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Emotion management as struggle in dirty work: the experiences of exotic dancers

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Abstract: We further the research to date on ambiguity, ambivalence and contradiction in organisation studies by integrating the dirty work and emotion management literatures. Our intent is to better understand the complex cognitive processes underpinning everyday experiences of those working in what has been perceived to be a high-breadth high-depth stigmatised occupation, that is, exotic dancing. Dancers' stories reveal they are acutely aware of social and moral taint associated with the work and in turn their self-identities. They adopt a number of strategies to manage their spoiled identities and we contribute by unpicking the cognitive processes that underpin these strategies. In extending strategies of emotional ambivalence at work and stigma management, we conclude that through a lens of emotion management as struggle, exotic dancers, and more broadly dirty workers, do not 'resolve' the ambivalence, contradiction and ambiguity they confront but can be seen to experience at best a type of contingent coherence in their everyday work.

Keywords: ambiguity; ambivalence, contradiction, dirty work, emotion management, exotic dancing

1 Introduction

Tyler (2011) argues that inadequate attention has been devoted to understanding ambivalence in everyday organisational life. This is surprising given evidence that reveals ambivalence, ambiguity and contradiction play a role in identity construction (Alvesson, 2010), organisational culture (Wicks and Grandy, 2007) and emotion at work (Pratt and Doucet, 2000). Pratt and Doucet's (2000) work on ambivalence and emotion reveals that emotion at work is likely to be complicated for some individuals in that it involves an ongoing to-ing and fro-ing between both negative and positive emotions about relationships with or within work. They go further to note, "subsequent research should explore whether certain types of organizations might be more likely to spawn ambivalent relationships than others" (p.222). There is indeed research that indicates that ambivalence, ambiguity and contradiction are particularly salient in the experiences of those who work in stigmatised, or dirty work (e.g., Ashforth et al., 2007; Stacey, 2005; Tyler, 2011). We take the research to date on ambiguity, ambivalence and contradiction in organisation studies further by integrating the dirty work and emotion management literatures.

Dirty work is that which is perceived to be disgusting or degrading (Hughes, 1958) and tainted physically, morally and / or socially (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999). It has been argued that individuals who work in stigmatised occupations personify the work so that over time they become dirty workers, that is, stigmatised or dirty in some way carrying the taint associated with their work (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999). Those working in stigmatised occupations are likely to confront criticism and disapproval from a variety of sources, including the general public, media, customers and even family and friends (Grandy and Mavin, 2012; Hallgrimsdottir, Phillips and Benoit, 2006; Simpson et al., 2012). As a result, identity construction for dirty workers can be particularly complex and they engage in a number of strategies to construct and negotiate

boundaries to manage the stigma they experience (e.g., distancing, dividing up their social world, projecting disgust, infusing the work with positive value, building strong subcultures) (Ashforth et al., 2007; Grandy, 2008; Tracy and Trethewey, 2005). Considerable literature has explored the emotion work inherent in these noted strategies, specifically the emotional labour required by individuals employed in dirty work occupations such as prison guards (Crawley, 2004), tour reps (Guerrier and Adib, 2003), prostitutes (Sanders, 2005) and exotic dancers (Barton, 2002; Fogel and Quinlan, 2011). Pratt and Doucet (2000) contend that emotional labour may result in emotional ambivalence and we extend this line of thinking by fusing the literatures on dirty work, emotion management and exotic dancing to theoretically and empirically advance our understanding of the complexity of everyday experiences of work. Specifically, the purpose of this research is to reconceptualise emotion management as struggle through a focus upon contradiction, ambiguity and ambivalence evident in dirty workers' talk about work. We look to a particular type of dirty work, namely, exotic dancing to do this.

There are three objectives guiding this research: to review the literature on exotic dancing to position it as a form of dirty work laden with expectations of emotional labour and emotion management; to fuse the literatures on dirty work and emotion management and re-conceptualise emotion management as struggle; and, to empirically explore further the complexities of emotion management as struggle for dirty workers, specifically exotic dancers, through a focus upon ambivalence, contradiction and ambiguity as dancers talk about their everyday experiences of work.

2 Exotic dancing: a dirty work site marked by ambiguity, contradiction and ambivalence?

Exotic dancing is understood as a form of sex work that involves either topless or nude dancing (Wesley, 2002). In North America the number of clubs increased substantially in the 1980s and 1990s and in the UK there are between 150 to 300 clubs operating legally (Bindel, 2004; Bruckert, 2002; Liepe-Levinson, 2002; Object, 2008). Exotic dancing, as a form of dirty work, can be viewed as physically (e.g., using poles after other dancers without appropriate cleaning, located in dangerous areas), socially (e.g., in contact with other stigmatised individuals, servile work) and morally (e.g., sexual contact outside of monogamous relationships) tainted. It is an industry fraught with change, contradiction and ambiguity as evidenced in controversy over concerns ranging from the exploitation of women, criminal activity, workplace and public safety, unionisation and the licensing of clubs (Bradley, 2008; Fogel and Quinlan, 2011). It is also an industry where the lived experiences of those working in it are emotionally charged and diverse. Accounts from the media and scholarly work acknowledge differences between and within categories of sex work (Weitzer, 2000), diversity in clubs operating in the industry (Bradley-Engen and Ulmer, 2009), and similarities and differences in the experiences of those working in the industry (Mestemacher and Roberti, 2004; Philaretou, 2006; Sweet and Tewksbury, 2000). Sanders and Hardy's (2011) initial findings from a recent large scale study of more than 200 exotic dancers in the United Kingdom reveal findings similar to previous work in that dancers express ambivalence in their emotion work and they report competing feelings of both exploitation and empowerment (see also the work of Deshotels and Forsyth, 2006 on "strategic flirting"). Interestingly, however, Sanders and Hardy (2011) also report that nearly three quarters of all dancers they encountered indicated high levels of satisfaction with their jobs (7-10 out of a 10 point scale). It appears that dancers can experience job satisfaction and a sense of

empowerment from their work while simultaneously confront stigma from a variety of sources and the negative emotions that accompany it.

Dancers have to manage a range of emotions from disgust to lust (Montemurro, 2001) and researchers have explored the emotional labour inherent in sex work, albeit sometimes implicitly, through discussions of “counterfeiting of intimacy” (Foote, 1954), “cynical performance” (Goffman, 1959) and “impression management” (Goffman, 1959). Foote (1954) first introduced the term counterfeit intimacy to refer the dramaturgical aspect of sex workers ‘performing’ intimacy, that is, the intimacy experienced by customers is often imitation, inauthentic, or “counterfeit currency in interpersonal relations” (p.162). Boles and Garbin (1974), Chapkis (1997), Ronai and Ellis (1989) and Wood (2000) also highlight how exotic dancers manage impressions through costume, make-up, facial expressions, body movements, music choices for stage shows and conversations with customers for commercial gain. Bruckert’s (2002) and Wood’s (2000) research on exotic dancers illuminates the emotional labour required in sex work and they go further to tease out the gendered nature of sex work, as well as the stigma enveloping the industry and the individuals performing the work.

