity. Similar to some dancers' family members, some dancers' partners would use stripping as an insult during arguments. However, unlike in their relationships with their families, dancers were not as willing to risk their financial security or emotional well-being in order to sustain a romantic relationship. Still, the threats to women's income and the bolstering of masculinity that was required of them in romantic relationships, no matter how temporary, shows how the systemic violence of stigma materializes in dancers' lives in specific ways.

In the next chapter, I explore the economic aspects of stripping, as I expand my analysis of stigma and further conceptualize my theory of "stripping money."

## Chapter 6 “Easy” Money, Hard Work: Conceptualizing “Stripping Money”

Misty: Stripping is hard work. That’s what a lot of people don’t understand. Getting up there. It’s frickin’ hard. You’re wearing five-inch heels, dancing. And then you’re going show to show to show to show. It’s WORK. Lots of people are like, “Oh you just work in the bars, and you just drink,” and it’s like, no. No. I actually have to move, and walk, and dance, and talk, and sit, and stand...

It was early Friday evening in late October, and I was driving down the far north end of Henderson Highway with Morgan, a twenty-four-year-old dancer I had met a few times before but had never driven.

The drive to Lockport during the fall is always beautiful, and Morgan gazed out the window to admire the lovely foliage as we chatted. I couldn’t remember what I had told her about myself, so I reminded her that I was a doctoral student doing research on the impact that the stigma of dancing has on romantic relationships. “Oh yeah, I think you mentioned something about that before. But my experience might be different from the other girls you’ve talked to because I don’t have the typical jealous boyfriend,” she said. “My boyfriend actually used to work security at Secrets, so he understands my job. He doesn’t judge, and he knows that it’s hard work.” Morgan shook her head as she articulated her observations of exotic dancers’ romantic relationships with men over the years.

“It’s just so frustrating to see these beautiful girls accepting all of this jealous bullshit from men, especially when you see them supporting their boyfriends with their stripping money. I think they do that because they’re ashamed of their job. They feel guilty. Like that’s what they deserve, and they think they need to pay for it. There’s no way in hell I’m going to do this job and give some guy all of my money,” Morgan said.

“We’re making this money off of our bodies, we’re naked, and we’re vulnerable. This money belongs to me.”

Her words gave me much to think about.

Although I had thought a great deal about the meaning of forms of violence in romantic relationships, and how the seeming illegitimacy of stripping labour contributed to this violence, up until that point I hadn't given as much thought to the earmarking of money by dancers as "stripping money." What are the implications of understanding money in this way? Why was the money we made "off of our bodies," as Morgan framed it, different from other types of money? How did the ways we spend "stripping money" delineate our relationships and social networks? Does spending "stripping money" in particular ways actually alleviate guilt and shame or protect us from stigma and violence? These were all questions that I had after my conversation with Morgan, and I explore them in this chapter.

In the previous chapters, I have shown how the stigma of exchanging sexualized services for money could negatively impact exotic dancers' quality of life. Specifically, I argued that stigma is systemic violence that manifests itself through multiple forms of direct violence that arise in women's relationships with their family members and romantic partners. Moreover, I have demonstrated that the violence that occurs in these relationships contributes to the dehumanization and abjection of women who work as exotic dancers, which silences their voices and puts them at risk for more violence. Understanding the underlying capitalist patriarchal cultural mechanisms that serve to legitimate women's abjection under these conditions is important so that we can begin to identify points of intervention for de-stigmatization.

While others studies of exotic dance (which I cite in Chapter One) have mostly focused on the kinds of stigma management techniques used by dancers, this study questions the naturalization of stigma's existence in their lives and offers a deeper understanding of how stigma operates as violence. Going beyond the management of stigma, we need to consider who

might benefit from the abjection of exotic dancers (and women more generally) and who the stakeholders might be in our stigmatization. Exposing the powerful socioeconomic motivations undergirding the stigmatization of exotic dancers is one way that the violence of this stigma can be challenged. Therefore, in this chapter, I shift the analysis to consider how the dancers in my study perceived the money that they made. How do their perceptions tie in to the broader argument I am making about stigma and its relationship to the morality of earning and spending money in a patriarchal capitalist economy. I argue that an analysis of the moral condemnation of stripping for its apparent mixing of sacred intimacy with the profane market suggests how stigma becomes attached to women performing this type of labour. This is an important line of analysis because when we take Zelizer's (2011) economic theory of "connected lives" into consideration, we reveal the paradox of this moral condemnation of erotic labour. It is paradoxical because, from a feminist perspective, economics can be seen to pervade all intimate relationships and so-called sacred intimate spaces.

According to Zelizer (2011, 167), "connected lives" means that "people constantly mingle their most intimate relations with economic activities, including monetary payments; households, for instance, are hotbeds of economic interaction. Instead of menacing alien intrusions, economic transactions repeatedly serve to create, define, sustain, and challenge our multiple intimate relations." Thus, women who exchange sexualized intimacy for money are not only threatening to the social order because they mix erotics and commerce, but because they do so in a blatant way that is divorced from the "right" way to engage in this exchange, i.e. through marriage, domesticity, monogamy, or other ways that are deemed socially appropriate for women. As I have argued throughout my thesis, when women are deemed threatening to the

social order by working as exotic dancers, they become abject and experience multiple forms of violence in their interpersonal relationships.

Despite the stigma they experienced on a daily basis, dancers remained optimistic in the face of this adversity, often citing some of the benefits that stripping offered them. One of the most positive aspects of stripping that participants mentioned was its potential for them as young women who would likely be working in jobs that didn't pay much above minimum wage. They could make a living as dancers that not only paid their bills but also allowed for disposable income that would improved their quality of life. For women who had second jobs, young children to care for, or were in school, the flexible schedule that stripping offered them was an important considerations. They could work part-time as dancers, like Misty and I did, and still earn a considerable amount of money.

Sex-work scholars have claimed that the primary motivation for women to pursue erotic labour is the increased income, the immediacy of cash, and flexibility relative to other available options (Jeffery and MacDonald 2006; Weldon 2010; Egan, Frank, and Johnson 2006; Willman 2010; Bernstein 2007a, 2007b; Dewey 2011). My research contributes new ethnographic data that echos this finding. Misty, who worked as an administrative assistant for an accounting firm and danced part-time, had this to say about money and stripping:

People think, oh you're a stripper. You don't know any better. I would tell people, I have a full-time job. I've been doing what I do for the past ten years. This is just a filler for me. I know girls who put themselves through school. Charity did a nursing degree. She was a nurse, and she preferred to dance because she made more money. People just don't understand that because they don't want to. They just automatically look at you as, oh, you don't know better. It's just easy to take your clothes off. No, it's really good money, and it's just easy to have that job.

For Misty, stripping was a part-time, flexible "filler" job that she could return to whenever she needed extra cash, which is what she is referring to when she says "it's just easy to have that

job.” Misty also pointed out how a coworker chose stripping over nursing due to its potential to make her more money, thus reflecting the importance of income to choosing a career as an exotic dancer. Here, Misty also chastises people who judge her for stripping by confronting the stereotype that dancers must not “know any better” or have other career options. She criticizes people who do not see the obvious capitalist logic of pursuing this line of work. In her view, this is “because they don’t want to,” an accusation she levels at the people who stigmatize her job. Misty’s words also highlight the privilege inherent in choosing not to see the financial benefits of stripping; women who have never had to struggle to make ends meet will not have to confront the hypocrisy of capitalist patriarchy as she has. Even though all women labour under a misogynist hierarchical economic system that does not serve them or promote their interests, working as an exotic dancer has allowed Misty to see the system for what it is and make it work to her advantage. In other words, people may see the economic logic in choosing a career in stripping, but acknowledging this logic would necessitate an unraveling of sacred and deeply ingrained cultural beliefs about money, class, monogamy, intimacy, and gender. This “unraveling” is what women who participated in my study have begun to do.

As Zelizer (2011) argues, contrary to the romantic notion of intimacy that is free from market intrusions, people actually devote intense effort to ensure that the “right” type of monetary transaction occurs in intimate relationships. Similarly, Povinelli (2006, 196) argues that “the importance of the dense hermeneutic and institutional mirroring between economic, political, and intimate contracts is not that it shows how these contractual forms have collapsed into each other in some absolute way, but how their possible implosion created widespread anxiety.” Additionally, Povinelli (2006) argues that, rather than confront their own practices, which belie the truth of intimate events aligning with economic and political ones, people with

liberal values in western democracies dismiss any personal deviation from the separation of intimacy and commerce as mere aberrations that do not negate the fact of general social equality. This relates to the arguments I have made about abjection in previous chapters. Fears that erotic labour might be just as rational as their own household economies, and that the women who work as exotic dancers could be any woman, causes society to distance themselves from that which is causing their trepidation. Furthermore, exotic dancers are made abject because their labour reveals the truth about capitalist patriarchal systems. That is, that these systems are upheld through the exploitation of women's emotional and sexual labour, valuable commodities which are expected to be freely or cheaply given, and primarily operate to serve the interests of powerful men. Acknowledging the material value of women's sexuality by recognizing the work of exotic dancers as legitimate labour would be akin to suggesting the destruction of this system, which is a dangerous proposition because it poses a threat to those who hold the most privilege and power in society. Thus, the stigma of working as a dancer manifests violently to protect these interests.

As I have argued throughout my thesis, the danger that abjection and stigmatization creates for women who work as exotic dancers cannot be underestimated. Stigma is not simply a minor inconvenience to be managed; it is systemic violence. As scholars have discovered in their studies on other forms of sex work, stigma can contribute to detrimental health outcomes, intense physical and emotional suffering, and death (Maticka-Tyndale et al. 1999, 2000; Dewey 2011; Choo et al. 2012). Scambler (2007) has argued that stigma is deeply felt, and thus has an impact on our bodies. Furthermore, the murder of sex workers and violence against them is often reported in a way that reproduces and maintains their stigmatization.<sup>23</sup> In other words, as

Povinelli has argued about the Aboriginal population of Australia, sex workers and other abject communities “can continually suffer death without evoking mourning” (2006, 202).

Sadly, experiences with dehumanization were ordinary occurrences in exotic dancers’ lives. Ivy explained to me how she had confided in a few women she went to school with about her former job as an exotic dancer. One day, as they were all sitting around the lunch table talking about their plans for the future, Ivy mentioned how she’d eventually like to have lots of children. One of the women chastised Ivy, saying “I guess that’s what happens when money comes so easily to people. They think they can just splurge it and have as many kids as they want. You must be used to easy money.” Ivy explained to me:

I was just like, girl. You don’t even know. It’s not like that. From that point on she viewed me completely different. It was like, oh, she’s the stripper. She’s not a human being. She’s not a person. She’s not a woman. She’s not a girl. She was a stripper. So it’s hard to tell people because you have to kind of go, I was a stripper. But wait! Hold on. Let me explain myself.

In this situation, assumptions about how Ivy had earned her income in the past impacted how she was seen by her peers as “not a woman” and “not a person.” In Ivy’s view, the only way she could potentially retrieve her humanity in the eyes of others was if she had an opportunity to “explain” herself. An analysis of the relationship between money and stigma in dancers lives is imperative. Ivy’s classmate characterizes stripping money as “easy,” and connects this to “splurging,” the implication being that when women are able to make money easily, they will not adequately recognize its value and spend it unwisely, an issue I explore in the next section of this chapter.

While money and schedule flexibility appear to be the main reasons for many women to pursue a career in adult entertainment, there are other reasons why women seek a career in stripping. But as my research and other research shows, the number one motivator for women to

choose dancing, like anyone who chooses to work in any occupation, is money for living, and, in the case of stripping (and most likely other occupations based on tips), the immediacy of this money (Dewey 2011; Weldon 2010).

During my fieldwork, women often told me how irritating it was when customers asked them why they were working as exotic dancers (usually some variation of the cliché “what’s a girl like you doing in a place like this?”) when it seemed so obvious to them. As I mentioned above when discussing Misty’s statement about how people think that women who work as exotic dancers must not “know any better,” the supposed social deviancy of working as an exotic dancer seemed to blur common sense for these patrons. It was as if economic security was not a good enough reason to work as a dancer. Thus, starting from the assumption that money was the primary reason that many women worked as exotic dancers was useful because it allowed me to move beyond the “why do they do it” and into a more nuanced analysis of stripping economics. Starting from this supposition was important because, as Weldon (2010, 151) explains, “The ability to acquire a job entirely without a resume and to leave your first working shift with cash makes more of a difference to most of the women who decide to do it than the social and sexual aspects.”

However, unlike exotic dancers who work in other locales like Ontario, for example (see Macklin 2003; Bruckert 2002), the women who work in Winnipeg also receive weekly paychecks for their stage shows in addition to the cash that they earn directly from patrons, as I explained in Chapter Three. The regular paychecks received by dancers who work in Winnipeg are important to this analysis. Other scholars have argued that dancers and other sex workers tend to spend money quickly because of how directly this money is made, in addition to the perceived “dirtiness” of this money, which necessitates its immediate disposal (Dewey 2011;

Weldon 2010; Willman 2010; Bott 2006). The addition of a paycheck to direct payments of cash from customers problematizes these arguments, as I discuss in the next section of this chapter.

The women in my study had much to say about money, economics, capitalism, and the contradictions that came with participating in neoliberal economic capitalist systems that symbolically devalued their sexual and emotional labour while compensating them handsomely for it.

I argue in this chapter that while exotic dancers are offered a place in the economy as consumers, they are not necessarily extended a place in society as labourers with rights. This lack of rights came up acutely when women wanted to leave stripping for other occupations that would not recognize dancing as legitimate work experience. As I have suggested in previous chapters, the money earned from stripping (or other forms of erotic labour) was thought to be “tainted” in a number of ways that other ways of making money was not. While people who work in most other forms of labour are allowed some freedom and privacy in terms of what they spend their money on, dancers are subjected to harsher moral judgment and must endure invasive questions about their spending habits and income (Weldon 2010; Dewey 2011).

I recall telling people that I was stripping to pay my way through university as an undergraduate student, even when my mother was paying my tuition. Dancers in my study said similar things to nosy patrons and casual acquaintances. For some people who would otherwise judge exotic dancers, stripping is at least somewhat redeemable in some cases if it is done for “the right reasons,” such as paying for school or supporting children as a single mother, which I address in this chapter.

I will never forget watching talk shows like *Ricky Lake* as a child in the 1990s, where women who worked as strippers were dragged on stage to be shamed into quitting for a

“respectable” nine to five job by their friends, family, and romantic partners (shored up by the host and audience, of course). It was clear that the amount of money one made as an exotic dancer was not an important consideration for the status given to women by those in their social networks; it was better to make money through embodied labour that was “clean,” no matter what the financial sacrifice.

Throughout this chapter I explore the paradox of “easy money” and hard work, ideas of “dirt” and “cleanliness” related to how dancers’ income, or “stripping money,” is earned and spent, the place of erotic labour in the economy, and, ultimately, its link to the social stigma that exotic dancers experienced in their lives and relationships.

### **“Easy” Money for Hard Work: Cash and the Devaluing of Women’s Embodied Labour**

Before working in the exotic dance industry, the women in my study were most often employed in other service based occupations where emotional labour and an attractive physical appearance were also job requirements. Here, Scarlett describes an experience she had in another jobs before dancing:

I used to work as a receptionist. It’s kind of similar qualifications to what you need to do to be a stripper. As a receptionist, part of the reason I got the job was because I was a young, attractive looking woman. So I’m sitting in front of their office building greeting people, and I’m friendly and nice, and that was my job. Be nice looking, be friendly, sit there. And I got paid less for not taking off my clothes so... [laughing]

Lucy, too, experienced something similar:

I managed a pet store. One of the biggest pet stores in Canada. I had like fifteen staff I was in charge of on a Saturday. I had to keep track of all the money and all the goals, and all the product, and everything like that. That was a really. Stressful. Job. And I did it pretty well. There could be fifteen people there, there’d be a birthday party going on, there are animals you have to have safety for, and you have to send animals to the vet. I’d have to take care of their medical needs. I did EVERYTHING. And I only got eleven dollars an hour for managing the place when I was there.

As noted by other scholars, working in low-wage customer service jobs prior to involvement in erotic labour is common for many women (Dewey 2011; Jeffery and MacDonald 2006; Bruckert 2002; Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002). Unlike other occupations that might pay women a similar amount of money, dancing does not require the time or economic investment of a college diploma or university degree, thus making it an attractive option for women who do not consider formal education a desirable or viable option. Dancing was also an attractive option for women who did attend college or university, as it allowed them to cover their expenses and offered much more flexibility than other jobs usually available to students (Egan 2006a; Trautner and Collette 2010; Sanders and Hardy 2013, 2015; Hardy and Sanders 2015; Roberts, Jones, and Sanders 2013; Roberts et al. 2010; Roberts, Bergstrom, and La Rooy 2007; Betzer, Kohler, and Schlemm 2015). This was certainly the case for me, as I mentioned in the Foreword. Indeed, given these considerations, sex work seems like a rational choice according to capitalist logic, where taking the job that offers the highest pay for one's education level, experience, and time constraints makes sense (Weldon 2010; Jeffery and MacDonald 2006). Yet, when women chose to work as exotic dancers based on these rational factors, "everybody loses their heads," which speaks to the stigma of erotic-economic exchanges (Manaster 2006, 17). Thus, as I have argued in the previous chapters, the patriarchal underpinnings of capitalist logic is revealed by the deeply entrenched cultural ideology that imagines intimacy as "pure" and "untainted" because intimate labour is most often provided by women (Zelizer 2000, 2011; Povinelli 2006; Sharp 2000).