In conceptualising exotic dancing as a form of dirty work we build upon previous research on the emotion work of exotic dancers to explicitly theorise and empirically explore the role of contradiction, ambivalence and ambiguity in dancers’ emotion management as evident in their talk about work. We theorise that contradictions and inconsistencies as struggle demonstrate a lack of coherence, balance and stability of self. The individual experiences a lack of certainty in their feelings and self-identities. Drawing upon El-Sawad, Arnold and Cohen’s (2004) work on contradiction the interest here is in contradictions within the story of the same individual (at different points in time within interviews). Drawing upon Alvesson (1993), Grandy (2007) and Robertson and Swan (2003), ambiguity is broadly interpreted as that which seems unclear, contradictions that cannot be resolved or involves an absence of agreement on boundaries. Ambivalence is understood as experiencing opposing feelings towards the same subject, object or event. This co-existence in one person provides a useful depiction of the tensions and balancing act (and therefore struggle) of emotion management. Ambivalence is manifested through double-talk or double-speak in the individual’s conversations about work.

In threading the dirty work, emotion management and exotic dancing literatures with a focus upon ambivalence, contradiction and ambiguity our contribution is three-fold. First, we contribute to the dirty work literature by building upon Tyler’s (2011) recent work which illuminates the complex inter-relationship between simultaneity (repulsion and desire) and setting as experienced by Soho sex shop workers. We also extend theoretical and empirical arguments of Ashforth and Kreiner (1999), Ashforth et al. (2007), Kreiner, Ashforth and Sluss (2006) and Kreiner, Hollensbe and Sheep (2006) on ambivalence, identity construction and dirty work by shifting the focus from identity construction to emotion management. Second, we contribute to the emotion management literature by responding to Pratt and Doucet’s (2000) call for further research into the particularities of certain organisations (in our case occupations) where ambivalence in emotion at or about work is likely to be more prevalent. We do this by integrating dirty work and stigma management strategies with Pratt and Doucet’s (2000) emotional responses (or strategies) to ambivalence. Moreover, we build upon Bolton’s (2000a, 2000b, 2009) and Jenkins, Delbridge and Roberts’ (2010) work on the different and sometimes overlapping types of emotion management to focus in on the contradiction, ambiguity and ambivalence inherent in processes of emotion management. Finally, we contribute to the exotic dancing and more broadly, sex work, literature by looking closer at the cognitive processes

underpinning the strategies employed by sex workers as they manage their “spoiled identities” (Goffman, 1963) and the myriad of emotions they experience. Specifically, we build upon the work of Sanders (2005) on the “manufactured identities” of prostitutes and the various other strategies as described by Murphy (2003), Thompson, Harred and Burks (2003), Thompson and Harred (1992) and Ronai and Ellis (1989) to further understand the complexities that exotic dancers face as they grapple with being pulled in different directions emotionally.

3 Dirty work and emotion management

There are also more problematic forms of indignity deriving from work involving dirt or practices which have some kind of taboo or stigma attached to them...If the workers themselves have doubts about the worth of the work they are likely to experience ambivalence, as they oscillate between shame and resentment about having to do it and pride in their fortitude in being able to do it nonetheless. (Sayer, 2007, p.577/8)

Self-respect is in many ways dependent upon the ways in which individuals are viewed and treated by others (Sayer, 2007). Sayer (2007) notes that the workplace, and as extended here, one’s occupation, plays an important role in whether individuals live with self-respect and dignity. To have dignity is to be in control of oneself, to be able to express and experience autonomy and to be taken seriously (Sayer, 2007). Where inequalities exist, whether that is based upon gender, race, accessibility, or occupational image (e.g., stigmatised work), it will be more difficult for individuals to maintain dignity, possibly resulting in undignified work (Sayer, 2007). Dignity is positively related to emotions such as integrity, respect, pride, recognition, worth and status, while it is negatively related to shame, stigma, humiliation, lack of recognition and mistrust (Sayer, 2007). Based on this, we theorise that individuals who work in stigmatised or dirty work may experience indignity or have to exert considerable effort to have dignity. We also expect that they face a myriad of competing and contradictory emotions.

There is a broad range of occupations that can be considered dirty in some way (e.g., butchers, exotic dancers, funeral directors, nurses) (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999). Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) note that occupational prestige, a composite of status, power, quality of work, education and income, helps us to understand the extent to which some jobs are dirtier than others¹. More recently, Kreiner, Ashforth and Sluss (2006) argue that all work is dirty to some extent and present a typology of dirty work based upon breadth and depth of stigma. The stigma associated with certain work is subjective in that it can change over time and context (Adams, 2012; Dick, 2005).

Stigmas vary along a number of different dimensions (see Jones et al., 1984), but they share the common characteristic of involving invisible attributes, characteristics, or experiences that convey an identity that is devalued in some social settings (Crocker, Major and Steele, 1998; Goffman, 1963; Ragins 2008). Bergman and Chalkley (2007) argue that the stigma of doing dirty work is so pervasive that it may ‘stick’ or remain even after the ‘mark’ is removed, that is, once the individual leaves the work. Stigmatised individuals may form negative self-identities that become self-fulfilling prophecies (Paetzold, Dipboye and Elsbach, 2008) so that challenging the validity of a stigma, at least to oneself, may provide a critical element of an individual’s search for identity. Ragins (2008) highlights that for those with invisible stigmas, an integration of various identities may become a healthy response for the individual, however, “integration does

not come without a struggle and would be difficult to achieve without a threat posed by a negative identity” (Paetzold, Dipboye and Elsbach, 2008, p. 192).

Managing stigma can indeed be a complex process requiring considerable effort on the part of the individual. Stacey’s (2005) research on homecare aides reveals that these dirty workers have a conflicted, often contradictory relationship to their work. The participants in her study indicate that they experience considerable constraints in their work that affect their ability to perform their work well or experience meaningful work (e.g., added responsibilities, physical and emotional strain), but they also experience rewards. These workers draw dignity from these rewards and for them dignity emerges partly from the aspects of the work that make it dirty. “Workers draw meaning from their willingness and ability to perform dirty and mundane tasks that others avoid, knowing that their efforts improve the lives of others” (Stacey, 2005, p.845). Further, Tyler’s (2011) research on individuals working in sex shops in Soho also surfaces the ambivalence that dirty workers’ experience in that they are both repulsed by and attracted to the work. She refers to these experiences as the performance of ‘abject labour’ and concludes “this simultaneity involves a fascination that goes beyond mere ambivalence” (p. 1493). Tyler’s (2011) work is invaluable in paving the way for our theoretical development but we are cautious not to downplay the experience of ambivalence as lacking intensity or complexity, as her quote implies. We theorise that ambivalence and related concepts such as contradiction and ambiguity re-present complex cognitive processes of emotion management underpinning many of the stigma management strategies employed by dirty workers.

A variety of terms are used in categorising the strategies and tactics adopted by dirty workers including: reframing, recalibrating, refocusing and social weighting (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999); doing gender by emphasising masculine or feminine aspects of the work to infuse positive value or neutralise stigma (Bolton, 2005; Dick, 2005; Meara, 1974); manufacturing identities (Sanders, 2005); dividing the social world (Goffman, 1963); denial of injury, condemning the condemners and appealing to higher loyalties (Sykes and Matza, 1957; Thompson and Harred, 1992); and, social buffering, confronting clients and the public, and defensive tactics (e.g., avoiding, gallows humour, blaming, distancing) (Ashforth et al., 2007)². Heinsler, Kleinman and Stenross (1990) and Tracy and Scott (2006) reveal that some dirty workers are more successful than others in managing the stigma associated with their work. For example, police detectors are better able than campus police to transform their dirty work into meaningful work (Heinsler, Kleinman and Stenross, 1990), and fire fighters are able to transform the danger associated with their work into a badge of honour (Tracy and Scott, 2006).

Drawing upon social identity theory and system justification theory, Kreiner, Ashforth and Sluss (2006) contend that dirty workers’ (at the group level) responses to the threat of occupational stigma are re-presented in three cognitive states, namely identification, disidentification and ambivalent identification. Ambivalent identification involves simultaneous identification and disidentification and they theorise that it is likely experienced by those working in occupations with ‘pervasive stigma’ (e.g., exotic dancing) as they strive for positive self-esteem and enhancement. We contend that Pratt and Doucet’s (2000) work on ambivalence and emotion at work offers a bridge between the cognitive processes of emotion management, ambivalence (and by our extension contradiction and ambiguity) and strategies of stigma management. They note that ambivalence can come from individual differences (e.g., personality) or structural conditions (e.g., role conflicts possibly similar to “work-self intrusion” as discussed by Kreiner, Hollensbe and Sheep, 2006³). They propose four categories of attitudinal / movement responses to the cognitive state of ambivalence, namely positive/approach

(e.g., commitment or identification with the organisation or subgroups in it), negative/approach or moving against (e.g., anger, frustration, revolutionary thoughts, humour - but not job exit), negative/avoidance or moving away (e.g., detachment, escapism, denial), and mixed (e.g., splitting targets, temporal splitting, trade-offs, paralysis). These responses overlap with many of the stigma management strategies proposed in the dirty work literature. For example, identification with subgroups (positive/approach) is similar to Ashforth and Kreiner's (1999) social weighting strategy whereby individuals create strong subcultures to provide the social resources "to place more weight on social referents that affirm the workers' value and less weight on referents that do not" (p.425-6). Similarly, Kreiner et al.'s (2007) defensive tactics of avoidance, humour and distancing used by managers in a diverse range of dirty work occupations are similar to the emotional responses to ambivalence described by Pratt and Doucet (2000) as negative/approach and negative/avoidance.

Emotional labour and emotion management have been studied extensively since Hochschild's (1983) foundational work. Researchers draw attention to the emotion management and emotional labour required in the cognitive processes of negotiating the demands of dirty work (Crawley, 2004; Filstad, 2010; Guerrier and Adib, 2003; Sanders, 2005). Beyond the dirty work literature, Bolton (2000a, 2000b, 2009) argues for a more nuanced discussion of emotion management to better capture the complexities of individuals' experiences across occupations and sectors. Jenkins, Delbridge and Roberts (2010) draw upon Bolton's (2000a, 2000b) and Bolton and Boyd's (2003) typology to tease out the different types of emotion management performed by call centre workers and to surface the human agency of emotion management. We are more interested in processes, rather than types of emotion work, specifically in dirty work. Building upon Hochschild's (1983) and Bolton and Boyd's (2003) work, emotion management is conceptualised as the exercises in which an individual engages in working on her soul, thoughts and ways of understanding herself and others, not necessarily for commercial use, although it may occur within organisational boundaries. We theorise that emotion management can be re-conceptualised as struggle marked by ambivalence, contradiction and ambiguity. Here we direct attention to the cognitive processes underlying the stigma management and responses to ambivalence as experienced by a group of dirty workers, exotic dancers. We argue that given the attention devoted to understanding the emotional labour of sex workers, specifically exotic dancers, and the stigmatised or dirty nature of the work, this is a fitting site to explore emotion management as struggle and how further insights can be provided into the complexities of their everyday experiences of work.

4 The research process

This research is part of a larger qualitative project undertaken by the first author on identity at work. The exploratory nature of the theoretical development, data collection and analysis provided the opportunity to revisit the data with a focus upon ambiguity, ambivalence and contradiction under an emotion at work umbrella. The research approach is underpinned by social constructivism and it is understood to be a perspective that views individuals as continually constructing and negotiating meanings, models and concepts to make sense of experiences in relation to specific historical, cultural, social and political contexts (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Fletcher, 2006; Schwandt, 2000)⁴. While we are interested in local and multiple constructed realities (Burrell and Morgan, 1979, Denzin and Lincoln, 2000), we also adopt a position that takes into account the material effects produced by these specificities (e.g., stigma).

We offer a particular reading of the data collected and approach our research as co-constructors of the partial, retrospective accounts of participants' experiences, intertwined with our own lived experiences (gender, culture, age, education) (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000; Dick and Cassell, 2004; Tsoukas and Chia, 2002; Watson, 1998).

A case study strategy (Stake, 2000) was adopted and this research serves as both an intrinsic and instrumental case study (Grandy, 2009a, 2009b; Stake, 2000). It is intrinsic in that the contradictory nature of the sex industry (e.g. growth versus rejection by various stakeholders or repulsion versus desire as noted by Tyler, 2011) triggered the first author's interest to learn more about how individuals who work in the industry manage the various challenges they confront and how they come to define themselves given this complexity. The research is also instrumental in that there is still much to be learned about complexity in everyday working life across all occupational settings, in particular for dirty workers. Initially, the first author did not set out to explore the experiences of exotic dancers through a dirty work lens, however, it was felt that the struggles of a group of stigmatised workers would more vividly surface the complexities of securing a positive sense of self than looking to a more mainstream occupation. In turn, the insights of this research contribute to our understanding of complexity at work for exotic dancers, dirty workers in general and possibly even more broadly to other occupational sites.