In addition to the devaluing of dancers' justification for their employment, there are other downsides to working in erotic labour. Some of this I mentioned in Chapter Three, and I bring it up again here. Dancers are kept in precarious positions as independent contractors. Recently, scholars have noted that women will choose to work in exotic dance or other forms of sex work

even under exploitative labour conditions, which speaks to the general increase in precarity under neoliberalism that makes stripping one of the few viable options available to some women (Sanders and Hardy 2013, 2015; Hardy and Sanders 2015; Roberts, Jones, and Sanders 2013; Roberts et al. 2010; Roberts, Bergstrom, and La Rooy 2007; Betzer, Kohler, and Schlemm 2015; Moll, Kitterlin, and Williams 2014).

Sociologists Teela Sanders and Kate Hardy (2015) note that the economic downturn of 2008 had severe repercussions for women working as exotic dancers in the United Kingdom. While strip clubs continued to proliferate in the years since this economic downturn, managers and club owners leaned heavily on exotic dancers' income by taking a higher percentage of their tips as a way to make money. This cut heavily into the amount of profit a dancer could earn (Sanders and Hardy 2015). In Chapter Three, I discussed similar trends occurring in the Canadian adult entertainment industry. My point here is that even when dancers do not make a sufficient income, the immediacy of the cash and the ease with which one can get a job working as a dancer remain attractive qualities of stripping. This feature sets it apart from other occupations available to women in erotic labour, and are as exploitative, as Ivy and Scarlett articulated in their above statements about jobs they held prior to dancing (Weldon 2010; Jeffery and MacDonald 2006; Brennan 2010; Dewey 2011).

The "ease" with which money could be made in short periods of time was something that Ivy pointed out to me when she was describing how she felt about the money she made, compared to her ex-boyfriend's feelings about her job:

It was never necessarily about the amount of money I made, it was about how easily I made it. It wasn't that I made \$100 a day and he thought I should be making \$1000 a day. It wasn't about that. It was about the fact that I worked half an hour and I made that \$100. It was like I did nothing for it.

Weldon (2010, 150) argues, “there is no substitute for this in our society.” However, the immediacy of the cash also had an impact on how women felt about the money they made as dancers, compared to other sources of income that provided only bi-weekly pay cheques (Weldon 2010; Bott 2006; Dewey 2011). Her ex-partner's jealousy over feeling like Ivy “did nothing for it,” because of how fast the money was made, contradicts her and the other participants’ assertions that stripping was hard work. Similarly, Dewey (2011) was initially perplexed that the exotic dancers in her study characterized their income as “easy” given the physical and psychological demands of their work. Dewey (2011, 56) argues that this paradox exists because “many dancers characterize the money they make from stripping as ‘dirty’” and that “the income earned from ‘nothing’ is often regarded with disdain and even a sense of shame.”

I agree that the stigma attached to exotic dancers stems from deeply entrenched cultural ideology about the “dirtiness” of money when it is mixed with intimate events. Dancers sometimes internalize this ideology. Yet I also argue that there are alternate lines of analysis from which to understand the hard work/easy money paradox. For instance, Lucy had this to say about the difficulties of her job:

I know dancing you get paid because no one else wants to do it. And it is a hard job, I’m not gonna lie. The hours and the traveling, and dealing with the mental things, and dealing with people. It is a hard job. It’s just, I can do it. It’s easy to me. It feels like a break from these other jobs where one little mistake and you could get demoted like I did. And I can make a two-week paycheque at the pet store in one night [laughs], it’s so awesome!

Similarly, Scarlett describes what she sees as a benefit to stripping, over and above the increased income and flexibility, and above other occupations that allow for less freedom of expression. Here, Scarlett refers to her reaction to a situation where a customer disrespected her by taking pictures of her with his phone:

Dancing, as much as it is professional, and like, please respect our job, there's only one job in the world where I can dump a glass of ice water on a customer, walk out, and still be working the next day [laughing].

Thus, taking Lucy and Scarlett's explanations into consideration, the "ease" of stripping that dancers describe may also be related to the comparative advantages of stripping over other jobs. As Lucy stated, although stripping is hard work because it is stigmatized ("no one else wants to do it") it "feels like a break" when she contemplates her past experiences in retail. In other service industry jobs, like bartending and waitressing, Scarlett had not been permitted to directly confront disrespectful behaviour from patrons as she could while working as an exotic dancer.

However, as participants pointed out to me, aside from more flexibility and the potential to earn greater amounts of money more quickly, the upsides and downsides to stripping and other forms of sex work are similar to other types of employment in the service sector of the Canadian economy (Jeffery and MacDonald 2006; Shaver, Lewis, and Maticka-Tyndale 2011).

According to Jeffery and MacDonald (2006, 320), "The money that can be made in sex work is even more appealing given that a number of the downsides of sex work are also experienced in other forms of employment as well. While the incomes of sex work are highly variable and subject to the whims of clients, so are incomes in minimum wage, shift based service work... The potential physical and emotional stressors of sex work are also experienced in other forms of service work." This was reflected in Scarlett's explanation as to why she chose to return to stripping after exploring similar options in the service industry:

I cried one time when I was bartending at the Bee. I got so frustrated with this group of guys who were a group of regulars. This was maybe one month after I quit dancing. I was just so infuriated because I was wearing a shirt with three little gnomes across the chest and it says "chillin' with my gnomies." It's super cute. Every time I'd bring them beers, they'd be like "that's my favourite gnomie" and "that's my favourite gnomie" because they're on my boobs. And, ha ha, they're saying which boob is their favourite. It just kept on, every time. Finally, the last time they did it, I'm like, fuck. That's it. I've had it. That was the last one. Any

more gnomie jokes and I'm gonna lose my shit. And they were just like "that one," and I just lost it. I was like "fuck you, get your own beer. You can walk to the bar. I don't give a shit anymore. Your quarter of a tip is not enough for this bullshit." It's the same kind of objectification, but because my shirt is on and not off, I'm making less money for it. Well, fuck that! I don't care if I'm naked. I would rather have more money and be naked than less money and not.

For Scarlett, working as a server at a bar entailed "the same kind of objectification" as stripping, yet only offered a fraction of the pay and autonomy, which ultimately led to her rejection of working in bars unless it was as an exotic dancer. Additionally, as Scarlett explained before, she was able to directly confront customers who were disrespectful to her while working as a dancer in a way that she could not as a bartender or server, lest she risk her job security.

However, the catch to the immediacy of cash and the potential to make a great deal more money than other available options, as I have frequently communicated throughout this thesis, is that stripping comes with other costs. That is, the social stigma that stems from mixing erotics with commerce and the impact that it has on intimate relationships in dancer's lives is a huge cost. While other service industry jobs are similar to stripping, a significant difference is that women who work as exotic dancers cannot list their occupation on their resumes when they apply for other jobs in the future. As Weldon (2010, 150) argues, "this money comes at a unique cost. It separates the women who would do such a thing for money from the women who would never do such a thing for money."

In the next section, I address the understanding of money as "dirty" or "clean," and how this relates to the ways in which money is made and spent by exotic dancers. Additionally, I problematize the common arguments that are made about exotic dancers and money based on my research findings and the specific organization of Winnipeg's adult entertainment industry, where dancers receive weekly paychecks. Specifically, I look at the assumption that dancers

spend money more quickly than other individuals, and that they spend it hastily because they believe it to be “dirty.”

### **Dirty Money versus Clean Money: Dancing the Right Way, for the Right Reasons**

Citing anthropological literature on economic exchanges in non-western societies, such as Marcel Mauss (2001) and Michael Taussig (2006), Zelizer (2011) argues that throughout history and in a variety of cultural contexts money (or other units of exchange) has been marked as “dirty” when it is earned or spent in ways that are deemed illicit or morally corrupt. The reasons that money becomes marked as “dirty” depend on the values of particular societies and their cultural taboos (Zelizer 2011). Women who work as exotic dancers are in a difficult position because capitalist logic is in direct contradiction with cultural mores that attach repugnance to acquiring wealth through the sexual or intimate use of the body.

In sociologist Esther Bott’s (2006, 34) ethnographic study of British women working as exotic dancers in Tenerife, she argues, “what the women do with the money they make with their bodies is also important to understanding their strategies for distinction.” Bott’s (2006) study focused on the desire of the working class women she interviewed to achieve status through their consumption of luxury items and experiences. However, what interests me about this statement is the idea that women making money “with their bodies” differentiates this money from money made in other ways, and that the ways in which this money is spent differs from money made in other ways. As my conversation with Morgan at the beginning of this chapter demonstrates, these were societal ideas that participants in my study grappled with when they thought about the role that money played in their lives in relation to stigma.

Bott (2006) also contends that women who work as exotic dancers are prone to wasteful spending habits at least in part because they are subconsciously aware that the money they make

is marked as “dirty,” and thus, must be disposed of quickly. As I mentioned before, Dewey (2011) also theorized that the perceived “dirtiness” of the money that women in her study made influenced how quickly they spent this money, as well as what they spent it on. However, Dewey (2011) also notes that it was the “ease” with which women could make what physically looked liked considerable sums in short amounts of time that also influenced spending habits. This idea was reflected in Ivy’s fascinating analysis of the money that women earn from stripping:

The money that you earn as a dancer is so disposable. It’s too disposable. It’s like it can be taken from you like that [snaps fingers]. It doesn’t matter what you do. It can just be taken from you. It’s almost like if you don’t get it and get rid of it and put it immediately to something like school, it can be in your bank account for ten years, twenty years, but eventually, it will be gone. It’s not a forever thing; it is temporary. That money is so temporary. It’s like drug dealing money. It’s like it’s almost illegal, but it’s not. You know, it just... it doesn’t mean anything. It has no value to it. It has no value because it’s just so easy to make that it’s so disposable. That’s how it was for me anyways. It was so disposable. If I had a thousand dollars, I could blow it the next day because I know I can make maybe another three, four thousand the next day. That’s how I paid off all my debt. It’s because of dancing. Why didn’t it stick? I believe because it was dancing.

Bott’s (2006) research and Ivy’s assertion that certain forms of money are “more disposable” than others fits Zelizer’s (2011, 89) theory that “where the money comes from, in what form, and how, strongly effects how people actually use it.” Still, we must understand Ivy’s explanation as situated in a specific context. That is, Winnipeg’s adult entertainment industry. In Winnipeg, dancers’ income comes from a combination of paychecks and cash tips. They can lose that income flow suddenly, such as when they are cut off from bookings, as I explained in Chapter Three.

After working as an exotic dancer for several years making very good money, Ivy explained to me that our agents had stopped giving her enough work, making it impossible for her to survive off of stripping alone and forcing her to go into debt, as she found it difficult to adjust her spending habits to her new situation. Thus, her previous income security, where she

felt that she could buy what she wanted because she knew she would be making more “the next day,” disappeared. Ivy’s positioning of stripping money as different from, and more disposable than, other forms of income that are more stable must be understood in this context. In this context, Ivy’s income insecurity might be familiar to anyone who works as an independent contractor, freelancer, seasonal labourer, or in service work that is dependent upon tips.

As I discussed in Chapter One, understanding dancers’ “complex personhood” means that their feelings about the money that they made were mixed, sometimes contradictory, and always in flux. For instance, although Misty was critical of people who stigmatized exotic dancers because of how they made their money, Misty placed importance upon the separation of prostitution from exotic dance. Here, Misty positions physical contact during private dances as making money the “dirty” way, as opposed to the “clean” and “proper” way, which did not involve any touching:

It’s like you get these little hoochies that ruin it for the girls who just wanna work and make money the proper way. You know, or just have a good time in the bar. Make some money. Clean money, not dirty money.

In her study of exotic dance in the United Kingdom, Colosi (2010) also found that women would chastise the dancers who performed “dirty dances,” that is, the women who provided too much or the “wrong” type of physical contact during lap dances. Other dancers did not appreciate this because they worried that customers would come to expect physical contact. This was a concern that Misty and other dancers who worked in Winnipeg had as well. Thus, although Misty did not view the money she made from stripping as “dirty,” she at least acknowledged that it *could* be, were she to perform her labour in the “wrong” way.

Therefore, while money earned in certain ways, such as through stripping and other forms of sex work, is marked by society as “dirty” money, in the sense that many view this form

of labour as degrading or illegitimate, my findings in terms of how dancers perceived the money they made were a little more complicated. For participants in my study, the fast cash aspects of dancing, as well as how easily one could return to dancing if money was needed immediately, were more meaningful than perceived “dirtiness” in terms of how this money was spent (Weldon 2010).

Still, as is evident in Ivy’s analysis of the money that dancers make, women were aware that the money they made off of their bodies was considered “dirty,” or at least “different,” because of the stigma attached to working as an exotic dancer. Ivy’s comparison of stripping money to drug dealing money, saying “it’s almost illegal, but it’s not,” is evidence of her awareness of the perceived illicitness of stripping and its location at the edge of legality. Dancers were also aware that this money could be “washed clean,” at least somewhat, if it was used in morally appropriate and class specific ways. But this awareness on the part of dancers did not mean that women spent money irresponsibly to “get rid” of it, or that they felt guilty when they did not spend money in what were considered socially responsible ways. For example, Scarlett talks about her frustration with people who think that stripping is only justified through how one makes and spends stripping money:

What makes a good stripper versus a bad stripper? It’s like, are you going to do something with your money? Whether it’s get a car or get a house or go to school, it’s like you have to be working for a reason. Sometimes I’m lazy, and I won’t sell shows, or I won’t hustle, and I’m like, I don’t care. I don’t need to make all the money, I just need to make enough money. And people will be like, what are you doing this for if not to make as much money as you possibly can? And spend it in whatever way they think makes it okay that you’re getting naked for money. It’s just another sort of “I’m okay because I’m doing it this way.”

Scarlett’s analysis shows the ways in which stripping can sometimes be viewed as socially acceptable as a capitalist endeavor by dividing women who work as exotic dancers into the “bad” strippers, who spend their money the wrong way according to middle class logic and, thus, must

remain working in erotic labour for the long term, and “good” strippers who hustle as hard as they can for a short period of time in order to meet respectable goals or, “discrete projects” such as paying for education, buying a house, or purchasing a car, before they ultimately leave dancing for a more socially acceptable career (Scambler 2007, 1083).

What is left out of Bott’s (2006) analysis is a consideration of the relative youth of the participants in her study (late teens and early twenties) and a comparison to other “quick cash” occupations, such as waitressing and bartending. In addition, Bott (2006) leaves unexamined her rather classed assumption about what constitutes “responsible” spending. Women who work as exotic dancers in Winnipeg, while they can make fast cash through tips and selling private dances, also earn a significant amount of their income through stage shows, which are tabulated on a weekly basis, thus showing the importance of local business structures to a socioeconomic analysis. Women who work in Winnipeg have more stable incomes than the exotic dancers in Bott’s (2006) study because they also wait for a weekly pay cheque, problematizing the “fast cash” argument if we consider how and why strippers in different locales might view money differently.

Furthermore, according to Weldon (2010), the ability to make quick cash at a relatively young age influences individuals’ perspective on managing money, which is evident in Kat’s reminiscing about the money she used to make as a dancer:

I think I had like ten shows my first day dancing. I really wish I had saved some of that money. I spent it all. I danced for six years, and I have nothing to show for it. Except a box of half broken shoes and some costumes [laughs].

I can say from my own experience that going from making minimum wage to stripping for far greater sums of money at the age of nineteen undoubtedly had an impact on how I managed my money. At that point in time, most of my friends were in school and, at most, made

minimum wage from part time jobs; I thus had a significant disposable income that my peers did not. However, I dispute that the ways that I spent my money had much to do with the fact that it came from stripping. I argue that any occupation that offered me that kind of income at that age could have resulted in the same types of spending habits. However, there was certainly pressure to lie about how I used my money because of the cultural perception that the money I made was “dirty,” but redeemable if I spent it on school.

Similarly, Weldon (2010) speculates that the spending habits of sex workers (and others in cash businesses) are often based on a “there’s always more where that came from” attitude, as well as the fact that sex workers are often making a great deal of money before they learn how to manage it, which was demonstrated by Ivy and Kat’s description of how they spent their money. Weldon (2010, 152) explains; “I believe similar conditions influence most workers who handle cash and that they contribute to creating a significantly different understanding of finance than the understanding of the more commonly recognized population of workers who receive checks twice a month.” This was also something that participants pointed out.

Ivy explains how she had to change her attitude towards money after she stopped dancing:

You have to completely change your view. Completely. You have to decide that a dollar is a dollar. You know, it is four quarters. And 100 dollars is five twenty-dollar bills. Ten, ten-dollar bills. It is a lot of money. It is 100 dollars. That’s my phone bill for two months. That’s a car payment. You know a lot of people would think, what can you do with it? Nothing. To me, now, I can do a lot with 100 dollars. Before, 100 dollars can’t even buy me a pack of hair extensions. It just changes so much. It changes drastically.