The case organisation is the result of both judgement or purposeful sampling and convenience sampling (Marshall, 1996). First, the case organisation is positioned as a 'gentlemen's club' and these clubs are seen to be unique in comparison to other exotic dancing organisations. Forsyth and Deshotels (1997) argue they can "serve as a vehicle through which stripping will become less deviant" (p. 130). These clubs, as do the dancers who work in them, occupy a position of exclusivity and attempt to present exotic dancing establishments as professional, legitimate, law-abiding businesses (Forsyth and Deshotels, 1997; Mestemacher and Roberti, 2004). Self-employed dancers are contracted to the case organisation under formal (hours of work, dress and drinking policies), as well as informal rules (rigid physical criteria) to which dancers must conform. The case organisation represents a chain of clubs across the UK and the first author expected that getting access to one club might make it easier to obtain access to others. Moreover, given the unique positioning of the clubs and similarities in house rules and management objectives across clubs under the same brand, it was expected that it would allow the first author to develop a deep level of comfort with organisational life as demanded by ethnography. The selection of the case site was also partly influenced by the first author's contact with one of club managers, Terry (a pseudonym). The first author made numerous unsuccessful 'cold calls' to different clubs and the constant willingness Terry displayed in facilitating visits to the club by placing the first author on the guest list and introductions to dancers was critical in the decision to use this organisation as a continued site.

4.1 Sample and methods

The larger research project drew upon a variety of secondary (e.g., media accounts, corporate documents) and primary data (e.g., participant-observation, diary notes, interviews with dancers and managers) collected by the first author. The focus of analysis here is upon formal, informal and follow-up interviews with 21 dancers over the period 2003 – 2004 (pseudonyms are used for all participants). Our approach was similar to Tyler (2011) in that it can be described as "improvisational, interactive and iterative" (p.1485). Common in exotic dancing research (e.g.,

Deshotels and Forsyth, 2006), a snowballing technique was employed to increase the sample. The exploratory and flexible approach adopted facilitated the first author's ability to ask individuals generally about their work-related experiences to surface processes of emotion management more naturally, rather than imposing questions about stigma, identity and emotion on participants. A similar approach was adopted by Kreiner et al. (2007) in their research with managers across 18 different occupations classified as dirty work. Indeed, given the extant literature (e.g., Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999; Thompson and Harred, 1992), the first author's expectations about dancers' lived experience was that they would be marked by both positive and negative emotions. However, she was also aware of the reported differences in experiences across the industry (e.g., Bradley-Engen and Ulmer, 2009; Mestemacher and Robertis, 2004; Philaretou, 2006) and wanted to remain open to the unexpected. To garner a better understanding of participants' unique experiences a semi-structured interview guide was adopted with broad or grand tour (Spradley, 1979) questions asked initially to allow participants the flexibility to tell their story (e.g. Tell me how you first became a dancer, what did that involve?; On a typical night how does it start, progress, end?; How would you describe a typical dancer?) The interview guide drew upon broad themes of work experiences (McCracken, 1988), many of which were areas covered by researchers exploring sex workers and more specifically exotic dancers (e.g. motivations, strategies employed in securing dances) (Boles and Garbin, 1974; Bruckert, 2002; Forsyth and Deshotels, 1997; Frenken and Sifaneck, 1998; Skipper and McCaghy, 1970).

All interviews with dancers were conducted at the clubs, before or during shifts and usually in the dressing rooms. This meant that often dancers had limited time to converse with the first author and there were distractions and interruptions (loud conversations, hair dryers in use, music playing). Most formal interviews were conducted in groups of two to four at the request of the participants. This also permitted an opportunity to gauge interaction among participants and as argued by Madriz (2000), group interviews provide a more relaxed context thereby increasing the chance of spontaneous responses. While challenging at times, the context did provide a more naturalistic setting and provided the first author an opportunity to experience various elements of the work (e.g., relationships in the dressing room, bodywork required). All formal interviews, with the exception of two, were taped, ranged in duration from 30 minutes to one hour and were transcribed verbatim. Although sampling was not systematic, the aim was to interview a diverse range of participants based upon experience, age, and background (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000). Dancers were between 19 and 31 years of age with experience in exotic dancing that ranged from 2 months to 6 years. Employment experience of participants ranged from topless-only, fully nude, employment in the case site only and employment in other clubs.

Drawing upon the tenets of ethnography (Schwartzman, 1993), the long interview (McCracken, 1988) and grounded theory (Charmaz, 2000; Corbin and Strauss, 1990) an ongoing process of discovery characterised the research. First, adopting a thematic coding approach, interview transcripts were examined individually by the first author as the data was collected with a process of initial and focused coding (as advocated by grounded theory). Initial coding involved sorting text into broad themes, then focused coding involved reviewing the material for more meaningful concepts. Second, a process of re-interpretation with a focus upon how individuals define their work and themselves in particular ways followed. Finally, there was a process of constant comparison (Charmaz, 2000; Corbin and Strauss, 1990) across themes and across interview transcripts. Some of the key emerging themes from this process included ambivalence, ambiguity and contradictions. As a result, both authors went back to the original

transcripts with a view to search for the concept of ‘struggle’ as highlighted through these themes.

Individual and group transcripts were re-read, identifying separately where dancers’ stories surfaced ambiguities, contradictions and ambivalence, noting why the authors believed so. The authors identified separately and then together which accounts would ‘best’ reflect the conceptualisation of emotion management as struggle. In what follows we first discuss the awareness of stigma across participants to demonstrate the extent of taint experienced by dancers in their everyday work. We then focus upon the account of one dancer, Sam, to vividly illustrate ambiguity, ambivalence and contradiction in dancers’ everyday working experiences. Following Fletcher and Watson (2007) and Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) we contend the focus upon one account is risky but does provide a more persuasive and richer account that allows the reader to better connect with the everyday experiences of dancers.

5 Stigma awareness

In the extant literature exotic dancing is posited as physically, socially and / or morally tainted (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999; Grandy, 2008; Mavin and Grandy, 2013; Bradley, 2007; Thompson, Harred and Burks, 2003). In this research, dancers’ accounts of their lived experiences reveal evidence of both social (e.g., servile, in contact with “sleazy” men) and moral (e.g., commercial sexual contact) taint, but not physical taint. Dancers’ a priori socialisation plays a role in their awareness of stigma associated with the work, as well the real and expected perceptions of others with whom they interact, including family, friends, partners, customers and the general public. Dancers experience and confront a variety of emotions from others because of the felt moral and social taint. Some of these emotions include disgust, shame, rejection (or fear of), insecurity, guilt, anger, humiliation, and jealousy.

Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) contend that the boundaries between different types of taint can be blurred and Sam’s comments illustrate how moral and social taint associated with her experiences of exotic dancing overlap. She argues that clients are disrespectful to dancers. She implies that the respect afforded to the general public in regards to appropriate and inappropriate questions about one’s personal life and personal space (e.g., touching) are ignored when it comes to interactions with dancers. We conclude that this is the result of the servile (e.g., dancers are expected to be passive and responsive to the wants of clients) and also sexual (e.g., nudity, ‘sex’ for hire) nature of the work. It leaves dancers’ in a vulnerable position emotionally whereby they are expected to enact professionalism, similar to other service occupations where ‘the customer is always right’, even if dancers are offended, disgusted or humiliated by the encounter.

“A lot of men think because you’re doing this job, they have a right to ask you questions like ‘do you do this for your boyfriend’... personal questions that you wouldn’t ask someone else. But I expect that of a man anyway, especially a man in a place like this... A typical man in here would be somebody generally feels that girls in here aren’t the sort of girls they meet on the street therefore they can push the line with them, they do tend to try and be a more touchy feeling [*put hand on knee*].”

Wharton (2009) contends that deference is expected in many occupations that require emotional labour and as a result individuals “may have a difficult time maintaining their dignity

and engendering respect from customers” (p.152). Moral taint coupled with social taint means finding dignity in work may be even more challenging for exotic dancers. One response to this is to “condemn the condemners” (Sykes and Matza, 1957; Thompson and Harred, 1992). Sam efforts to condemn the condemners is evident in her comment, “a man in a place like this”. In effect, she transfers the disgust associated with the work (and place of business) to those who use the services provided. In a similar way, Tian reveals the social taint associated with the work, specifically the taint that transfers from stigmatised clients to dancers. “I don’t know why else [*other than money*], who likes getting dressed up and talking to sleazy men?” Tian also adopts a strategy of ‘going public’ in regards to informing others about the type of work she performs and this we argue is in response to the moral taint perceived by the general public. In this way, she remains in control of information and can confront the taint directly. “I’d rather they get it from me [*friends, anyone who asks*], but you just find that you have a lot of different guys approach you [*outside of work*] when they find out you’re a stripper.” Her approach is different to the ‘confronting clients and the public’ strategy as described by Ashforth et al. (2007) in that she does not discuss using humour, offering rebuttals to specific perceptions or acting contrary to occupational stereotypes, but at the same time she confronts the public by simply being open and upfront about what she does for paid work, despite the negative interactions that may follow (with men).

The nature of the work and immorality associated with it can also be a source of conflict between dancers’ and their partners. Amy’s partner has a negative view of the work. They often argue about it and he has ‘left her’ on more than one occasion because of it. As a result, she experiences what Bradley (2007, p.399) refers to as “moral role conflict” in performing the work. Amy makes reference to “feeling like you’re cheating even though we’re not doing anything wrong”, and feels insecure about the future of their relationship. Alex implies that the general perception is that dancers are promiscuous, however, she emphasises that most dancers have partners and are therefore not promiscuous (or immoral) or that they are dancing because they have to for financial reasons, not sexual reasons. “I don’t like that they [*customers, other women*] treat you like a stereotype, people and a lot of women out there shouldn’t judge because at the end of the day most girls who work here have a partner at home or they’re doing it for money.” In this way, similar to the dancers’ encountered in Thompson’s and Harred’s (1992) research, Alex adopts the strategies “denying injury” (Sykes and Matza, 1957) to others (i.e., loyal partners) and “appealing to higher loyalties” (Sykes and Matza, 1957) to justify the reasons for working (e.g., financial need). Bradley’s (2007) work on the romantic relationships of exotic dancers also indicates that dancers have difficulty in maintaining genuine romantic relationships because by “objectifying her body and appearing sexually available for customers, a dancer violates the larger social norm of exclusive sexual privilege of her partner” (p. 381). She goes further to note that partners serve as a “social mirror” (p.396) constantly reminding dancers of the larger social stigma enveloping the work.

Unlike Tian who directly confronts the stigma by openly exposing her work to those she encounters, dancers’ awareness of the moral taint associated with the work also surfaces from the disclosure techniques that some of them employ. Some dancers choose not to disclose the nature of their work to certain loved ones, particularly family members. Similar to the experiences reported by dancers in Thompson and Harred’s (1992) and Philaretou’s (2006) research, by “dividing up the social world” (Goffman, 1963) dancers protect their self-image, avoid facing the stigmatised aspect or negative views of outsiders (Ashforth et al., 2007), and prevent shaming loved ones. Ivy keeps her work a secret from her family and grounds her decision in the

religiosity of her family. In this way, it illuminates how she positions the work as immoral in some way or how she expects her family to position it as immoral based upon their religious beliefs. “None of my family know and I’d rather keep it that way because they won’t understand, I come from a very Catholic family.” Similarly, Nancy indicates that her mother knows, “but my dad doesn’t because my dad is very old fashioned and he’d go mad.”

While all dancers express a level of stigma awareness with the work they perform, not all dancers’ a priori socialisation is grounded in the perception that the work is socially or morally tainted. In a group interview, Carrie discusses how she started dancing because she perceived it to be “glamorous”, “exciting” and “so much money” based upon “the way it’s portrayed in the press.” Following Carrie’s comment, another dancer, Lesley, added that such positive positioning of the work is relatively recent and likely in response to celebrities engaging in pole dancing. “It’s just been really about three years ago, [*in the past*] you wouldn’t dare [*see or hear about*] table dancers on videos, but nowadays... you hear Britney’s doing it, Christina Aguilera and Jennifer Aniston.” The comments of both Carrie and Lesley allude to the shifting position of exotic dancing in a paid work hierarchy. While still stigmatised, it does raise the question if stigma reduction of the occupation is possible over time given celebrity acceptance and associated positive media portrayal.

Having illustrated the moral and social taint experienced by this group of exotic dancers, we now direct attention more fully to the ambivalence, contradiction and ambiguity of doing such dirty work. We focus upon the account of one dancer, Sam, to do this.

6 Emotion management as struggle... the achievement of contingent coherence

At the time of interviewing, Sam was in her mid twenties and had been exotic dancing (topless only) for more than two years. She also taught pole dancing courses open to the public through the club. She recounts her reason for starting dancing as a means to earn good money quickly before going to university. She describes her job as “brilliant” because it is “fun”, a way to express herself and a “good laugh”. Despite the positive feelings expressed, Sam’s reflections about her work reveal how even before entering the profession she had to confront and manage a variety of conflicting emotions because of the stigma associated with the work. When asked to reflect upon her motivations for starting to dance and the experience of work at that time, she recalls being hesitant to audition for dancing because of her perception of the work, club operations and the dancers themselves.

“I spoke to a girl that already did this and she was doing fully nude work. After speaking to her I thought no it’s not really for me but then I was looking through the Stage magazine and lots of people were just ‘you should do it, you should do it’ I thought ‘no, no, no’. Somebody said, ‘I saw in the Stage magazine it said topless, no touching, no contact’ so I thought oh I’ll just come and give it a try, just have a look. When I came and saw how the club ran I was really impressed, it was very different to how I imagined. I did it for just a couple of nights to just to see how it was and I absolutely loved it. I had a really good time of it, loads of really good people. Then I really got into doing the pole dancing cause I saw a girl doing the pole dancing and thought I want to do that’.”

“I didn’t feel like I was at work for a start. I felt it was quite fun. I’m quite an outgoing person. Not exhibitionist, it wasn’t the getting my boobs out, it was the actual dancing. I

like dancing, I like the fact I was meeting people. You sitting having a drink with them and I found that a lot of girls that worked in this industry they split into two halves. You get the really disastrous, strange girls and the other girls are really lovely. You get some real cracking people and it's really a good way to meet people. I enjoyed the fact that I had my days free and I felt that I had a really fun night, let alone the fact that I earned quite a bit of money for it. I was like 'wow this is brilliant' so the money, the atmosphere, coming out on stage I just felt like 'whoa I'm on stage', it was just exhibitionism I suppose."

Sam expresses discomfort with fully nude dancing but at this point she does not explicitly indicate the reasons. Before entering the occupation, she appears to have constructed meaning around acceptable and unacceptable nudity but these boundaries seem tenuous as she recounts still feeling uncertain about the work. She committed only to "give it a try and just have a look". Later in her interview she indicates that if fully nude dancing occurred at the club where she regularly danced none of the current dancers would want to do it and the "standard there would drop" in regards to dancers, the clients and the club. Similar to the strategy employed by prostitutes whereby they construct condoms as a psychological barrier to filter out intimate feelings (Sanders, 2005), Sam uses the extent of nudity to negotiate acceptable boundaries, both mental and physical. In this way, Sam adopts a negative / avoidance response (Pratt and Doucet, 2000) to the ambivalence she experiences and this allows her to 'move away' (Pratt and Doucet, 2000) or establish emotional distance from those individuals who dance fully nude and the clubs that provide those services. At the same time, the option of topless only serves as a means through which to counteract the stigma she attaches to fully nude work. Further, she emphasises the positive aspects of learning pole tricks (positive / approach response - Pratt and Doucet, 2000). Identification with these two aspects of the work allows her to negotiate a sense of belonging and temporary coherence. In effect, she vacillates between emphasising positive and negative aspects of the work by "splitting" (Sincoff, 1990, as cited in Pratt and Doucet, 2000) the targets of her ambivalence "so that positive aspect of the relationship get associated with one individual or object, and the negative aspects of the relationship get associated with another individual or object" (p. 219). This type of splitting is different than the "temporal", "current versus ideal relationship" and "trade-offs" splitting described by Pratt and Doucet (2000). Drawing upon social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1986) and self-categorisation theory (Turner, 1987) we refer to it here as *in-group out-group splitting*.

Sam's comments about being impressed by the club, different than she imagined and meeting good people implies that prior to entering the organisation she expected to interact with stigmatised groups (e.g., clients, managers, other dancers) and that the club would be managed unprofessionally. This demonstrates a tension of competing feelings: an opportunity to earn good money in exciting work, conflicts with improper exposure and association with other stigmatised individuals (management, dancers, clients). Similar to Seymour and Sandiford's (2005) public house staff, Sam's emotion management is influenced by a priori socialisation processes and experiences. Her experience with topless only, a well managed organisation (however conceptualised), good people and the opportunity to learn pole dancing, is a resource through which to counteract, at least temporarily, the ambivalence experienced (and associated negative emotions) and move toward balance and coherence in her experience of work.

We argue that Sam's efforts to separate herself from "one half" of the dancers demonstrate that she is unable to achieve a stable sense of coherence in her experience of work.

She divides the dancers into the “really disastrous strange girls” and the “really lovely, cracking people” (good girls) and aligns herself with the ‘good’ girls to balance the uncertainty she confronts in working in a dirty work occupation. The use of derogatory comments is a less severe expression of negative / approach response (Pratt and Doucet, 2000). It is possible, as Pratt and Doucet (2000) contend, that this may allow her ‘move against’ the target of her ambivalence. Part of what make this process so complex, however, is that in high-depth high-breath dirty work occupations, it is difficult to isolate a target of ambivalence because there is likely a broad range of factors (e.g., media, activists groups, family, co-workers, competitor organisations, managers) that contribute to the stigma and in turn serve as targets of ambivalence. While we agree with Pratt and Doucet (2000) that ambivalence is relational, in that it is experienced in relation to something or someone, here we draw attention to how ambivalence for these dancers is likely experienced in relation to many things and many individuals. As a result, managing the process is complex and requires the enactment of multiple responses or strategies. Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) contend that “depending on the mix of chronic and acute threats from the social perceptions of dirtiness and on the utilisation and efficacy of defense mechanisms” (p. 428), dirty workers’ work role identification is likely to fluctuate. Sam’s talk about work reveals a complex cognitive process, a struggle of emotion management, which underpins the simultaneous adoption of a negative / approach response (e.g., ‘disastrous strange girls’) and a more positive / approach response (Pratt and Doucet, 2000) (e.g., ‘lovely, cracking people’). The latter can also be seen as a defensive strategy of “selective social comparison” (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999) or what Ashforth et al. (2007) refer to as a “social buffer”. This involves selecting a network of social referents that convey and confirm a positive self-identity (e.g., “lovely, cracking people”). We believe this simultaneous adoption is a mixed response to ambivalence, that is, in-group out-group splitting.

The latter part of her excerpt also reveals further struggle. Sam strives to refocus (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999) the work and re-direct attention to non-stigmatised elements, including flexibility (days off), excitement (fun) and financial benefits. Furthermore, Sam describes herself as an outgoing person, enjoys meeting people but is initially quick to separate herself from exhibitionism. As she ended this part of our conversation, however, she admitted she was a bit of an exhibitionist. She initially acknowledges the stigma of exhibitionism (e.g., obscenity, indecency) but as she continues to talk about work she also adopts a reframing strategy (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999) to reposition the work as a performance on stage, marked by feelings of exhilaration similar to that experienced by other entertainers. Sam’s talk about work reveals a double-talk or ambivalence in making sense of her experiences at work. Emotion management as struggle is evident when Sam attempts to clean up the work by indicating it is not simply about ‘getting her boobs out’ and thus dirty, while at the same time ends up concluding it is exhibitionism in the sense of a performance: ‘I am not an exhibitionist... I am an exhibitionist’. This supports Ashforth et al.’s (2007) conclusion that the notion of ambivalence suggests that individuals can *simultaneously* identify and dis-identify with their work (Elsbach and Bhattacharya, 2001; Kreiner and Ashforth, 2004). We also believe this provides further weight to the claim that dirty work, with its socially salient taint, may well provoke stronger ambivalence than most occupations (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999; Pratt, 1998).