Billie explains her similar experience with a change in attitude towards the worth of money, comparing how she felt when she started dancing, to how she felt about money later in her career:

Dancing was fun and exciting, and good money. I wanted to live on my own. I liked to be independent. I moved out when I was in university. I wasn't living at home. I was by myself and living on Kraft dinner and wieners. Now I can have chicken breast! That was another thing, too. I always wanted to eat well, and just enjoy life. I always had this thought that maybe dancing, I can't say for sure, but would make me rich. So it's all this money at once that you never saw. Then all of a sudden it just becomes another job. And twenty bucks is two bucks.

Additionally, Weldon explains, “most younger workers may be making a living for the first time and there's no reason whatsoever to think that they would be any better with money than most young people. And on top of that, they make their livelihood watching men who are usually old enough to be authority figures spending money most unwisely” (Weldon 2010, 152).

Importantly, Weldon (2010) draws our attention to the fact that many people in North American society spend beyond their means, or purchase luxury goods and services despite a lack of traditional markers of responsible adulthood, such as property or education. She also asks researchers to consider the sociocultural attitude towards money and economics in general when looking at the spending habits of sex workers. Indeed, as a dancer, I was often implored by complete strangers to “save my money” in ways that were completely unheard of when I worked in other occupations. I found it infuriating that anyone besides my accountant should voice an opinion about what I should and shouldn't do with my money. In other words, sex workers as labourers and consumers cannot be studied as if they exist outside the sociopolitical economy and consumer capitalist culture, an issue I address in the next section of this chapter.

### **Striponomics: A Place for Strippers as Consumers**

As I discussed in Chapter Three, although stripping is a form of sex work that is technically legal in Canada, exotic dancers are still stigmatized and not necessarily treated as labourers with rights. However, because of the nature of the exotic dance business, much of our money is spent on our appearance: gym memberships, salon visits, tanning, costumes, lingerie, shoes, pole

dancing classes, and makeup. There are also other costs, such as the payment of taxes, as well as drivers, agency fees, and travel costs, and thus, dancers pump much of their income into the Canadian economy. Therefore, although exotic dancers hold a precarious place in society as rights-bearing workers, they are generally accepted as consumers and tax payers (Macklin 2003; Sanders 2008; Ross 2009; Jochelson and Kramar 2011; Fogel and Quinlan 2011; Hayward 2015). In other words, the Canadian government and many businesses appear to be neutral when it comes to taking our “dirty” money, but they seem to resist recognizing our labour as legitimate work experience.

One day, while visiting Ivy at her home, our conversation turned to this topic. I recalled how I had to quickly go to the mall one afternoon before work to buy a new outfit when Kisses decided that dancers needed to wear white for floor time. “God, I hate going to Lacey’s to buy new lingerie for work. The sales girls are so aggressive. I was looking at some bra and panty sets, and this one starts talking to me about how different kinds of bras offer different types of support and stuff like that. And I’m just thinking to myself, I really don’t care, I need this for work!” I said. “I remember one time when I needed new lingerie for work, I went to Lacey’s and I actually straight up told them that I was an exotic dancer and I needed it for work. Next thing you know, all of the girls who worked there gathered around me and were like ‘wow! You’re a stripper! That’s so cool!’ and asked me, like, a zillion questions about it” Ivy said. “Huh. That’s interesting. Because you also said that you weren’t going to put stripping on your resume when you apply for other jobs right?” “Right.” “But what if you wanted to apply for a job at Lacey’s, for example. Those girls you talked to said they thought stripping was cool. Do you think if you put stripping on your resume, Lacey’s would hire you?” Ivy laughed. “Absolutely not.” “Why do you think that is?” I asked. “I think the people that work there think that it’s cool. They think that

it's cool because you're shopping there and you're buying their stuff. But I don't think that a manager or a store owner would be like, oh cool, you were a stripper. Let's have you work here. No. I think that they think it's cool because they don't think that you are gonna try and work there," Ivy explained. "Ugh! That's so frustrating. 'Cause I feel like dancing gives you so many skills that translate well to other jobs. Especially sales," I said. "Yeah, it really does. Stripping is kind of like retail in a lot of ways. You're just selling yourself. But people don't think of those little things. If they saw "stripper" on your resume, they'd probably just toss it in the garbage. I think that managers almost view it as, like, having a criminal working in their place," Ivy replied.

While researchers have noted the expansion of "stripper chic," where items and practices that were once solely the domain of exotic dancers are now acceptable parts of women's self-expression, actual exotic dancers remain stigmatized, and the difficulties they face as workers remain invisible (Roach 2007; Bahri 2012; Egan 2006a). In Ivy's view, the "coolness" of stripping had limited social cachet because it did not translate to work experience that could be put on her resume. Therefore, while the women who worked at Lacey's may have been fascinated by Ivy's involvement in exotic dance, Ivy was also aware that they would never be interested in working with her. Her money may have been acceptable as a consumer, but she was not acceptable as a worker. Similarly, according to Blissbomb (2010), her experience with "stripper chic" when she was trotted out as a spectacle at dinner parties left her questioning whether the "coolness" of being a sex worker in certain circles isn't an extension of social stigma because it silences our difficulties and struggles. As I mentioned in Chapter One, the desire for stripping to be a fun and exciting feminist project that I detected in certain individual responses to my disclosure that I had worked as an exotic dancer were almost as disturbing as the negative

ones because they were classed, racialized, and privileged. Furthermore, the extent to which commodities, goods, and services may be “tainted” by stripping money should also be considered.

For instance, how would the owners of companies like Lacey’s react to exotic dancers’ explicit use of their products for work wear? While it appears that Lacey’s seems to accept dancers purchasing their lingerie, would this change if dancers became blatantly associated with their brand? Or would they seek to distance themselves from dancers’ money, as they do from their labour? If money can be tainted by the way it is made then this taint may “rub off” on the items that stripping money purchases. After all, it is not unusual for brands to distance themselves from certain social groups in order to retain their image.

When I studied fashion in the United Kingdom, I learned about “Chavs,” a pejorative term for young working class people who were known for their ostentatious displays of popular fashion brands, and Burberry in particular. In fact, the classic Burberry check print, which was the upscale brand’s signature, became the hallmark of Chav fashion. Burberry struggled to distance itself from Chavs, as it was thought that Burberry’s sales were negatively impacted by the association (Hall 2004). The celebrities, socialites, and upper class customers that Burberry had primarily catered to in the past no longer seemed interested in buying items that were now largely associated with British working class culture (Hall 2004). I speculate that a similar distancing might occur were dancers to blatantly associate themselves with a particular brand. In this case, Chav money and stripping money are seen as “different” than other money. Even though this money presumably has the same value and purchasing power as other forms of income, the items they purchase become tainted. Thus, as Zelizer (2011) has argued, not everyone’s money is treated equally when it enters the global marketplace.

In this chapter, I linked the stigma of erotic labour to the ways in which exotic dancers made and spent money in a patriarchal capitalist economy. Contrary to popular socio-cultural understandings of money, economics is essential to the maintenance of all intimate relationships. Thus, exotic dancers are not unique in their mixing of the marketplace with erotics. Yet strippers are stigmatized because they do this in a way that is considered too blatant, which causes fear and anxiety for the world around them. Similarly, feminist scholar Shawna Ferris (2015) has argued that global capitalism has not made space for sex workers as producers and consumers, as one might expect given the tenets of free market economics. Instead, she argues, whore stigma prevails because sex workers are perceived as contributing to “danger,” particularly in city centers that are increasingly sanitized in order to appease middle-class consumer tastes and business interests (Ferris 2015). Thus, sex workers are feared and ejected from these spaces because the truths that they reveal about who benefits from global capitalism are too much of a threat to social order.

Zelizer (2011, 179) explains, “Many people think that money is the root of all evil, that it contaminates the relations it touches, and that we can only hold on to moral values by rigidly separating the sphere of economic necessity from the sphere of authentic social being. But in fact people constantly integrate money into their intimate social lives without damaging them.” Thus, this kind of argument against the work of exotic dancers is without merit. As I have shown in this chapter, the idea that economics can (and should) be separated from intimacy is not only an illusion, but a key tenet of patriarchal capitalism that serves to disenfranchise women, and sex workers in particular.

Women consistently mix commerce with intimacy in their personal lives without destroying their social worlds by performing intimate labour for romantic partners who might

provide them with dinner on dates, for instance. Women in sex work perform similar types of labour for customers. Yet, because compensation for their work is more direct, their social worlds are indeed threatened. Therefore, it is no wonder that Zelizer's (2011) research shows how carefully women ensure that money is transferred to them in specific ways. To not do so would be to risk becoming a whore, and by extension, stigmatization and abjection. Thus, women are convinced, through threats of literal and symbolic violence, to co-operate in-and give free labour to-an economic system that does not serve them. Whether it takes place in the home or in the marketplace, an acknowledgement that women's intimate work is a valuable commodity that deserves compensation is a radical proposition because it means that patriarchal capitalism can no longer depend on the free or cheap labour of women, and the façade that sex working women are "different" from other women is broken. All women are potential threats to the system, and are therefore stigmatized when they recognize the façade and do not comply by demanding money for their work. Thus, the de-stigmatization of sex work must include a deconstruction of such beliefs about money, economics, intimacy, and separate social spheres.

## **Chapter 7: Conclusion**

“I’m just preparing myself for the inevitable,” Scarlett says to me as she performs her stretches before her stage show backstage at Kisses. “This industry is dying out. And soon, stripping as we know it won’t exist. We need to be ready for that.”

“You think it’ll happen soon?” I ask.

“I don’t know. All I know is it’s a good idea to have a backup plan just in case. That’s why I’m branching out into other things, like burlesque. Not sure where that could lead, but I’d like to keep performing as long as I can. Then eventually I’d like to start my own business,” Scarlett explained.

Just then the DJ started Scarlett’s music, and she stepped on to the stage to begin her show. As I peeked through the curtained doorway that leads to the stage, I saw her climb the pole and hang upside down as the crowd of men cheered. I wondered, “What new forms of performance or entertainment could replace this?”

### **The Future of Stripping: An Industry in Flux**

Throughout my time in the field, I often felt as if I was documenting a dying industry. When I met up with Billie to talk about her feedback on my thesis, I asked her what she thought the future of the exotic dance industry in Winnipeg would be.

She smirked and said, “You mean besides the fact that it’s going to shit?”

As I explained in Chapter Three, Winnipeg’s adult entertainment business has changed quite drastically since I last worked as a stripper in the early 2000s. Bookings at small bars and taverns used to be plentiful, and women did not have to worry about a lack of available work, regardless of whether they were new or experienced dancers. Furthermore, this bounty of work meant that dancers’ incomes were far more secure fifteen years ago than they are today, since

there is a greater dependency on tips and selling private dances. Changes like these reflect scholars' similar findings on the trajectory of adult entertainment industries in other parts of Canada and the United States (Macklin 2003; Berson 2016). Even during my two years of fieldwork as a dancer, I noticed that I was increasingly booked for floor time rather than "jamming," or going bar to bar to perform stage shows, as smaller local bars and pubs began to cancel increasingly more bookings.

Gradually, strip clubs that at one time did not institute mandatory floor time came to adopt this practice. Most significantly, the floor time "day shift," which was unheard of when I first started my research in 2012, became a common feature of strip clubs. What these changes amount to is an increased amount of time spent at work for dancers, who are now frequently booked for back-to-back floor time (twelve to fourteen hours a day), at a far greater risk to their income potential because of agency fines and the ebbs and flows of customer spending whims.

Towards the end of my fieldwork, along with the other dancers, I became increasingly angry about our working conditions. Poor working conditions made it difficult for us to keep a positive attitude while trying to do our jobs. New rules were added to floor time expectations on an almost weekly basis at every strip club. Bookings were scarce for local women when dancers came to Winnipeg from out of town, or new dancers were hired. DJs and bar managers monitored our every move. Billie elaborated on her comment that the exotic dance industry in Winnipeg is "going to shit" by pointing out how frustrated she was with the lack of consistency and organization that prevails when there is little to no communication between bar staff, agents, and dancers.

"There's more rules, yet less professionalism. Less caring about us putting on good stage shows. All they care about is floortime now. And the thing is, I don't think the customers even

like it. That's why the bars aren't busy anymore. It was better when we said what goes because we're the ones who know best how to do our job. Like, having to wear white? Making us wear stockings when we have to do shower shows? And how are sports jerseys a costume? These things are completely impractical, and then we get fined if we don't do them. But they won't listen to us," Billie told me.

We were expected to deal with all of these workplace frustrations and threats to our income and autonomy with grace and dignity on top of the stigma that we experienced in our lives on a daily basis. I had the distinct feeling that this resentment was about to reach a boiling point and bubble over at any moment.

Billie and Scarlett both imagined that the exotic dance industry in Winnipeg would continue to move towards an exclusive focus on floortime, with the possibility of stage work disappearing completely. However, unlike other scholars such as Macklin (2003) and Berson (2016) who have noted similar trajectories in other locales, Scarlett and Billie did not see full contact lap dancing as a realistic possibility for Manitoba given socially conservative values in this province. Scarlett thought that there was also space for burlesque as a form of erotic entertainment that might fill the void left as stage shows at strip clubs continue to flounder. I asked them what they thought we could do to improve our situation and access our rights as workers. Neither considered unionization a good way to achieve these goals.

As I mentioned in Chapter Three, although unionization might seem like a desirable option, it also presents many challenges. One of the most desirable characteristics of stripping work is that it offers women flexibility and relative autonomy. These benefits would be threatened were we to be considered employees instead of independent contractors. Additionally, employee status is no guarantee that workplace exploitation will no longer occur. As long as

women who work as exotic dancers remain stigmatized, it is unlikely that they will consider unionization a realistic possibility. Pursuing unionization would pit us against our agency and draw attention to ourselves in ways many women, including me, would not feel comfortable with. Scarlett also argued that dancers must be humanized before they are taken seriously as workers with rights.

“It’s the culture that has to change before the industry does. And with Donald Trump promoting rape culture in the States now, it’s going to be even more of a challenge. But I think that it’s going to be daily conversations that make a difference,” Scarlett explained.

### **Contributions**

As I have shown throughout my thesis, contrary to some who suggest that stripping is becoming more acceptable in society based on the proliferation of “stripper chic,” my research shows that the stigma attached to women who perform erotic labour has remained intact despite these cultural shifts. The increasing acceptance of commodities associated with stripper practices and paraphernalia, such as purchasing pole dancing class and thongs for personal use, did not translate to the de-stigmatization of women who actually worked as strippers and, thus, had little meaning to the women who participated in my study, whose lives and relationships were deeply impacted by stigma.

Even when people told us that they thought our jobs were “cool,” “fun,” or “exciting,” the underlying assumption that dancing *should* be those things, in fact, contributed to our stigmatization because it rendered our workplace exploitation invisible. Furthermore, whenever stripping was constituted as “cool,” it was by individuals who were not regular fixtures in our social circles. The people that mattered most to us, our families and romantic partners, did not talk about stripping in such a positive way. In other words, while we certainly encountered

negative comments and reactions from strangers relatively frequently, the violence of stigmatization is made most visible when it threatens to “rub off” onto our most cherished intimate relationships. Thus, if stripping is only “cool” when it is not your girlfriend, mother, or daughter who is performing this labour, then the virgin/whore dichotomy is reinforced by this perspective.

This research contributes to the growing body of work that broadens the rather narrow focus on the reasons why individual women work as exotic dancers, or whether strippers find their labour exploitative or empowering, and moves the analysis towards a more robust theorization of stigma in women’s lives in a specific locale. Returning to my original research questions outlined in Chapter One, I found that the women who participated in my study had a sophisticated understanding of the role that stigma played in their lives. Women continually drew my attention to the hypocrisy of patriarchal capitalism by pointing out the ways in which they were punished for figuring out how to make the system work for them, i.e., charging for labour that is traditionally provided for free by women. As I have shown by sharing women’s stories about their relationships with family and romantic partners, the stigma of erotic labour is rooted in social beliefs about the impurity of mixing commerce with intimate events in specific ways that do not conform to patriarchal and heteronormative ideology and traditional womanhood. In other words, following Zelizer’s (2011) suggestion for researchers to examine the relationship between money and intimacy in a variety of social contexts, I have theorized the distinctive earmarking of “stripping money,” which is considered “tainted” by society, as a significant source of stigma in exotic dancers lives. These cultural mores are constantly upheld, reproduced, and disseminated through the media, laws, and political ideology, in obvious and not so obvious ways. Ultimately, the result of such a social positioning of erotic labour is the systemic violence

of stigma that could manifest as direct physical, psychological, verbal, or economic violence in women's interpersonal relationships.

As I have argued throughout this thesis, as dancers, we are ultimately positioned in society as "other" or abject because we remain on the wrong side of this dichotomy due to our blatant mixing of "dirty" commerce and "sacred" intimacy. This cultural perspective on money, intimacy, and femininity, in concert with local conservative values, as well as municipal, provincial, and federal laws that regulate our bodies, constitute the systemic violence of stigma that impacted dancer's lives and relationships. Following Parker and Aggleton's (2003) theoretical perspective, I have argued that the systemic violence of stigma that manifested most devastatingly in women's relationships with their family members and romantic partners was part of a larger social problem. In particular, the stigma attached to women who exchange erotics for cash is indicative of the perilous position that all women are in when they love and work in a patriarchal capitalist economy. It takes mere moments, the few seconds that it takes to step onto a stage and begin removing your clothes in front of a room full of men, to cross the imaginary line that exists between the "good girls" and the "bad." Our humanity is devalued because we claim ownership of our bodies and sexuality in the face of a culture that threatens violence against us unless we give these things freely, or for very limited forms of compensation in normative monogamous relationships. However, despite the violence of stigma in our lives, our very existence is proof of resistance to this violence. These are not stories about "sad" strippers. These are stories about women's strength and resiliency in a culture that is still hostile to femininity and feminine sexuality in many ways. Sometimes these stories were hard to tell. However, my research, and the body of literature about exotic dancers that it contributes to, is important

because it presents a direct challenge to stigma by demonstrating our diversity, complexity, and humanity.

### **Drawbacks and Limitations**

As I mentioned in Chapter Two, there were several drawbacks to this study. Because I was unable to recruit participants from my second phase of field work, my data comes primarily from interviews with women who needed drivers at that particular time (some have since purchased vehicles and now drive themselves to work), limiting the diversity of the study. Additionally, even though many women showed interest in my research, the fear of their identities potentially being revealed through participation in my project was deemed too much of a risk for some. Again, this limits my results to the experiences of women who were at least somewhat more comfortable with taking this risk, however minimal. There were many benefits to having a small number of participants, which I have elucidated throughout this chapter. However, I would have liked to recruit several more women for interviews, particularly dancers of colour, to add more voices and diversity of experiences to my analysis of stigma. Adding the perspectives of women of colour may have prompted me to investigate the intersections of race and stigma more thoroughly, as I had not thought to ask participants questions about race or pay as much attention to the ways in which racism may have manifested in dancers lives during my fieldwork. Although racism was not a specific focus of this study, stigma and racism are forms of structural and systemic violence that I would like to address together in my future research.

Similarly, it may have been beneficial to have more participant involvement and collaboration beyond Billie and Scarlett's contributions. When I first proposed this project, I had anticipated that there would be approximately fifteen women recruited for interviews, and possibly more if I had been able to do focus groups. Thus, at the beginning of my fieldwork I

went ahead with my plan to ask two women to act as collaborators, as I wanted their involvement to start as soon as possible so that they could assist me with developing interview questions. If I had known that there would be a small enough number of women participating in my research that all could have acted as collaborators, I may have asked them to become more involved in the project. However, I did give women the option to collaborate to a certain extent on their interview consent forms. Only one woman, Kat, checked the option to see her interview transcripts, which I sent to her. The rest of the participants (aside from Billie and Scarlett) only checked the option for me to send them the link to my final thesis.

As I have also discussed in this chapter, trust building with participants is an essential component to studies of sexual labour, and one that takes a great deal of time. Having dedicated three years of field work to this project with the outcome of six women willing to participate in interviews for my research speaks to the issue of time in ethnographic research, especially when trust between researcher and participants is essential. Had I been a little more persistent, I am sure I could have convinced more women to participate. Perhaps I could have also conducted focus groups with two or more women, as I had originally planned.<sup>24</sup> However, I considered it more important to follow my professional and personal ethical principals as closely as possible, and so I erred on the side of caution by making sure I was not too pushy when it came to scheduling interviews. Unfortunately, the nature of the exotic dance business in Winnipeg, where dancers were often scheduled on short notice, also added to interview scheduling difficulties. Indeed, it was challenging to schedule individual interviews, let alone focus groups with two or three women. As I mentioned before, some of these concerns were mitigated by the fact that some women still allowed me to write about them from my field notes, rather than participate in interviews. Related to this issue, another limit to my study is its regional context, which means

participants' experiences may have been different if I had chosen to conduct this research in another geographical location. Therefore, there are limitations to the generalizability of my data.

During the transcription of the interviews I did with participants, I noticed areas for improvement in regards to my interview techniques as well. Although I am confident that my interviews yielded very important data, there were times that I could have probed further instead of changing the topic or asking the next question. However, I also noticed that my interview skills improved with each participant.

The drawbacks to my study, which I discuss above, are all common issues for studies of sex work and other stigmatized communities (Shaver 2005). Thus, as exotic dance and other form of sex work become de-stigmatized, problems related to rapport building and access should become less troublesome.

### **Recommendations and Future Research Directions**

As I have shown throughout my thesis, stigma is a deeply ingrained system of literal and symbolic violence that impacts the lives and relationships of women who work as exotic dancers in numerous ways. However, this finding does not negate the possibility for change. Even though the de-stigmatization of erotic labour might seem like a daunting task, based on my findings, I believe it is also one of the many challenges that are necessary for the full emancipation of women. Furthermore, exotic dancers have already begun to do this work. At the beginning of this chapter, Scarlett pointed out the importance of engaging in meaningful conversations with people about her work in order to dispel myths about the exotic dance industry and the women who work in it. On their own, these conversations might not seem to be a significant contribution to de-stigmatization, but they have the radical potential to add up to real cultural change as individual dancers become humanized to more and more people. Thus, the women in my study

did the work of de-stigmatization every time they had conversations that educated people outside of the industry.

When giving me feedback on my thesis, Scarlett told me how difficult it was for her to finish reading my literature review because some of the past studies on exotic dance that I cited made her angry. “That’s why your research is important,” she said, “It puts our voices out there.” Therefore, starting de-stigmatizing conversations is also part of what I hope my work accomplishes. However, these conversations must not only be started by exotic dancers. Women who work as exotic dancers already bear the burden of confronting stigma in their lives on a daily basis, which is not only an exhausting endeavor, but sometimes dangerous. In order for de-stigmatization to occur, we need allies who will promote our interests and challenge the institutionalization of stigma.

For allies, contributing to de-stigmatization could include a number of actions, such as: donating money to sex workers’ rights groups and, if donating money is not a realistic possibility, asking if there is anything else you can do to help; donating the skills/expertise of your profession to sex workers. Or, for example, if you are a therapist, doctor, lawyer, nurse, etc. you could find ways to communicate to potential clients that you are a sex worker friendly professional; when a friend or family member makes negative comments or jokes about sex workers, gently call them out and explain why their words are harmful; when a sex worker confides in you about issues related to their work, make them feel safe by listening to what they have to say and treat them as the expert on their own life. This list of possible interventions for allies is not exhaustive, and many sex workers’ rights organizations will have lists that are more extensive. However, the point I am making here is that the de-stigmatization of exotic dance is pushed forward by good allyship. Additionally, the recommendations I list for allies more

generally are also recommendations that I would make for the family and romantic partners of exotic dancers, as it is my hope that our loved ones will become our allies.

In addition to the things I list above, family and romantic partners should also be aware of the ways in which their words and actions have contributed to the stigmatization of a loved one and take steps to mitigate the fall out of their behaviour. Family members, in particular, would benefit from seeing the results of my study because, even though my data shows that they were complicit in the abjection and stigmatization of exotic dancers, this does not mean that they want to be, or are aware that they are. What dancers in my study desired most from their family members was for their expertise to be acknowledged and for their judgment in deciding to work in the exotic dance industry to be trusted. In other words, dancers wanted their family members to prioritize their voices over other sources when it came to conflicting information about stripping, and to come to treat stripping as they would any other occupation. As a family member, simply listening to what exotic dancers have to say about their work, as you would if they were to talk about their work in another occupation, can go a long way. By doing this, you become a source of support for a dancer to confide in, instead another person she must avoid or tip-toe around when it comes to talking about her work. Life for women who work as exotic dancer can become much easier if they do not feel like they have to hide their work from their family members, not only on an emotional level, but materially and physically as well.

In Chapter Four, I pointed out how some women missed out on the full economic potential that dancing had to offer because they could not come up with reasonable excuses for their family members as to why they were out of town, for instance. If dancers were able to be open with their family members about their work, they would not have to suffer as many financial consequences to participation in a stigmatized job. Additionally, dancers' physical

safety is increased by acceptance by family members because they would have a safety net that many women in their class location and age group have access to, such as being able to live at home if need be. Parents and siblings, especially, can be extremely beneficial to the de-stigmatization process by talking to other relatives on behalf of a dancer when those extended family members are hostile towards sex workers. As a dancer, knowing that your parents and siblings will defend you if you encounter negative attention because of your job at a family gathering, for instance, is comforting and liberating because it might allow you to feel confident enough to attend the gathering in the first place. Thus, family bonds are strengthened by understanding stripping as work.

Romantic partners, too, can become allies and contribute to de-stigmatization. As a man who is dating a dancer, a significant aspect of this will be for him to work out his own feelings about his identity and masculinity. He must acknowledge that traditional hegemonic masculinity is violent, and that women are taking a significant risk to their health and safety when they date men in general, but that this is especially the case for exotic dancers. Similar to the recommendations I make for family members, letting a dancer know that she is supported in social situations where she might encounter hostility about her job from a romantic partner's social networks is extremely important. This should also be the case even when she is not physically present.

Ultimately, allies, family members, and romantic partners all have a role to play in unraveling the stigma of erotic labour by supporting exotic dancers in specific ways, and my research findings could contribute to this process by creating awareness and promoting a more open dialogue between exotic dancers and their loved ones.

Given the growing concern that women had with their job security and working conditions, future research should continue to explore stigma and how it may impact dancers' ability to report grievances and make demands related to their safety and well-being in the work place. As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, unionization does not seem likely. But what other possibilities might exist for exotic dancers with concerns about their labour rights? Scarlett noted her belief that the culture would have to change in order for us to be taken seriously as workers with rights by policy makers, bar owners, and staff. Similarly, Billie talked about how the exotic dance business would be better off if bar managers, agents, and dancers were working together. Furthermore, Billie pointed out how all of these stakeholders could be more successful if they did away with arbitrary rules and, instead, were willing to incorporate dancers' knowledge into their business practices.

Research that specifically addresses the business practices of the exotic dance industry without reproducing moralizing arguments about sex work (calling agents "pimps" or suggesting that the sex industry should be abolished, for example) is severely lacking and could help identify tangible solutions for bars, agents, and dancers.<sup>25</sup>

The stigma attached to exotic dance impacts other social actors who work in this industry, although certainly not to the extent that it impacts the women who work as dancers. Still, how might the stigma of erotic labour impact the ways in which DJs, bartenders, waitresses, managers, and agents interact and work with us? Conducting studies that interview these other adult entertainment industry workers could shed more light on some of the issues that dancers face, as well as identify misunderstandings that may be occurring between these workers. The knowledge these kinds of studies would produce could go towards the production of a manual for strip club managers and employees, for example.

Given the high amounts of stress associated with managing stigma, the relationship between stigma, well-being, health, and access to health services should be an important area for future research, as studies on other forms of sex work have indicated (Shaver et al. 1999; Choo et al. 2012; Lilleston, Reuben, and Sherman 2015; Sherman, Lilleston, and Reuben 2011). How might understanding stigma in exotic dancers' lives as systemic violence that stems from mixing erotics and commerce help us comprehend the health implications of stigma? Assessing the health needs of women who work as exotic dancers could help us identify where access to appropriate health care is lacking and how this might be overcome.

Scarlett once told me how a friend of hers, who also works as a dancer, had to go to the emergency room because she got glitter in her eye at work. Instead of telling the doctors what had really happened, she told them that she got glitter in her eye while helping her son with his school project. Multiple women mentioned similar occurrences, with some avoiding doctors all together for fear of what they might say about their work as exotic dancers. This is extremely problematic. Instead of suggesting that the only way to solve physical and mental health problems is to quit working in the exotic dance industry, as some scholars have suggested (see Philaretou 2006, for example), we can conduct research that gives health care providers the tools they need to de-stigmatize their practices and better serve this population of women. Thus, when it comes to dominant health paradigms, which have tended to treat sex work as deviant behaviour that must be corrected, or, as is increasingly more common, to treat the sex worker as a victim of exploitation, the work of feminist exotic dance scholars is imperative. The knowledge created by studies that look at how stigma impacts health and creates barriers to exotic dancers' health care needs could contribute to booklets or programs that educate health care workers. Exploring the

intersections of race and stigma as forms of structural and systemic violence that are layered for women of colour would also be an important element of inquiry in any of these future studies.

Ultimately, I argue that these areas of research are important because consistently attempting to understand, unravel, and challenge stigma could improve, and potentially save, women's lives.

## References

- Aggarwal, Ravins. 2000. "Traversing Lines of Control: Feminist Anthropology Today." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 571: 14-29.
- Agustin, Laura Marie. 2005. "New Research Directions: The Cultural Study of Commercial Sex." *Sexualities* 8 (5): 618-631.
- . 2007. *Sex at the Margins: Migration, Labour Markets and the Rescue Industry*. London and New York: Zed Books.
- Ahmed, Sarah. 2000. *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Postcoloniality*. London: Routledge.
- Aimee, Rachel. 2012. "License to Pimp: A Conversation with Filmmaker Hima B." *Tits and Sass*, July 6.
- Alemzadeh, Sheerine. 2013. "Baring Inequality: Revisiting the Legalization Debate through the Lens of Strippers Rights." *Michigan Journal of Gender and Law* 19: 339-372.
- Allan, Helen and Debbie Barber. 2005. "Emotional Boundary Work in Advanced Fertility Nursing Roles." *Nursing Ethics* 12 (4): 391-400.
- Allan, Sarah and Darcie Bennett. 2000. *My Work Should Not Cost Me My Life: The Case against Criminalizing the Purchase of Sex in Canada*. Vancouver: Pivot Legal Society.
- Allen, Robert. 1991. *Horrible Prettiness: Burlesque and American Culture*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Anderson, Solanna, Jessica Xi Jia, Vivian Liu, Jill Chattier, Andrea Krüsi, Sarah Allan, Lisa Maher, and Kate Shannon. 2015. "Violence Prevention and Municipal licensing of Indoor Sex Work Venues in the Greater Vancouver Area: Narrative of Migrant Sex Workers, Managers and Business Owners." *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 17 (7): 825-841.
- Anderson, Kristin L. and Debra Umberson. 2001. "Gendering Violence: Masculinity and Power in Men's Accounts of Domestic Violence." *Gender and Society* 15 (3): 358-380.
- Artibise, Alan. 1974. *A Social History of Urban Growth*. Montreal and London: Mc-Gill Queen's University Press.
- Attwood, Fiona. 2007. "No Money Shot? Commerce, Pornography and New Sex Taste Cultures." *Sexualities* 10 (4): 441-456.
- Austria, Carolina Ruiz. 2010. "Outside, Hidden and in Between: Locating the Migrant Exotic Dancer in Canadian Legal Discourse and Regulatory Practice." *Comparative Research in Law and Political Economy* 6 (5): 1-20.

- Bahri, Jacenta. 2012. "Fun, Fitness, Fantasy: Consuming Pole Dancing Classes as an 'Empowering' Gendered Leisure Practice." *University of Manitoba Anthropology Student's Association Journal* 30.
- . 2014. "Sex Workers Negotiating Romantic Relationships: Toward a Theory of Marginalized Intimacy." In *Gender, Love, and Intimacy* (e-book), edited by Angie Knaggs and Silke Frischmuth, 39-49. Oxford: Inter-disciplinary Press.
- Barnard, John. 2009. *Winnipeg Burlesque*. Winnipeg: Farpoint Films.
- Barton, Bernadette. 2001. "Queer Desire in the Sex Industry." *Sexuality and Culture* 5 (4): 3-27.
- . 2002. "Dancing on the Mobius Strip: Challenging the Sex War Paradigm." *Gender & Society* 16 (5): 585-602.
- . 2006. *Stripped: Inside the Lives of Exotic Dancers*. New York and London: New York University Press.
- . 2007. "Managing the Toll of Stripping: Boundary Setting among Exotic Dancers." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 36 (5): 571-596.
- . 2010. "Spirituality and Stripping: Exotic Dancers Narrate the Body Ekstasis." *Symbolic Interaction* 33 (2): 280-296.
- Barton, Bernadette and Constance L. Hardesty. 2010. "Spirituality and Stripping: Exotic Dancers Narrate the Body Ekstasis." *Symbolic Interaction* 33 (2): 280-296.
- Bell, Holly, Lacey Sloan, and Chris Strickling. 1998. "Exploiter or Exploited: Topless Dancers Reflect on their Experiences." *Affilia* 13 (3): 352-368.
- Benoit, Celia, and Frances Shaver. 2006. "Critical Issues and New Directions in Sex Work Research." *CRSA/RCSA* 43 (3): 243-264.
- Benoit, Cecilia, Mikael Janson, Alison Millar, and Rachel Phillips. 2005. "Community Academic Research on Hard to Reach Populations: Benefits and Challenges." *Qualitative Health Research* 15 (2): 262-282.
- Bergman, Mindy E. and Katherine M. Chalkey. 2007. "'Ex' Marks the Spot: The Stickiness of Dirty Work and Other Removed Stigma." *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* 12 (3):251-265.
- Bernstein, Elizabeth. 2001. "The Meaning of the Purchase: Desire, Demand, and the Commerce of Sex." *Ethnography* 2 (3): 389-420.
- . 2005. "Desire, Demand, and the Commerce of Sex." In *Regulating Sex: The Politics of Intimacy and Identity*, edited by Elizabeth Bernstein and Laurie Schaffner, 101-125. New York: Routledge.
- . 2007a. "Sex Work for the Middle Classes." *Sexualities* 10 (4): 473-488.
- . 2007b. *Temporarily Yours: Intimacy, Authenticity, and the Commerce of Sex*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Berson, Jessica. 2016. *The Naked Result: How Exotic Dance became Big Business*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Betzer, Felix, Stephan Köhler, and Ludwig Schlemm. 2015. "Sex Work Among Students of Higher Education: A Survey-based Cross-sectional Study." *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 44 (3): 525-528.
- Blissbomb, Lucy. 2010. "Sex Work for the Soul: Negotiating Stigma as a Feminist Activist and Closeted Sex Worker." *Wagadu: Journal of Transnational Women's and Gender Studies* 8: 292-311.
- Boles, Jacqueline, and A.P. Garbin. 1974a. "The Strip Club and Stripper-Customer Patterns of Interaction." *Sociology & Social Research* 58 (2): 136-144.
- . 1974b "The Choice of Stripping for a Living: An Empirical and Theoretical Explanation." *Sociology of Work and Occupation* 1 (1): 110-123.
- Boris, Eileen, Stephanie Gilmore, and Rhacel Parrenas. 2010. "Sexual Labors: Interdisciplinary Perspectives Toward Sex as Work." *Sexualities* 13 (2): 131-137.
- Bott, Esther. 2006. "Pole Position: Migrant British Women Producing 'Selves' through Lap Dancing Work." *Feminist Review* 83: 23-41.
- Bouclin, Suzanne. 2004. "Exploited Employees or Exploited Entrepreneurial Agents? A Look at Exotic Dancers." *Canadian Woman Studies* 23 (3/4): 132-137.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bradley-Engen, Mindy S., and Carrie M. Hobbs. 2010. "To Love, Honor, and Strip: An Investigation of Exotic Dancer Romantic Relationships." In *Sex Work Matters: Exploring Money, Power, and Intimacy in the Sex Industry*, edited by Melissa Hope Ditmore, Antonia Levy, and Alys Willman, 67-84. London and New York: Zed Books.
- Bradley-Engen, Mindy S., and Jeffery T. Ulmer. 2009. "Social Worlds of Stripping: The Processual Orders of Exotic Dance." *The Sociological Quarterly* 50 (1): 29-60.
- Bradley-Engen, Mindy S. 2008. "Stripping in the New Millennium: Thinking about Trends in Exotic Dance and Dancers' Lives." *Sociological Compass* 2 (2): 503-518.
- . 2009. *Naked Lives: Inside the Worlds of Exotic Dance*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Brennan, Denise. 2004a. *What's Love Got to Do with It? Transnational Desires and Sex Tourism in the Dominican Republic*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- . 2004b. "Women Work, Men Sponge and Everyone Gossips: Macho men and Stigmatized/ing Women in a Sex Tourist Town." *Anthropological Quarterly* 77 (4): 705-733.