This emotion management as struggle, highlighted through the inconsistency and contradiction of attempting to separate herself from certain aspects of the work (fully nude dancing, strange dancers), while embracing the work and all it has to offer, comes through even stronger later in her conversation.

“I’m totally a different person here, I use a stage name and I’m a different person when I’m working. I’m fitting into how the customers are, rather than to how I am. It’s [*job*] just something I take it very light heartedly. I take my teaching seriously. I think the job is just fun and I see it for what it is. It’s not that I put on a role that I’m trying to hide from it at all. You’ve got your stage name and you form a sexual person, although not overly you know. I’ve never felt the need to hide because I’m not ashamed of what I do. You know I would never go nude, there’s certain things I would and wouldn’t do, so I don’t have a problem with what I do. I don’t think any of my friends or family did because they knew me before I did it so they’re all very supportive.”

“One of my beefs about this job and hopefully it will change in years to come is that as dancers it is a male dominated industry. A lot of the more seedier clubs, it’s run by men. They don’t understand the girls, they don’t understand that they take high fees and think nothing of it. They don’t understand that to take your clothes off for money is quite a big deal to girls. I don’t feel that they’re in touch a lot of times with how girls are feeling and what it takes for them to do a job like this. They do treat girls like they’re ten a penny not like they’re real valued employees. A lot of clubs need to show girls a little bit more respect. I think they do treat the girls a little bit like they’re stupid sometimes you know, they don’t appreciate that a lot of these girls are very intelligent, educated girls and are doing it between degree courses.”

The struggle with opposing feelings and the desire for coherence in how Sam understands work and herself as an exotic dancer are vivid in her discussions about disclosure (stage name, role playing), dignity at work (shame, respect) and the seriousness of her profession (fun, fantasy, topless only). There is a lot of double-talk and we contend this is because Sam struggles with constructing a positive sense of self amidst the competing feelings she experiences and therefore is engaging in emotion management. She implies that she is role playing with the use of a stage name and in this way she attempts to normalise the work and distance herself from clients and her role (Ashforth et al., 2007). It can also be viewed as a negative / avoidance response to the ambivalence (Pratt and Doucet, 2000), ‘escapist’ behaviour even. At the same time, she also notes that it is not role playing and she is not hiding from the work: I am role playing... I am not role playing... I am ashamed... I am not ashamed. Sam’s double-talk is similar to the lived experiences of dancers’ involved in Thompson, Harred and Burks’s (2003) research. “Another dancer, a mother of three, when asked if her children knew how she made her living, immediately responded “Hell no!” despite the fact that earlier in the interview she has indicated “I don’t care who knows what I do because I’m not ashamed of it, and besides, it’s nobody else’s business” (p. 561).

It is common that exotic dancers adopt stage names while at work (e.g., Thompson, Harred and Burks, 2003) and following Sanders’ (2005) work the stage names informs part of a “manufactured identity”. Sanders’ (2005) argues that prostitutes construct a manufactured identity as a calculated response to the potential stressors of the work that also serves to increase their marketability. While Sanders (2005) acknowledges the problematic nature of sex as labour (gendered, sexualised) she does not devote attention to what we believe is a messy and complex cognitive process underpinning the development of these manufactured identities. Drawing attention to the ambivalence, contradiction and ambiguity of dancers’ stories or the struggle of

emotion work, we offer an enhanced understanding of the complexity of the everyday working life of these exotic dancers and dirty workers more broadly.

Sam downplays the seriousness of the work as fun and a good laugh and in doing this she minimises the legitimacy of the work. She also emphasises that the managers often do not recognise that the work requires emotional resilience and that some dancers are indeed intelligent and deserving of respect: it is not a big deal because it is fantasy and fun... it is a big deal; dancing is not a real job.... dancers deserve respect because the work is hard; dancers are good girls (smart, educated)... dancers are bad girls (fully nude, dirty). In the latter excerpt she engages in two types of splitting, namely splitting ambivalence between current and ideal relationships (Pratt and Doucet, 2000) and in-group out-group splitting. First, she expresses revolutionary thoughts (Pratt and Doucet, 2000) in regards to the structure of the industry and envisions a different future, one where the industry is less male-dominated. Second, she continues to vacillate between her negative feelings for “seedier clubs” and more positive feelings for those clubs whose managers treat the dancers with respect and dignity. Topless only clubs, clubs with empathic and considerate managers, and clubs that value the dancers that work for them are constructed as an in-group, while the “seedier clubs” become an out-group.

Boudens (2005) analyses emotion using indirect means (e.g., figures of speech and language) and concludes that there are three overarching themes important to emotional life in the workplace namely, balance, boundaries and silence. It is the first two that are particularly relevant here. She contends that individuals grapple to establish and maintain balance in their relationships with others and in relationships with work. “Stability in such matters as equity, trust and power is rarely if ever achieved, and as a result the balance we strive for in our work lives is constantly being negotiated and renegotiated” (p.1301). In regards to boundaries, Boudens (2005) argues that self-identities inform an important component of emotion at work. The process of identity “takes place in the context of a struggle that sets the self up against others, and so sets the self apart as unique” (p.1302). Drawing upon Boudens’ (2005) work, we conclude that emotion management involves a struggle of boundary making and balancing. For dirty workers, emotion management is a balancing act that never really balances; an order that is never fully achieved. The degree and/or breadth of the taint associated with these jobs is such that people desire to separate themselves from the work, despite perhaps feeling somewhat indebted to the noble-but-dirty worker (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999). The taint of dirty work creates a real dilemma for its practitioners.