———. 2010. "Sex Tourism and Sex Workers Aspirations." *In Sex for Sale: Prostitution, Pornography, and the Sex Industry*, edited by Ronald Weitzer, 307-324. New York and London: Routledge.

Brents, Barbara G. and Kathryn Hausbeck. 2007. "Marketing Sex: US Legal Brothels and Late Capitalist Consumption." *Sexualities* 10 (4): 425-439.

Breward, Christopher. 1995. *The Culture of Fashion*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.  
 ———. 1998. "Cultures, Identities, Histories: Fashioning a Cultural Approach to Dress." *Fashion Theory* 2 (4): 301-314.

Brewster, Zachary. 2003. "Behavioral and Interactional Patterns of Strip Club Patrons: Tipping Techniques and Club Attendance." *Deviant Behavior* 24: 221-243.

Brooks, Siobahn. 2010. *Unequal Desires: Race and Erotic Capital in the Stripping Industry*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Brown, Jason, Nancy Higgitt, Christine Miller, Susan Wingert, Mary Williams, and Larry Morrisette. 2006. "Challenges Faced by Women Working in the Inner City Sex Trade." *Canadian Journal of Urban Research* 15 (1): 36-53.

Bruckert, Chris. 2002. *Taking it Off, Putting it On: Women in the Strip Trade*. Toronto: Women's Press

Bruckert, Chris and Martin Dufresne. 2002. "Re-Configuring the Margins: Tracing the Regulatory Context of Ottawa Strip Clubs, 1974-2000." *Canadian Journal of Law and Society* 17: 69-88.

Bumiller, Kristin. 2008. *In an Abusive State: How Neoliberalism Appropriated the Feminist Movement Against Sexual Violence*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Burana, Lily. 2001. *Strip City: A Stripper's Farewell Journey across America*. New York: Miramax.

Büschi, Eva. 2014. "Sex work and violence: focusing on managers in the indoor sex industry." *Sexualities* 17 (5-6): 724-741.

Butler, Judith. 2004. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. New York: Verso.

Cabezas, Amalia L. 2009. *Economies of Desire: Sex and Tourism in Cuba and the Dominican Republic*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Campbell, Catherine, Yugi Nair, and Sbondile Maimane. 2006. "AIDS Stigma, Sexual Moralities and the Policing of Women and Youth in South Africa." *Feminist Review* 83: 132-138.

Canada. "Measuring Violence against Women: Statistical Trends." Report prepared by Marie Sinha. 85-002-x. 2013.

Canada. *Criminal Code of Canada*. R.S.C., 1985, c.C-46, Sections 210-213 [Repealed, 2014, c.25, S.15] 1985.

Canada. *Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act*. S.C.2014, c.25. 2014.

Capous-Desyllas, Moshoula and Vanessa A. Forro. 2014 "Tensions, Challenges, and Lessons Learned: Methodological Reflections From Two Photovoice Projects with Sex Workers." *Journal of Community Practice* 22: 150-175.

Carey, Sandra, Robert A. Peterson, and Louis K. Sharpe. 1974. "A Study of Recruitment and Socialization into Two Deviant Female Occupations." *Sociological Symposium* 11: 11-24.

Carter, Craig W. and Kristi L. Stringer. 2014. "Exotic Dancers in an Awkward Negotiation: Implications for Affect Control Theory." *The Social Science Journal* 51: 277-286.

Cavanagh, Edward. 2011. "A Company with Sovereignty and Subjects of Its Own? The Case of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1670–1763." *Canadian Journal of Law and Society* 26 (1): 25-50.

Chapkis, Wendy. 1997. *Live Sex Acts: Women Performing Erotic Labor*. New York: Routledge.  
———. 2010. "Productive Tensions: Ethnographic Engagement, Complexity, and Contradiction." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 39 (5): 483-497.

Chernoff, John. 2003. *Hustling is Not Stealing: Stories of an African Bar Girl*. Chicago: University of Chicago

Choo, Esther K., Megan L. Ranney, Michael J. Mello, Melissa A. Clark, Tina Charest, Christine Followill, Karina Bertsch, Saskia Larsen, and Caron Zlotnick. 2012. "High Risk Health Behaviors and Healthcare Access Among Female Adult Entertainment Club Employees." *Women and Health* 52: 646-657.

Clamen, Jenn, Chris Bruckert, and Maria Nengeh Mensah. n.d. *Managing Sex Work: Information for Third Parties and Sex Workers in the Incall and Outcall Sectors of the Sex Industry*.

Clipperton, Deborah. 2012. "Work, Sex, or Theatre? A Brief History of Toronto Strippers and Sex Work Identity." In *Selling Sex: Experience, Advocacy, and Research on Sex Work in Canada*, edited by Emily van der Meulen, Elya M. Durisin, and Victoria Love, 29-44. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Cody, Diablo. 2006. *Candy Girl: A Year in the Life of an Unlikely Stripper*. New York: Penguin.

Colosi, Rachela. 2010. *Dirty Dancing? An Ethnography of Lap-Dancing*. London and New York: Routledge.

- Comack, Elizabeth and Maya Seshia. 2010. "Bad Dates and Street Hassles: Violence in the Winnipeg Street Sex Trade." *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice* 52 (2): 203-214.
- Constable, Nicole. 2009. "The Commodification of Intimacy: Marriage, Sex, and Reproductive Labor." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 38: 49-64.
- Coy, Maddy, Josephine Wakeling, and Maria Garner. 2011. "Selling Sex Sells: Representations of Prostitution and the Sex Industry in Sexualized Popular Culture as Symbolic Violence." *Women's Studies International Forum* 34: 441-448.
- Crowley, Jocelyn Elise. 2007. "Friend or Foe?: Self-Expansion, Stigmatized Groups, and the Researcher-Participant Relationship." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 36 (6): 603-630.
- Dalla, Rochelle. 2001. "Et tú Brutè? : A Qualitative Analysis of Streetwalking Prostitutes' Interpersonal Support Networks." *Journal of Family Issues* 22 (8): 1066-1085.
- Darling-Wolf, Fabienne. 1998. "White Bodies and Feminist Dilemmas: On the Complexity of Positionality." *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 22 (4): 410-425.
- Davies, Jacqueline M. 2015. "The Criminalization of Sexual Commerce in Canada: Context and Concepts for Critical Analysis." *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality* 24 (2): 78-91.
- Day, Sophie. 2007. *On the Game: Women and Sex Work*. London: Pluto Press.
- Deliovsky, Katerina. 2010. *White Femininity: Race, Gender, and Power*. Winnipeg: Fernwood.
- DeMichele, Matthew T. and Richard Tewksbury. 2004. "Sociological Explorations in Site-Specific Control: The Role of the Strip Club Bouncer." *Deviant Behavior* 25 (6): 537-558.
- DeShong, Halimah A.F. 2015. "Policing Femininity, Affirming Masculinity: Relationship Violence, Control and Spatial Limitation." *Journal of Gender Studies* 24 (1): 85-103.
- Deshotels, Tina, Mollie Tinney, and Craig Forsyth. 2012. "McSexy: Exotic Dancing and Institutional Power." *Deviant Behavior* 33 (2): 140-148.
- Deshotels, Tina and Craig Forsyth. 2008. "Sex Rules: The Edicts of Income in Exotic Dancing." *Deviant Behavior* 29 (5): 484-500.
- Devereux, Cecily. 2012. "Last Night I did a Striptease for my Husband." *Feminist Media Studies* 12 (3): 317-334.
- Dewalt, Kathleen M. and Billie R. Dewalt. 2002. *Participant Observation: A Guide for Fieldworkers*. Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press.

- Dewey, Susan. 2011. *Neon Wasteland: On Love, Motherhood, and Sex Work in a Rust Belt Town*. Berkley: University of California Press.
- . 2012. "The Feminized Labor of Sex Work: Two Decades of Feminist Historical and Ethnographic Research." *Labor* 9 (2): 113-132.
- Dickson-Swift, Virginia, Erica Lyn James, and Pranee Liamputtong. 2008. *Undertaking Sensitive Research in the Health and Social Sciences: Managing Boundaries, Emotions, and Risks*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ditmore, Melissa Hope, Antonia Levy, and Alys Willman, eds. 2010. *Sex Work Matters: Exploring Money, Power, and Intimacy in the Sex Industry*. London: Zed Books.
- Dobash, Emerson R. 1979. *Violence Against Wives: A Case Against the Patriarchy*. New York: Free Press.
- Downs, Daniel M., Shaan James, and Gloria Cowan. 2006. "Body Objectification, Self-Esteem, and Relationship Satisfaction: A Comparison of Exotic Dancers and College Women." *Sex Roles* 54: 745-752.
- Durisin, Elya M. 2009. "Perspectives on Rape in the Canadian Sex Industry: Navigating the Terrain between Sex Work as Labour and Sex Work as Violence Paradigms." *Canadian Woman Studies* 28 (1): 128-136.
- Eaves, Elisabeth. 2002. *Bare: On Women, Dancing, Sex, and Power*. New York: Knopf.
- Edmonton Journal*. 1996. "Slain Computer Trainer had Double Life; Woman Bludgeoned to Death in Boston Suburb was also an Exotic Dancer." June 4.
- . 2011. "Two Women Beat Exotic Dancer in Hotel Room." September 13.
- . 2012. "Stripper Fired from Newspaper Claims Discrimination." May 12.
- Egan, R. Danielle, Katherine Frank, and Merri Lisa Johnson, eds. 2006. *Flesh for Fantasy: Producing and Consuming Exotic Dance*. New York: Thunder's Mouth Press.
- Egan, R. Danielle. 2003. "I'll be your Fantasy Girl, if you'll Be My Money Man: Mapping Desire, Fantasy and Power in Two Exotic Dance Clubs." *Journal for the Psychoanalysis of Culture and Society* 8 (1): 87-108.
- . 2004. "Eyeing the Scene: The Uses and (RE) Uses of Surveillance Cameras in an Exotic Dance Club." *Critical Sociology* 30 (2): 299-319.
- . 2005. "Emotional Consumption: Mapping Love and Masochism in an Exotic Dance Club." *Body and Society* 11 (4):87-108.
- . 2006a. *Dancing for Dollars and Paying for Love: The Relationships between Exotic Dancers and their Regulars*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- . 2006b. "Resistance Under the Black Light: Exploring the use of Music at two Exotic Dance Clubs." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 35 (2): 201-219.

- Egan, R. Danielle and Katherine Frank. 2005. "Attempts at a Feminist and Interdisciplinary Conversation about Strip Clubs." *Deviant Behavior* 26 (4): 297-320.
- Ehrenreich, Barbara, and Arlie Russell Hochschild, eds. 2002. *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Global Economy*. New York: Holt Paperbacks.
- Ellis, Carolyn. 2007. "Telling Secrets, Revealing Lives: Relational Ethics in Research with Intimate Others." *Qualitative Inquiry* 13 (1): 3-29.
- Ellis, Carolyn S. and Arthur P. Bochner. 2006. "Analyzing Analytic Autoethnography: An Autopsy." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 35 (4): 429-449.
- Entwistle, Joanne. 2000. *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Evans, Adrienne, Sarah Riley, and Avi Shankar. 2010. "Technologies of Sexiness: Theorizing Women's Engagement in the Sexualization of Culture." *Feminism & Psychology* 20 (1): 114-131.
- Farley, Melissa, Jan Macleod, Lynn Anderson, Jacqueline M. Golding, and Steven N. Gold. 2011. "Attitudes and Social Characteristics of Men who Buy Sex in Scotland." *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy* 3 (4): 369-383.
- Farley, Melissa. 2003. "Prostitution and the Invisibility of Harm." *Women & Therapy* 26 (3/4): 274.
- . 2004. "Bad for the Body, Bad for the Heart: Prostitution Harms Women Even if Legalized or Decriminalized." *Violence Against Women* 10 (10): 1087-1125.
- Fassin, Didier. 2014. "True Life, Real Lives: Revisiting the Boundaries between Ethnography and Fiction." *American Ethnologist* 41 (1): 40-55.
- Fernandez-Esquer, Eugenia, and Pamela M. Diamond. 2013. "Intimate Partner Violence Among Stigmatized Latina Workers." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 28 (13): 2640-2656.
- Ferris, Shawna. 2015. *Street Sex Work and Canadian Cities: Resisting a Dangerous Order*. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press.
- Fischer, Carrie Benson. 1996. "Employee Rights in Sex Work: The Struggle for Dancers' Rights as Employees." *Law and Inequality: A Journal of Theory and Practice* 14 (2): 521-554.
- Fogel, Curtis A. and Andrea Quinlan. 2011. "Precarious Labour: in the Contemporary Female Strip Trade." *Canadian Social Science* 7 (5): 51-56.
- Foley, Brenda. 2002. "Naked Politics: Erie, PA v the Kandyland Club." *National Women's Studies Association Journal* 14 (2): 1-17.

———. 2005. *Undressed for Success: Beauty Contestants and Exotic Dancers as Merchants of Morality*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Forsyth, Craig J. and Tina H. Deshotels. 1996. "A Sociological Profile of the Nude Dancer." *International Review of Modern Sociology* 26 (2): 111-120.

———. 1997. "The Occupational Milieu of the Nude Dancer." *Deviant Behavior* 18 (2): 125-142.

———. 1998. "A Deviant Process: The Sojourn of the Stripper." *Sociological Spectrum* 18: 77-92.

Frank, Katherine. 1998. "The Production of Identity and the Negotiation of Intimacy in a Gentleman's Club." *Sexualities* 1 (2): 175-201.

———. 2002. *G-strings and Sympathy: Strip Club Regulars and Male Desire*. Durham: Duke University Press.

———. 2005. "Exploring the Motivations and Fantasies of Strip Club Customers in Relation to Legal Regulations." *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 34 (5): 487-504.

———. 2006. "Keeping Her Off the Pole? Creating Sexual Value in a Capitalist Society." In *Flesh for Fantasy: Producing and Consuming Exotic Dance*, edited by R. Danielle Egan, Katherine Frank, and Merri Lisa Johnson, 203-211. New York: Thunder's Mouth Press.

———. 2007. "Thinking Critically about Strip Club Research." *Sexualities* 10 (4): 501-517.

———. 2013. *Plays Well in Groups: A Journey Through the World of Group Sex*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield.

Frankenberg, Ruth. 1993. *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Friesen, Gerald and Esyllt Wynne Jones. 2009. *Prairie Metropolis: New Essays on Winnipeg Social History*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press.

Frohlick, Susan. 2013. "Intimate Tourism Markets: Money, Gender, and the Complexity of Erotic Exchange in a Costa Rican Caribbean Town." *Anthropological Quarterly* 85 (1): 133-162.

Gavey, Nicola. 2012. "Beyond 'Empowerment'? Sexuality in a Sexist World." *Sex Roles* 66: 718-724.

Ghassem-Fachandi, Parvis. 2009. *Violence: Ethnographic Encounters*. Oxford: Berg.

Giddens, Anthony. 1992. *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love, and Eroticism in Modern Societies*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Gira-Grant, Melissa. 2012. "Organized Labor's Newest Heroes: Strippers." *The Atlantic*, November 19.

———. 2016. *Playing the Whore: The Work of Sex Work*. London and New York: Verso.

Grandy, Gina. 2008. "Managing Spoiled Identities: Dirty Workers' Struggles for a Favorable Sense of Self." *Qualitative Research* 3 (3): 176-198.

Grant, Dianne. 2008. "Sexin' Work: The Politics of Prostitution Regulation. *New Proposals: Journal of Marxism and Interdisciplinary Inquiry* 2: 61-74.

Gray, James Henry. 1971. *Red Lights on the Prairies*. Toronto: MacMillan.

Goffman, Erving. 1963. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. Middlesex: Penguin Books.

Gordon, Avery. 1997. *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Gyepi-Garbrah, John, Ryan Walker, and Joseph Garcea. 2014. "Indigeneity, Immigrant Newcomers, and Interculturalism in Winnipeg, Canada." *Urban Studies* 51 (9): 1795-1811.

Hall, James. 2004. "Burberry brand tarnished by 'chavs.'" *The Telegraph*, November 28.

Hallgrimsdottir, Helga Kristin, Rachel Phillips and Cecilia Benoit. 2006. "Fallen Women and Rescued Girls: Social Stigma and Media Narratives of the Sex Industry in Victoria, B.C., from 1980-2005." *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 43 (3): 265-280.

Halstead, Jason. 2010. "Club too Exotic? Waverly Heights Residents Oppose Opening of Strip Bar." *Winnipeg Sun*, May 13.

Hammersley, Martin and Paul Atkinson. 2007. *Ethnography: Principles in Practice Third Edition*. London and New York: Routledge.

Hammond, Natalie. 2010. "Tackling Taboos: Men who Pay for Sex and the Emotional Researcher." In *New Sociologies of Sex Work*, edited by Kate Hardy, Sarah Kingston, and Teela Sanders, 59-74. Farnham: Ashgate.

Hanna, Judith Lynne. 1998. "Undressing the First Amendment and Corseting the Striptease Dancer." *The Drama Review* 42 (2): 38-69.  
 ———. 2003. "Exotic Dance Adult Entertainment: Ethnography Challenges False Mythology." *City and Society* 15 (2): 165-193.  
 ———. 2005. "Exotic Dance Adult Entertainment: A Guide for Planners and Policy Makers." *Journal of Planning Literature* 20 (2): 116-134.  
 ———. 2010. "Dance and Sexuality: Many Moves." *Journal of Sex Research* 47 (2): 212-241.  
 ———. 2012. *Naked Truth: Strip Clubs, Democracy, and a Christian Right*. Austin: University of Texas Press.  
 ———. 2013. "Striptease Spectators: Live and Imaginary." *Sexuality and Culture* 17: 67-82.

Hannem, Stacey and Chris Bruckert eds. 2012. *Stigma Revisited: Implications of the Mark*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press.

- Hannem, Stacey. 2012. "Theorizing Stigma and the Politics of Resistance." In *Stigma Revisited: Implications of the Mark*, edited by Stacey Hannem and Chris Bruckert, 10-28. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press.
- Hardy, Kate and Teela Sanders. 2015. "The Political Economy of 'Lap Dancing': Contested Careers and Women's Work in the Stripping Industry." *Work, Employment and Society* 29 (1): 119-136.
- Hatty, Suzanne E. 2000. *Masculinities, Violence and Culture*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Hayward, John O. 2015 "Exotic Dancing: Taxable Gyration or Exempt Art?" *Tax Lawyer* 68 (4): 739-760.
- Hochschild, Arlie. 1983. *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Holsopple, Kelley. 1999. "Pimps, Tricks, and Feminists." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 27 (1/2): 47-52.
- Hood, Jane C. 1988. "From Night to Day: Timing and the Management of Custodial Work." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 17 (1): 96-116.
- Hooks, bell. 1992. *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Boston: South End Press.
- Hoops, Stephanie. 2012. "Spearmint Rhino Exotic Dancers Settle Suit for Nearly \$13 Million." *The Huffington Post* November 14.
- Hossain, Mashrur Shahid. 2010. "Enforced Ab/Normalcy: The Sex Worker Hijras and the (Re)Appropriation of s/he Identity." In *Sex Work Matters: Exploring Money, Power, and Intimacy in the Sex Industry*, edited by Melissa Hope Ditmore, Antonia Levy, and Alys Willman, 117-139. London and New York: Zed Books.
- Howlett, Karen and Gloria Galloway. 2010. "Strippers Withdrawn from Job Bank." *The Globe and Mail*, October 15.
- Hubbard, Phil and Rachela Colosi. 2015. "Respectability, Morality and Disgust in the Night-Time Economy: Exploring Reactions to 'Lap Dance' Clubs in England and Wales." *The Sociological Review* 63: 782-800.
- Hubbard, Phil, Roger Matthews, Jane Scoular, Laura Agustin. 2008. "Away from Prying Eyes? The Urban Geographies of 'adult entertainment.'" *Progress in Human Geography* 32 (3): 363-381.
- Hubbard, Phil and Mary Whowell. 2008. "Revisiting the Red Light District: Still Neglected, Immoral and Marginal?" *Geoforum* 39: 1743-1755.

- Hubbard, Phil. 1999. "Researching Female Sex Work: Reflections on Geographical Exclusion, Critical Methodologies and 'Useful' Knowledge." *Area* 31 (3): 229-237.
- . 2001. "Sex Zones: Intimacy, Citizenship and Public Space." *Sexualities* 4 (1): 51-71.
- . 2004. "Cleansing the Metropolis: Sex Work and the Politics of Zero Tolerance." *Urban Studies* 41 (9): 1687-1702.
- Hudson, Graham and Emily Van der Meulen. 2013. "Sex Work, Law, and Violence: Bedford v. Canada and the Human Rights of Sex Workers." *Windsor Yearbook of Access to Justice* 1: 115-145.
- Hugill, David. 2010. *Missing Women, Missing News: Covering Crisis in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside*. Black Point: Fernwood.
- Illouz, Eva. 2007. *Cold Intimacies: The Making of Emotional Capitalism*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Israel, Tina. 2002. "Studying Sexuality: Strategies for Surviving Stigma." *Feminism & Psychology* 12 (2): 256-260.
- Jackson, Crystal. 2011. "Revealing Contemporary Constructions of Femininity: Expressions and Sexuality in Strip Club Legislation." *Sexualities* 14 (3): 354-369.
- Jamieson, Lynn. 1999. "Intimacy Transformed? A Critical Look at the 'Pure Relationship.'" *Sociology* 33 (3): 477-494.
- Jeffrey, Leslie Ann and Gayle MacDonald. 2006. "It's the Money, Honey: The Economy of Sex Work in the Maritimes." *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 43 (3): 313-327.
- Jeffrey, Leslie Ann. 2005. "Canada and Migrant Sex Work: Challenging the 'Foreign' in Foreign Policy." *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 21 (1): 33-48.
- Jeffreys, Sheila. 2008. "Keeping Women Down and Out: The Strip Club Boom and the Reinforcement of Male Dominance." *Signs* 34 (1): 151-173.
- . 2009. "Prostitution, Trafficking and Feminism: An Update on the Debate." *Women's Studies International Forum* 32 (4): 316-320.
- . 2010. "The Sex Industry and Business Practice: An Obstacle to Women's Equality." *Women's Studies International Forum* 33 (3): 274-282.
- Jeltson, Melissa. 2017. "Who is Killing American Women? Their Husbands and Boyfriends, CDC Confirms." *Huffington Post*, July 23.
- Jiwani, Yasmin and Mary Young. 2006. "Missing and Murdered Women: Reproducing Marginality in News Discourse." *Canadian Journal of Communication* 31: 895-917.
- Jochelson, Richard and Kirsten Kramar. 2011. *Sex and The Supreme Court: Obscenity and Indecency Laws in Canada*. Winnipeg: Fernwood.

Johnson, Merri Lisa. 1998. "Pole Work: Autoethnography of a Strip Club." *Sexuality & Culture* 2: 149-157.

———2006. "Stripper Bashing: An Autovideography of Violence Against Strippers." In *Flesh for Fantasy: Producing and Consuming Exotic Dance*, edited by R. Danielle Egan, Katherine Frank, and Merri Lisa Johnson, 159-188. New York: Thunder's Mouth Press.

Karandikar, Sharvari, and Lindsay B. Gezinski. 2012. "'Without Us, Sex Workers will Die Like Weeds': Sex Work and Client Violence in Kamathipura." *Indian Journal of Gender Studies* 19 (3): 351-371.

Kelley, Patty and Susan Dewey. 2011. *Policing Pleasure: Sex Work, Policy, and the State in Global Perspective*. New York: New York University Press.

Kinnell, Hilary. 2013. *Violence and Sex Work in Britain*. London: Routledge.

Kozminski, Megan. 2009. "Empty-handed Constables and Notorious Offenders: Policing an Early Prairie City 'According to Order'." In *Prairie Metropolis: New Essays on Winnipeg Social History*, edited by Gerald Friesen and Esyllt Wynne Jones, 44-62. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press.

Kowalewski, Mark R. 1988. "Double Stigma and Boundary Maintenance: How Gay Men Deal with AIDS." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 17 (2):211-228.

Kraus, Rachel. 2010. "'We are not Strippers': How Belly Dancers Manage a (Soft) Stigmatized Serious Leisure Activity." *Symbolic Interaction* 33 (3): 435-455.

Kristeva, Julia. 1982. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Kulick, Don. 1995. *Travesti: Sex, Gender, and Culture among Brazilian Transgender Prostitutes*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

———1997. "A Man in the House: The Boyfriends of Brazilian Travesti Prostitutes." *Social Text* 52/53: 133-160.

Kurtz, Steven, Hilary Surratt, James Inciardi and Marion Kiley. 2004. "Sex Work and 'Date' Violence." *Violence Against Women* 10 (4): 357-385.

Labarre, Robert. 2002. "The Risk of Going 'Observationalist': Negotiating the Hidden Dilemmas of Being an Insider Participant Observer." *Qualitative Research* 2 (1): 97-122.

Lather, Patti. 2001. "Postbook: Working the Ruins of Feminist Ethnography." *Signs* 27 (1): 199-227.

Lauren, Jillian. 2010. *Some Girls: My Life in a Harem*. New York: Plume.

- Lavin, Melissa F. 2013. "Rule-Making and Rule-Breaking: Strip Club Social Control Regarding Alcohol and Other Drugs." *Deviant Behavior* 34: 361-383.
- 2017. "She Got Herself There: Narrative Resistance in the Drug Discourse of Strippers." *Deviant Behavior* 38 (3): 294-305.
- Law, Tuulia. 2015. "Licensed or Licentious? Examining Regulatory Discussions of Stripping in Ontario." *Canadian Journal of Law and Society* 30 (1): 31-50.
- Lerum, Kari. 2004. "Defining the Emotional Contours of Exotic Dance." *Sexuality and Culture* 8 (1): 44-52.
- Lewis, Jacqueline. 1998. "Learning to Strip: The Socialization Experiences of Exotic Dancers." *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality* 7 (1): 51-66.
- 2006. "I'll Scratch Your Back if You'll Scratch Mine: The Role of Reciprocity, Power and Autonomy in the Strip Club." *CRSA/RCSA* 43 (3): 297-311.
- Lewis, Jacqueline and Eleanor Maticka-Tyndale. 2000. "Licensing Sex Work: Public Policy and Women's Lives." *Canadian Public Policy* 26 (4): 437-449.
- Levitt, Heidi, Rebecca Swanger and Jenny Butler. 2008. "Male Perpetrators' Perspectives on Intimate Partner Violence, Religion, and Masculinity." *Sex Roles* 58 (5): 435-448.
- Liepe-Levinson, Katherine. 2002. *Strip Show: Performances of Gender and Desire*. London: Routledge.
- Lilleston, Pamela S., Jacqueline Reuben, and Susan G. Sherman. 2015. "Exotic Dance in Baltimore: From Entry to STI/HIV Risk." *Women and Health* 55: 595-611.
- Linz, Daniel, Kenneth C. Land, Jay R. Williams, Bryant Paul, Michael E. Ezell. 2004. "An Examination of the Assumption that Adult Businesses are Associated with Crime in Surrounding Areas: A Secondary Effects Study in Charlotte, North Carolina." *Law and Society Review* 38 (1): 69-104.
- Lowman, John. 2000. "Violence and the Outlaw Status of (Street) Prostitution in Canada." *Violence Against Women* 6 (9): 987-1011.
- Macdonald, Nancy. 2015. "Welcome to Winnipeg: Where Canada's racism problem is at its worst." *Maclean's*, January 22.
- Macklin, Audrey. 2003. "Dancing Across Borders: 'Exotic Dancers,' Trafficking, and Canadian Immigration Policy." *International Migration Review* 37(2): 464-500.
- Madden, Raymond. 2010. *Being Ethnographic: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Ethnography*. Sage: London.

Maia, Suzana. 2012. *Transnational Desires: Brazilian Erotic Dancers in New York*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.

Manaster, Shelly. 2006. "Treading Water: An Autoethnographic Account(ing) of the Lap Dance." In *Flesh for Fantasy: Producing and Consuming Exotic Dance*, edited by R. Danielle Egan, Katherine Frank, and Merri Lisa Johnson, 3-18. New York: Thunder's Mouth Press.

Manitoba. The Liquor Control Act, *Liquor Licensing Regulation*. Regulation 177/94, C.C.S.M.c.L160. 1994.

Manitoba. The Liquor and Gaming Control Act, *Liquor Licensing Regulation*. Regulation 61/2014, C.C.S.M.c.L153. 2014a.

———. *Licensee Field Manual*. Prepared by Manitoba Liquor Control Commission. 2014b.

Maticka-Tyndale, Eleanor, Jacqueline Lewis, and Megan Street. 2005. "Making a Place for Escort Work: A Case Study." *Journal of Sex Research* 42 (1): 46-53.

Maticka-Tyndale, Eleanor, Jacqueline Lewis, Jocalyn P. Clark, Jennifer Zubick and Shelley Young. 1999. "Social and Cultural Vulnerability to Sexually Transmitted Infection: The Work of Exotic Dancers." *Canadian Journal of Public Health* 90 (1):19-22.

———. 2000. "Exotic Dancing and Health." *Women and Health* 31 (1): 87-108.

Mattson, Heidi. 1995. *Ivy League Stripper*. New York: Arcade.

Mauss, Marcel. 2001. *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*. London: Routledge.

May, Hazel. 2000. "'Murderers' Relatives': Managing Stigma, Negotiating Identity." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 29 (2): 198-221.

McCaghy, Charles H. and James K. Skipper. 1969. "Lesbian Behavior as an Adaptation to the Occupation of Stripping." *Social Problems* 17 (2): 262-270.

———. 1970. "Stripteasers: The Anatomy and Career Contingencies of a Deviant Occupation." *Social Problems* 17 (3): 391-405.

McClintock, Anne. 1992. "Screwing the System: Sexwork, Race, and the Law." *Boundary* 19 (2): 70-95.

———. 1993. "Sex Workers and Sex Work." *Social Text* 37: 1-10.

McNair, Brian. 2013. *Porno? Chic! How Pornography Changed the World and Made it a Better Place*. New York: Routledge.

McNamara, Patricia. 2009. "Feminist Ethnography: Storytelling that Makes a Difference." *Qualitative Social Work* 8 (2): 161-176.

- Meagher, Gabrielle. 2003. *Friend or Flunkey? Paid Domestic Workers in the New Economy*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press.
- Mestemacher, Rebecca A and Jonathan W. Roberti. 2004. "Qualitative Analysis of Vocational Choice: A Collective Case Study of Strippers." *Deviant Behavior* 25 (1): 43-65.
- Minge, Jeanine and Amber Lynn Zimmerman. 2013. *Concrete and Dust: Mapping the Sexual Terrains of Los Angeles*. New York: Routledge.
- Minichiello, Victor and John Scott, eds. 2014. *Male Sex Work and Society*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Mitchell, Bob. 2006. "Stripper's Death on 401 Leaves Questions." *Toronto Star*, March 24.
- Moncton Times*. 2009. "N.B. Man Pleads Guilty to Attempted Murder of Exotic Dancer at Club." January 20.
- Moll, Lisa, Miranda Kitterlin, James A. Williams. 2014. "Sex Always Sells? Stripping the Façade Surrounding Vice Tourism in a Recession." *Tourism and Hospitality Research* 13 (2): 113-122.
- Monto, Martin. 2014. "Prostitution, Sex Work, and Violence: Lessons from the Cambodian Context." *Studies in Gender & Sexuality* 15 (1): 73-84.
- Morris, Andrew J. and Daniel C. Feldman. 1996. "The Dimensions, Antecedents, and Consequences of Emotional Labor." *The Academy of Management Review* 21 (4): 986-1010.
- Morrow, Lara Catherine. 2012. "Cyclical Role Playing and Stigma: Exploring the Challenges of Stereotype Performance among Exotic Dancers." *Deviant Behavior* 33: 357-374.
- Muldoon, Katherine A, Kathleen N. Deering, Cindy X. Feng, Jean A. Shoveller, and Kate Shannon. 2015. "Sexual Relationship Power and Intimate Partner Violence among Sex Workers with Non-Commercial Intimate Partners in a Canadian Setting." *AIDS Care* 27 (4): 512-519.
- Murphy, Alexandra G. 2003. "The Dialectical Gaze: Exploring the Subject-Object Tension in the Performances of Women who Strip." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 32 (3): 305-335.
- Nagel, Jill. 1997. *Whores and Other Feminists*. New York: Routledge.
- Naples, Nancy A. 2000. "Standpoint Epistemology and the Uses of Self-Reflection in Feminist Ethnography: Lessons for Rural Sociology." *Rural Sociology* 65 (2): 194-214.
- Narayan, Kirin. 1993. "How Native is a "Native" Anthropologist?" *American Anthropologist* 95 (3): 671-686.

Ngo, Anh D., Sheyrl A. McCurdy, Micheal W. Ross, Christine Markham, Eric A. Ratliff, and Hang T. B. Pham. 2007. "The Lives of Female Sex Workers in Vietnam: Findings from a Qualitative Study." *Culture, Health, and Sexuality* 9 (6): 555-570.

O'Connell Davidson, Julia. 2014. "Let's go Outside: Bodies, Prostitutes, Slaves and Worker Citizens." *Citizenship Studies* 18 (5): 516-532.

O'Doherty, Tamara. 2011. "Victimization in Off-Street Sex Industry Work." *Violence Against Women* 17 (7): 944-963.

Oerton, Sarah and Joanne Phoenix. 2001. "Sex/Bodywork: Discourses and Practices." *Sexualities* 4 (4): 387-412.

Opsal, Tara D. 2011. "Women Disrupting a Marginalized Identity: Subverting the Parolee Identity through Narrative." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 40 (2): 135-167.

Orchard, Treena. 2007. "In this Life: The Impact of Gender and Tradition on Sexuality and Relationships for *Devadasi* Sex Workers in Rural India." *Sexuality and Culture* 11 (1): 3-27.

Panchanadeswaran, Subdara, Sethulakshmi C. Johnson, Sudha Sivaram, A. K. Srikrishnan, Carla Zelaya, Suniti Solomon, Vivian F. Go, and David Celentano. 2010. "A Descriptive Profile of Abused Female Sex Workers in India." *Journal of Health and Popular Nutrition* 28 (3): 211-220.

Parker, Richard and Peter Aggleton. 2003. "HIV/AIDS- Related Stigma and Discrimination: A Conceptual Framework and Implications for Action." *Social Science and Medicine* 57: 13-24.

Parrenas, Rhacel Salazar. 2011. *Illicit Flirtations: Labor, Migration, and Sex Trafficking in Tokyo*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Pasko, Lisa. 2002. "Naked Power: The Practice of Stripping as a Confidence Game." *Sexualities* 5 (1): 49-66.

Paul, Bryant, Bradley J. Shafer, and Daniel Linz. 2001. "Government Regulation of 'Adult' Businesses through Zoning and Anti-Nudity Ordinances: Debunking the Legal Myth of Negative Secondary Effects." *Communication Law and Policy* 6 (2): 355-391.

Pederson, Cory L., Amanda R. Champion, Cassandra L. Hesse, Brodie J. Lewis. 2015. "A Question of Deviancy: Comparing Exotic Dancers and Female University Students." *Sexuality and Culture* 19: 800-815.

Pheterson, Gail. 1993. "The Whore Stigma: Female Dishonor and Male Unworthiness." *Social Text* 37: 39-64.

Philaretou, Andreas G. 2006. "Female exotic dancers: intrapersonal and interpersonal perspectives." *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity* 13: 41-52.

- Pilcher, Katy. 2009. "Empowering, Degrading or a 'Mutually Exploitative' Exchange for Women?: Characterizing the Power Relations of the Strip Club." *Journal of International Women's Studies* 10 (3): 73-83.
- Pinney, Amy. 2005. "Ethics, Agency, and Desire in Two Strip Clubs: A View from Both Sides of the Gaze." *Qualitative Inquiry* 11 (5): 716-723.
- Poon, Maurice Kwan-Lai and Peter Trung-Thu Ho. 2008. "Negotiating Social Stigma among Gay Asian Men." *Sexualities* 11 (1/2): 245-268.
- Potterat, John J., Devon D. Brewer, Stephen Q. Muth, Donald E. Woodhouse, Richard B. Rothenberg, Donald E. Woodhouse, John B. Muth, Heather K. Stites, and Stuart Brody. 2004. "Mortality in a Long-Term Open Cohort of Prostitute Women." *American Journal of Epidemiology* 159 (8): 778-785.
- Povinelli, Elizabeth A. 2006. *The Empire of Love: Toward a Theory of Intimacy, Genealogy, and Carnality*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Pratt, Geraldine. 2005. "Abandoned Women and the Spaces of Exception." *Antipode* 37 (5): 1052-1078.
- Price-Glynn, Kim. 2000. "Stripping Women: Workers' Control in Strip Clubs." *Current Research on Occupations and Professions* 11: 3-33.
- . 2008. "Keeping the Dancers in Check: The Gendered Organization of Stripping Work in The Lion's Den." *Gender & Society* 22 (3): 367-389.
- . 2010. *Strip Club: Gender, Power, and Sex Work*. New York: New York University Press.
- Pursaga, Joyanne. 2010. "Just Being 'Exotic' isn't enough to Force Business Out." *Winnipeg Sun*, May 23.
- Queen, Carol. 1997. *Real Live Nude Girl: Chronicles of Sex-Positive Culture*. San Francisco: Cleis Press.
- Quinet, Kenna. 2011. "Prostitutes as Victims of Serial Homicide: Trends and Case Characteristics, 1970-2009." *Homicide Studies* 15 (1): 74-100.
- Rambo, Carol. 2007. "Handing the IRB and Unloaded Gun." *Qualitative Inquiry* 13 (3): 353-367.
- Raphael, Jody and Deborah L. Shapiro. 2004. "Violence in Indoor and Outdoor Prostitution Venues." *Violence Against Women* 10 (2): 126-139.
- Ray, Audacia. 2014. *Prose & Lore: Memoir Stories about Sex Work: Issue 3*. New York: Red Umbrella Project.

- Razack, Sherene. 2002. *Race, Space, and the Law: Unmapping a White Settler Society*. Toronto: Between the Lines.
- Reidy, Denis E., Danielle S. Berke, Brittany Gentile, and Amos Zeichner. 2014. "Man Enough? Masculine Discrepancy Stress and Intimate Partner Violence." *Personality and Individual Differences* 68: 160-164.
- Reilly Meredith L., Danielle German, Chris Serio-Chapman, and Susan G. Sherman. 2015. "Structural Vulnerabilities to HIV/STI Risk among Female Exotic Dancers in Baltimore, Maryland." *Aids Care* 27 (6): 777-782.
- Ristock, Janice. 2002. *No More Secrets: Violence in Lesbian Relationships*. New York: Taylor and Francis.
- Roach, Catherine. 2007. *Stripping, Sex, and Popular Culture*. Oxford: Berg.
- Robben, Antonius C.G.M. and Jeffrey A. Sluka, eds. 2007. *Ethnographic Fieldwork: An Anthropological Reader*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing.
- Roberts, Ron, Amy Jones, and Teela Sanders. 2013. "Students and Sex Work in the UK: Providers and Purchasers." *Sex Education: Sexuality, Society and Learning* 13 (3): 349-363.
- Roberts, Ron, Teela Sanders, Ellie Myers and Debbie Smith. 2010. "Participation in Sex Work: Students' Views." *Sex Education* 10 (2): 145-156.
- Roberts, Rob, Sandra Bergstrom, and David La Rooy. 2007. "UK Students and Sex Work: Current Knowledge and Research Issues." *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* 17 (2): 141-146.
- Ronai, Carol Rambo. 1992. "The Reflexive Self through Narrative: A night in the Life of an Exotic Dancer/Researcher." In *Investigating Subjectivity: Research on Lived Experience*, edited by Caroline Ellis and Michael G. Flaherty, 102-124. Newbury Park: Sage.
- . 1998. "Sketching with Derrida: An Ethnography of a Researcher/Exotic Dancer." *Qualitative Inquiry* 4 (3): 405-420.
- Ronai, Carol Rambo and Carolyn Ellis. 1989. "Turn-ons for Money: Interactional Strategies of the Table Dancer." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 18 (3): 271-298.
- Rosenbloom, Susan Rakosi and Tina Fetner. 2001. "Sharing Secrets Slowly: Issues of Classroom Self Disclosure Raised by Student Sex Workers." *Teaching Sociology* 29 (4): 439-453.
- Ross, Becki L. 2000. "Bumping and Grinding on the Line: Making Nudity Pay." *Labour* 46: 221-250.
- . 2006. "Trouble Makers in Tassels and G-strings: Striptease Dancers and the Union Question in Vancouver, 1965-1980." *CRSA/RCSA* 43 (3): 329-344.

- . 2009. *Burlesque West: Showgirls, Sex, and Sin in Postwar Vancouver*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- . 2010. "Sex and (evacuation from) the City: The Moral and Legal Regulation of Sex Workers in Vancouver's West End, 1975-1985." *Sexualities* 13 (2): 197-218.
- Sallmann, Jolanda. 2010. "Living with Stigma: Women's Experiences of Prostitution and Substance Use." *Affilia: Journal of Women and Social Work* 25 (2): 146-159.
- Sanders, Teela. 2004. "Controllable Laughter: Managing Sex Work through Humour." *Sociology* 38 (2): 273-291.
- . 2006. "Sexing Up the Subject: Methodological Nuances in Researching the Female Sex Industry." *Sexualities* 9 (4): 449-468.
- . 2008. "Selling Sex in the Shadow Economy." *International Journal of Social Economics* 35 (10): 704-716.
- Sanders, Teela and Rosie Campbell. 2007. "Designing out Vulnerability, Building in Respect: Violence, Safety and Sex Work Policy." *The British Journal of Sociology* 58 (1): 1-19.
- Sanders, Teela and Kate Hardy. 2012. "Devalued, Deskilled and Diversified: Explaining the Proliferation of the Strip Industry in the UK." *The British Journal of Sociology* 63 (3): 513-532.
- . 2013. "Sex Work: The Ultimate Precarious Labour?" *Centre for Crime and Justice Studies* 93: 16-18.
- . 2014. *Flexible Workers: Labour, Regulation and the Political Economy of the Stripping Industry*. London: Routledge.
- . 2015. "Students Selling Sex: Marketisation, Higher Education and Consumption." *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 36 (5): 747-765.
- Scambler, Graham. 2007. "Sex Work Stigma: Opportunist Migrants in London." *Sociology* 41 (6): 1079-1096.
- Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. 2007. "Ire in Ireland." In *Ethnographic Fieldwork: An Anthropological Reader*, edited by Antonius C.G.M Robben and Jeffrey A. Sluka, 202-215. Malden: Blackwell Publishing.
- Schiff, Frederick. 1999. "Nude dancing: Scenes of sexual celebration in a contested culture." *Journal of American Culture* 22 (4): 9-16.
- Schoenbaum, Naomi. 2016. "The Law of Intimate Work." *Washington Law Review* 90: 1167-1244.
- Schweizer, Dahlia. 2004. "Striptease: The Art of Spectacle and Transgression." *Journal of Popular Culture* 34 (1): 65-75.
- Scott, Linda M. 2005. *Fresh Lipstick: Redressing Fashion and Feminism*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Seshia, Maya. 2010. "Naming Systemic Violence in Winnipeg's Street Sex Trade." *Canadian Journal of Urban Research* 19 (1): 1-17.
- Seymour, Andrew. 2011a. "Man Charged in Death of Exotic Dancer; Assessment Ordered to Determine if Accused has Mental Health Issues." *The Ottawa Citizen* March 29.
- . 2011b. "Ottawa Judge finds Exotic Dancer Guilty of Kicking Stripper Husband." *The Ottawa Citizen* November 24.
- Sharp, Lesley A. 2000. "The Commodification of the Body and its Parts." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 29: 287-328.
- Shaver, Frances. 1994. "The Regulation of Prostitution: Avoiding the Morality Trap." *Canadian Journal of Law and Sociology* 9 (1): 123-146.
- . 2005. "Sex Work Research: Methodological and Ethical Challenges." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 20 (3): 296-319.
- Shaver, Frances, Jacqueline Lewis, and Eleanor Maticka-Tyndale. 2011. "Rising to the Challenge: Addressing the Concerns of People Working in the Sex Industry." *Canadian Review of Sociology* 48 (1): 47-65.
- Sherman, Susan G., Pamela S. Lilleston, and Jacqueline Reuben. 2011. "More than a Dance: The Production of Sexual Health Risk in the Exotic Dance Clubs in Baltimore, USA." *Social Science and Medicine* 73: 475-481.
- Silver, Jim. 2010. "Inside Winnipeg's Inner City." *Canadian Journal of Urban Research* 19 (1): iii-viii.
- Singh, Anita. 2010. "Ex-stripper Accused in Case of Murder, Money, and Voodoo." *Edmonton Journal*, July 10.
- Sloan, Lacey and Stephanie Wahab. 2004. "Four Categories of Women who Work as Topless Dancers." *Sexuality & Culture* 8 (1): 18-43.
- Sloan, Lacey, Holly Bell and Chris Strickling. 1998. "Exploiter or Exploited: Topless Dancers Reflect on their Experiences." *Affilia: Journal of Women and Social Work* 13 (3): 352-368.
- Smith, Dorothy E. 1996. "Telling the Truth after Postmodernism." *Symbolic Interaction* 19 (3): 171-202.
- . 2000. "Schooling for Inequality." *Signs* 25 (4): 1147-1151.
- Southgate, Erica and Kerri Shying. 2014. "Researchers as Dirty Workers: Cautionary Tales on Insider-Outsider Dynamics." *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management* 9 (3): 223-240.
- Spivey, Sue E. 2005. "Distancing and Solidarity as Resistance to Sexual Objectification in a Nude Dancing Bar." *Deviant Behavior* 26 (5): 417-437.

- Stacey, Judith. 2000. "Is Academic Feminism an Oxymoron?" *Signs* 25 (4): 1189-1194.
- Stanko, Elizabeth A. 2002. *The Meanings of Violence*. Hoboken: Taylor and Francis.
- Steele, Valerie. 1991. "The F-Word." *Lingua Franca* April: 16.
- . 1996. *Fetish: Fashion, Sex and Power*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . 1997. "Letter From the Editor." *Fashion Theory* 1 (1): 1-2.
- . 1998. "A Museum of Fashion is More than a Clothes Bag." *Fashion Theory* 2 (4): 327-336.
- Sterry, David Henry and R. J. Martin Jr. 2009. *Hos, Hookers, Call Girls, and Rent Boys: Professionals Writing on Life, Love, Money, and Sex*. Brooklyn: Soft Skull Press.
- Stone, Maggie McCandless. 2014. "'This Could be a Good Avenue for You': Influential Strategies in the Hiring of Exotic Dancers." *Deviant Behavior* 35 (9): 727-741.
- Swader, Christopher S., Olga Strelkova, Alena Sutormina, Viktoria Syonima, Volha Vystskaya, Irene Fedorova. 2013. "Love as a Fictitious Commodity: Gift-for-Sex Barterers as Contractual Carriers of Intimacy." *Sexuality and Culture* 17: 598-616.
- Sweet, Nova and Richard Tewksbury. 2000a. "Entry, Maintenance and Departure from a Career in the Sex Industry: Stripper's Experiences of Occupational Costs and Rewards." *Humanity and Society* 24 (2): 136-161.
- . 2000b. "'What's a Nice Girl like you Doing in a Place like this?' Pathways to a Career in Stripping." *Sociological Spectrum* 20 (3): 325-343.
- Taussig, Micheal. 2006. *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Thaller, Jonel and Andrea N. Cimino. 2017. "The Girl Is Mine." *Violence Against Women* 23 (2): 202-221.
- Thobani, Sunera. 2007. *Exalted Subjects: Studies in the Making of Race and Nation in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Thompson, William E. and Jack L. Harred. 1992. "Topless Dancers: Managing Stigma in a Deviant Occupation." *Deviant Behavior* 13 (3): 291-312.
- Thompson, William E., Jack L. Harred, and Brenda E. Burks. 2003. "Managing the Stigma of Topless Dancing: A Decade Later." *Deviant Behavior* 24 (6): 551-570.
- Toronto Star*. 1985. "Exotic Dancer who was Raped 'Promoted Lust' Judge Says." February 8: A7.

- Trautner, Mary Nell, and Jessica L. Collett. 2010. "Students Who Strip: The Benefits of Alternate Identities for Managing Stigma." *Symbolic Interaction* 33 (2): 257-279.
- Trautner, Mary Nell. 2005. "Doing Gender, Doing Class: The Performance of Sexuality in Exotic Dance Clubs." *Gender and Society* 19 (6):771-88.
- Valverde, Mariana. 1999. "The Harms of Sex and the Risks of Breasts: Obscenity and Indecency in Canadian Law." *Social and Legal Studies* 8 (2):181-197.
- . 2008. *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Social Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Van der Meulen, Emily. 2010. "Illegal Lives, Loves, and Work: How the Criminalization of Procuring Affects Sex Workers in Canada." *Wagadu* 8: 217-240.
- Van der Meulen, Emily and Elya M. Durisin. 2009. "Why Decriminalize? How Canada's Municipal and Federal Regulations Increase Sex Workers Vulnerability." *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law* 20 (2): 289-311.
- Van der Meulen, Emily, Elya M. Durisin, and Victoria Love, eds. 2012. *Selling Sex: Experience, Advocacy, and Research on Sex Work in Canada*. Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Van Lissum, Romana. 2012. *The Life of a Stripper: 50 Exotic Dancers Confess their Personal Experiences in the Adult Entertainment Industry*. Anamor Productions.
- Wahab, Stephanie, Lynda. M. Baker, Julie M Smith, Kristy Cooper, and Kari Lerum. 2011. "Exotic Dance Research: A Review of the Literature from 1970 to 2008." *Sexuality & Culture* 15: 56-79.
- Wahab, Stephanie. 2003. "Creating Knowledge Collaboratively With Female Sex Workers: Insights From a Qualitative, Feminist, and Participatory Study." *Qualitative Inquiry* 9 (4): 625-642.
- Wardlow, Holly. 2006. *Wayward Women: Sexuality and Agency in a New Guinean Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Weitzer, Ronald John. 2010. *Sex for Sale: Prostitution, Pornography, and the Sex Industry*. New York: Routledge.
- Weldon, Jo. 2010. "Show Me the Money: A Sex Worker Reflects on Research into the Sex Industry." In *Sex Work Matters: Exploring Money, Power, and Intimacy in the Sex Industry*, edited by Melissa Hope Ditmore, Antonia Levy, and Alys Willman, 147-154. London and New York: Zed Books.
- Wesley, Jennifer. K. 2002. "Growing up Sexualized: Issues of Power and Violence in the Lives of Female Exotic Dancers." *Violence Against Women* 8 (10): 1182-1207.

- . 2003. “Where am I going to Stop?: Exotic Dancing, Fluid Body Boundaries, and Effects on Identity.” *Deviant Behavior* 24 (5): 483-503.
- . 2006. “Negotiating Myself: The Impact of Studying Female Exotic Dancers on a Feminist Researcher.” *Qualitative Inquiry* 12 (1): 146-162.
- Whitaker, Robin. 2011. “The Politics of Friendship in Feminist Anthropology.” *Anthropology in Action* 18 (1): 56-66.
- Whitehead, K., Kurz, T. 2009. “Empowerment and the Pole: a Discursive Investigation of the Reinvention of Pole Dancing as a Recreational Activity.” *Feminism & Psychology* 19 (2): 224-244.
- Willman, Alys. 2010. “Let’s Talk About Money.” In *Sex Work Matters: Exploring Money, Power and Intimacy in the Sex Industry*, edited by Melissa Hope Ditmore, Antonia Levy, and Alys Willman, 143-146. London and New York: Zed Books.
- Wilson, Jacki. 2008. *The Happy Stripper: Pleasures and Politics of the New Burlesque*. London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd.
- Winnipeg. City of Winnipeg By-law 200/2006, EZ-DAZ. 2006.
- Wirtz, Andrea, Sheree Schwartz, Sosthenes Ketende, Simplicie Anato, Felicity Nadedjo, Henri Ouedraogo, Odette Ky-Zerbo, Vincent Pitche, Ashley Grosso, Erin Papworth and Stefan Baral. 2015. “Sexual Violence, Condon Negotiation, and Condom use in the Context of Sex Work: Results From Two West African Countries.” *Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes* 68 (2): 171-179.
- Wong, William C., Eleanor Holroyd, and Amie Bingham. 2011. “Stigma and Sex Work from the Perspective of Female Sex Workers in Hong Kong.” *Sociology of Health and Illness* 33 (1): 50-65.
- Wood, Elizabeth Anne. 2000. “Working in the Fantasy Factory: The Attention Hypothesis and the Enacting of Masculine Power in Strip Clubs.” *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 29 (1): 5-31.
- York, Melinda R. 2011. *Gender Attitudes and Violence Against Women*. El Paso: LFB Scholarly Publishing.
- Young, Alan. 2008. “The State is Still in the Bedrooms of the Nation: The Control and Regulation of Sexuality in Canadian Criminal Law.” *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality* 17 (4): 203-220.
- Zalwango, Flavia, Lina Eriksson, Janet Seeley, Sarah Nakamanya, Judith Vandepitte, Heiner Grosskurth. 2010. “Parenting and Money Making: Sex Work and Women’s Choices in Urban Uganda.” *Wagadu* 8: 71-92.

Zelizer, Viviana. 2000. "The Purchase of Intimacy." *Law and Social Inquiry* 25 (2): 817-848.  
———. 2011. *Economic Lives: How Culture Shapes the Economy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Zurndorfer, Harriet. 2015. "Men, Women, Money, and Morality: The Development of China's Sexual Economy." *Feminist Economics*: 1-23.

## Appendix I: Consent Forms

**Research Project Title:** Stigmatized in Stilettoes: An Ethnographic Study of Stigma and Intimate Relationships in Exotic Dancers' Lives

**Principal Investigator:** Jacenta Bahri, Department of Anthropology, University of Manitoba, umbahri@cc.umanitoba.ca, ph. [REDACTED]

**Research Supervisor:** Susan Frohlick, Department of Anthropology and Women's and Gender Studies, University of Manitoba, susan.frohlick@ad.umanitoba.ca

This consent form, a copy of which may be left with you for your records and reference if you wish, will give you the basic idea of what my research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, please feel free to ask or contact me at any time with questions.

**Project Summary:** My PhD research is about how stigma affects the lives of women who work as exotic dancers, a topic I became interested in because I used to work as a dancer in Winnipeg. I would especially like to look at how working as a dancer affects women's intimate relationships, particularly with boyfriends, spouses, or other romantic and sexual relationships. I'm also interested in learning about any types of verbal, physical, or emotional violence that may (or may not) occur in these relationships.

**Interviews:** In the interview, I will be asking you to share some of your experiences with stigma, relationships, and intimate partner violence. This session will be recorded and last for approximately one hour. These recordings will be kept strictly confidential and I will be the only one who listens to them. Interview transcripts will only be available for viewing by me and you. You may request a copy of your interview transcripts and give me any clarification or feedback if you wish.

**Privacy:** I may use the information you share in the interview in my thesis paper and other future publications in academic journals, but that doesn't mean that you can't change your mind about being in the study at any point before I complete the final draft of my thesis by October 31, 2014. Any information you share with me will be kept strictly confidential and if I use it in my thesis or other future publications I will make sure to change your name and distinguishing features so that you cannot be identified. You may choose a false name, or I can choose one for you if you prefer.

Preferred pseudonym: \_\_\_\_\_

I want the pseudonym to be chosen for me: \_\_\_\_\_

It is highly unlikely that anyone will be able to identify you in my writing; however there is always some risk that this may happen. Please be assured that I will do everything I can to protect your privacy.

**Compensation:** You will be given a \$20.00 gift certificate at the end of the interview to thank you for your time and expertise. It is not intended as an incentive or inducement. You are free to

withdraw from the research without negative consequences at any time during or after the interview by contacting me before the completion of my thesis October 31, 2014.

**Confidentiality:** The main purpose of this consent form is to ensure that you are aware of the potential risks of participation and to inform you that I will do everything I can to protect your identity and privacy. By signing this consent form you are **not** bound to participate in the study if you change your mind.

**Research Results:** I expect to finish my research by approximately February 2015, at which time you will be provided with a short 1-3 page summary of the results of my project at your request. My thesis will be finished by approximately October 31, 2015, and I will provide you with a rough draft of the thesis for review if you wish and a link to my thesis when it is published online. You may see your transcripts at anytime and feel free to give me feedback and clarification. Please provide your contact details below if you would like me to provide you with the transcripts of the interview and/or the project summary, draft of the thesis, and/or thesis link. Your contact information and any other details you provide on this form will be kept strictly confidential and only I will have access to it.

**Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.**

**The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.**

**This research has been approved by the Joint Faculty Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at 474-7122. A copy of this consent form will be given to you to keep for your records and reference if you wish.**

Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I would like a copy of (please check all boxes that apply):

Interview transcripts

Summary of research results

Link to published thesis

Draft of thesis

I would like to receive these by:

Email

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail

Mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_

Verbally (by phone)

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

In person (contact me to arrange)

### Consent Form

I, [REDACTED], am aware that Jacenta Bahri, a student at the University of Manitoba, will be conducting research for her PhD in anthropology while she is employed as a dancer for my agency, [REDACTED].

I understand that this research will not interfere with the operation of my business and that signing this form in no way waives my legal rights nor releases the researcher from their legal and professional responsibilities.

A copy of this consent form will be given to you to keep for your records and reference if you wish.

Signature:

---

Date:

---

### Consent Form

I, [REDACTED], am aware that Jacenta Bahri, a student at the University of Manitoba, will be conducting research for her PhD in anthropology while she is employed as a driver for my agency, [REDACTED].

I understand that this research will not interfere with the operation of my business and that signing this form in no way waives my legal rights nor releases the researcher from their legal and professional responsibilities.

A copy of this consent form will be given to you to keep for your records and reference if you wish.

Signature:

---

Date:

---

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> While men are also employed in the fashion industry and sex work, men tend to dominate the higher level positions in the fashion industry, while women dominate the more physically intensive, lower paid garment production areas (Scott 2005). Male sex workers and their unique concerns are usually rendered invisible by the intense cultural focus on the “deviancy” of women who are involved in sexual labour, evidenced by the higher level of incarceration experienced by women who sell sex in North America (Minichiello and Scott 2014).

<sup>2</sup> A non-exhaustive list of additional studies of exotic dance from a variety of disciplines that explore an array of topics include: Bradley-Engen 2009, 2008; Bradley-Engen and Ulmer 2009; Bruckert 2002; Colosi 2010; Egan, Frank, and Johnson 2006; Egan 2006a, 2006b, 2005, 2004, 2003; Frank 2005, 2002, 1998; Johnson 1998; Ronai 1998, 1992; Maia 2012; Hanna 2012, 2010, 2003, 1998; Foley 2005, 2002; Brooks 2010; Liepe-Levinson 2002; Bott 2006; Murphy 2003; Pinney 2005; Price-Glynn 2008; Sloan, Bell, and Strickling 1998; Trautner and Collett 2010; Trautner 2005; Bouclin 2004; Lewis 1998, 2006; Fischer 1996; Hubbard et al. 2008; Jackson 2011; Macklin 2003; Ross 2009, 2005; Maticka-Tyndale et. al. 1999; Berson 2016; Lavin 2013, 2017; Carter and Stringer 2014; Hubbard and Colosi 2015; Morrow 2012; Reilly et al. 2015; Stone 2014; Barton and Hardesty 2010; Downs, James, and Cowan 2006; Lerum 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Burlesque was a form of theatre that existed from the late 19<sup>th</sup> to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century which featured female performers who would dance, sing, and use comedic tropes in addition to pushing public nudity boundaries. The present day neo-burlesque movement appropriates “old” burlesque looks, often attempts to merge burlesque acts with self conscious feminist politics, and is usually performed by women for a mostly female audience (Wilson 2008).

<sup>4</sup> Sociologist Arlie Hochschild (1983, 7) conceptualized “emotional labour” in *The Managed Heart*, which explored flight attendants’ “Management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display” which is “sold for a wage and therefore has exchange value.”

<sup>5</sup> Researcher bias in sex work research is referred to by Scambler (2007, 1082) as the “paradox of attention”; “that representations of prostitutes/sex workers often reflect the projects of those observing them”.

<sup>6</sup> Custodial work is defined by Jane C. Hood (1998) as janitorial or cleaning jobs. Mashrur Shahid Houssain (2010, 118) defines *hijra* as “a transgender minority community in Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan...born with certain biological characteristics that problematize sexual identity”.

<sup>7</sup> Goffman (1963, 108-109) also asserts, “it is assumed that he [the stigmatized individual] must necessarily pay a great psychological price, a very high level of anxiety, in living a life that can be collapsed at any moment...I think that close study...would show that this anxiety is not always found and that here our folk conceptions of human nature can be seriously misleading”.

<sup>8</sup> Anti-trafficking laws, Agustin (2007) argues, marginalizes those who are most vulnerable by pushing sex work further underground where women have less access to assistance because they are threatened by prosecution or deportation.

<sup>9</sup> This question about bruises arises from the fact that dancers are often bruised from pole work.

<sup>10</sup> Dancers can be fined for missing shows, arriving late for shows, or engaging in physical contact with customers. Being fined is highly dependent on a dancer's past behaviour, the relationship the dancer has with bar staff, and her relationship with the agents. Often, dancers will not find out they have been fined until they receive their paychecks. Fines are frequently disputed and a source of contention between the dancers, bar staff, and the agents.

<sup>11</sup> The name of the agency, strip clubs, bars, and all other specific locations have been changed, and pseudonyms were used for all individuals who are mentioned in my thesis.

<sup>12</sup> The names of all individuals mentioned in my study have been changed to protect their privacy.

<sup>13</sup> Southgate and Shying (2014) explain the difficulties of experiencing stigma as a researcher in addition to the stigma researchers experience when they participate in forms of "dirty" work.

<sup>14</sup> Frank (2002) discussed similar challenges as an exotic dancer/researcher in her study of strip club patrons in the United States.

<sup>15</sup> When Manitobans refer to the "LC" they may be referring to the regulatory body or Manitoba Liquor Marts, the sole retailer of alcohol in this province, as this abbreviation is used for both. Dancers and others employed at bars in Manitoba still refer to the regulatory body as the "LC", as in "the LC might be doing an inspection today."

<sup>16</sup> The threat of fines from the bar in which one works is also a significant deterrent to offering physical contact with a customer, which I will discuss in more detail later on in this chapter.

<sup>17</sup> Winnipeg resident, Sarah Rosnes, started an online petition to close Kisses in 2010, erroneously claiming that the strip club violated city by-laws. Rosnes stated to the media that a strip club opening in her neighbourhood "brings allot of unwanted things," including an increase of crime in the area. Her petition, while it garnered much support from city residents, was unsuccessful and Kisses continued to operate at that location until 2012 (Halstead 2010; Pursaga 2010). While the online petition is no longer available to view, I had the opportunity to read some of the residents' comments in May 2010. The majority of the comments reflected negative attitudes towards women who work as exotic dancers and were clearly not related to concerns over adherence to city by-laws.

<sup>18</sup> While I refused to engage in gossip about dancers, I also had to make sure I didn't jeopardize my relationships with anyone else in the industry that held power over my ability to work as a dancer in Winnipeg. This meant that I often took an active listening role whenever anyone,

including fellow dancers, bartenders, DJs, bar managers, or agents-spoke disparagingly about certain dancers, and did not offer an opinion on the matter either way.

<sup>19</sup> Some common fineable offences included, but were not limited to: late for floor shift, late for show, short show, missed show, inappropriate costuming, not socializing with customers enough, leaving a floor shift early, not meeting your private dance quota, overcharging customers for a private dance, and physical contact with customers or other dancers.

<sup>20</sup> Sociologist Jacqueline Lewis' (2006, 305) study of strip clubs in Ontario also highlights the importance of dancers maintaining mutually beneficial relationships with other strip club employees as a "mechanism to ensure autonomy in the work place." Similarly, sociologists Matthew T. DeMichele and Richard Tewksbury (2004), who explored the role of strip club bouncers in the United States, note that although bouncers were expected to enforce the rules of the bar, including dancer behaviour, they were less likely to reprimand the women who were friendly or known as high earners in the hopes that they would receive more tips. However, no dancer in Winnipeg, regardless of her reputation, was immune to fines because their application was so arbitrary and unpredictable. Even though some dancers were fined more than others, every dancer I worked with had been fined at least once during my fieldwork. Additionally, because each bar had their own specific rules in regards to dancer behaviour and dress that could end up resulting in a fine, we were often confused as to what the rules actually were at each bar on any given day.

<sup>21</sup> Dewey (2011) and Bruckert (2002) explore the tendency for exotic dancers to distance themselves from other sex workers more extensively in their work.

<sup>22</sup> By violence in this instance I am referring to any kind of controlling and restrictive behaviour from romantic partners that limit women's choices.

<sup>23</sup> A sample of headlines from Canadian news media that I have come across include: "Stripper's Death on 401 Leaves Questions" (Mitchell 2006); "Ex-stripper Accused in Case of Murder, Money, Sex and Voodoo" (Singh 2010); "Two Women Beat Exotic Dancer in Hotel Room" (Edmonton Journal 2011); "Man Charged in Death of Exotic Dancer; Assessment Ordered to Determine if Accused has Mental Health Issues" (Lofaro 2011); "N.B. Man Pleads Guilty to Attempted Murder of Exotic Dancer at Club" (Moncton Times 2009); "Ottawa Judge finds Exotic Dancer Guilty of Kicking Stripper Husband" (Seymour 2011).

<sup>24</sup> I had developed questions for focus groups, and these were outlined in my original research proposal. I was able to schedule a focus group once with Scarlett and Daisy, but ended up interviewing Scarlett twice because Daisy was unable to attend.

<sup>25</sup> Studies that contribute to the production of booklets like *Managing Sex Work: Information for Third Parties and Sex Workers in the Incall and Outcall Sectors of the Sex Industry* written by researchers Jenn Clamen, Chris Bruckert, and Maria Nengeh Mensah (n.d.) would also be helpful for the exotic dance industry.