Pratt and Doucet (2000) theorise that in the face of ambivalence in emotion work individuals can choose to emphasise the positive or negative aspects or both simultaneously. They also note that individuals can *approach* the source of their ambivalence through accentuating positive (moving towards) or negative (moving against) emotions, *avoid* the source (moving away) through establishing emotional distance (physical or psychological), or become *paralysed* (extreme indecision) because they are unable to ‘resolve’ the ambivalence. In many ways these proposed responses align with other stigma management strategies. In this research, we have interpreted that dancers use many of these strategies in making sense of their everyday experiences of work. We also believe that a focus upon ambivalence, contradiction and ambiguity as re-presented in the stories shared here, facilitates our understanding of the underlying complex cognitive processes or struggles of emotion management. Pratt and Doucet (2000) do acknowledge the process can be messy in that some individuals may respond through mixed positive / negative approach / avoidance strategies. We contend, however, that Pratt and Doucet (2000) fall short in their claim that ambivalence can be fully resolved through these

strategies. Based upon the experiences of these exotic dancers, we conclude that in dirty work occupations, specifically those of pervasive or high breadth and depth stigma (Kreiner, Ashforth and Sluss, 2006), the responses or strategies do not necessarily resolve ambivalence. As argued by Ashforth and Kreiner (1999), most members of a dirty work occupation “will retain some ambivalence about their jobs because they remain part of the larger culture with its stigmatising views and they have ongoing contact with people outside of their occupation” (p. 428). We conclude that ambivalence is likely never fully resolved for these individuals and the struggle of emotion management is therefore ongoing. The accomplishment of coherence (or resolution of ambivalence) in self-identities, behaviours and emotions is likely at best experienced as contingent coherence.

7 Conclusions

Douglas (1966) defined dirt as matter which is out of place or in the wrong place. Dirt is socially constructed and related to feelings of disgust and ideas of danger and disease (Widding Isaksen, 2002). As that which is out of place, dirt is disorderly, unclean and unbalanced. Drawing upon Douglas’ (1966) work, Widding Isaksen (2002, p. 800) notes that dirt involves ‘reflection on the relation of order to disorder’. Our reaction to dirt, and in this case dirty work and those who perform it, is the result of discomfort with ambiguity (Douglas, 1966; Widding Isaksen, 2002). Perceiving dirt in others or oneself is the threat of disorder and this sparks an intense emotional reaction. The extant literature posits that those who perform stigmatised or dirty work are acutely aware of the stigma associated with their work and by extension their self-identities (Ashforth et al., 2007; Bolton, 2005; Bradley, 2007; Cahill, 1999; Thompson, Harred and Burks, 2003; Tracy, 2004). The research to date also reveals that dirty workers are likely to experience both positive and negative emotions. Competing and conflicting emotions are sometimes experienced simultaneously because of the stigma they confront in their everyday work (Stacey, 2005; Tyler, 2011). Here we build upon Tyler’s (2011) recent work on abject labour and the stigma management strategies put forth by Ashforth and Kreiner’s (1999), Ashforth et al. (2007), Thompson, Harred and Burks (2003), Sanders (2005) and Goffman (1963) to more fully tease out the role of ambivalence, contradiction and ambiguity in the emotion management of dirty workers. We integrate the responses to emotional ambivalence (Pratt and Doucet, 2000) with stigma management strategies and argue that these strategies are underpinned by complex cognitive processes of emotion management as struggle.

We look to a particular type of dirty work, namely exotic dancing because it has been categorised as a high-breadth high-depth stigmatised occupation (Kreiner, Ashforth and Sluss, 2006) and the experience of ambivalence, contradiction and ambiguity is likely to be particularly salient for those who perform this type of work (Bradley, 2007; Deshotels and Forsyth, 2006; Murphy, 2003; Sanders and Hardy, 2011). Dancers confront competing feelings of empowerment and exploitation (Deshotels and Forsyth, 2006; Sanders and Hardy, 2011; Wood, 2000) and of shame / guilt and honour / pride (Bradley, 2006; Murphy, 2003) and contradictory expectations of performing erotic labour well (to be sexy, arouse others) and societal norms of female exclusivity and male sexual privilege (Bradley, 2007). The lived experiences of dancers involved in this study reveal an awareness of the social and moral taint associated with the work and their self-identities. Sam’s reflections on her everyday work also depict an intense cleansing process (Widding Isaksen, 2002) that involves a number of strategies and responses to the ambivalence and taint she experiences about and at work.

Pratt and Doucet (2000) focus upon emotional ambivalence but do note that “the experience of ambivalence often intertwines feeling, thinking and doing” (p.223). They draw upon Bleuler’s (1952) work to differentiate between three types of ambivalence, namely voluntary or behavioural (conflicts over how to act to achieve one’s desires), intellectual or cognitive (holding contradictory ideas) and emotional or affective (holding conflicting emotions towards someone or something). We believe that the experiences of the exotic dancers as co-constructed and re-told here through Sam’s story aptly demonstrates how in some dirty work occupations the degree of ambivalence is high and overlaps all three types (e.g., fully nude versus topless only dancing, legitimate and professional work versus non-serious work, fantasy versus infidelity). We thereby conclude that strategies and responses to felt ambivalence (and by our extension contradiction and ambiguity) are underpinned by complex cognitive processes of emotion management as struggle.

As we reflect upon the research process, we acknowledge several limitations that may affect the transferability of our findings. Despite the richness afforded through our case study and ethnographic approaches, conversations with dancers often occurred within strict time constraints, surrounded by numerous distractions, at their place of work and sometimes within close proximity to managers. In this way, dancers’ accounts may reflect ‘manufactured identities’ constructed to fit the expectations of management, co-workers or the first author perceived as an outsider. A focus upon gentlemen’s clubs all under the same ownership will have also limited the diversity in experiences and certainly do not reflect the experiences of all exotic dancers. Finally, our decision to opt for richness and re-tell the story of only one dancer to tease out emotion management as struggle through ambivalence, ambiguity and contradiction may raise questions about the occurrence of it across dancers’ stories.

Overall, examining the experiences of everyday work of exotic dancers, we provide a raw and vivid depiction of the complex cognitive processes underpinning stigma management and ambivalence responses that can be extended to dirty workers generally. We also contribute to furthering our understandings of the specific complexities that exotic dancers face as they grapple with being pulled in different directions emotionally. Similar to Whittle (2005), this research contributes to the growing body of research that proposes contradiction and ambivalence (struggle) as an integral part of organisational life. While our focus has been upon dirty work, it is proposed that the emotion management as re-presented here will also be present in the experiences of work across a variety of occupations. El-Sawad, Arnold and Cohen’s (2004) work with employees of a blue chip organisation supports the findings of this research, in that they reveal the presence of contradictions (double-think) in all of their participants’ stories about their careers and sense of self. They acknowledge that contradiction is uncomfortable but individuals can contain it, allowing contradictory beliefs to co-exist through double-think, and still work productively. The double-think, or as is referred to as double-talk / double-speak here, “creates and sustains a “protective cocoon” (Giddens, 1991)” (El-Sawad, Arnold and Cohen, 2004, p. 1198). It is suggested that future research extend the findings to comparative studies of organisations operating within the same dirty work industries, across different dirty work industries, and less stigmatised organisations. This will further reveal the similarities and differences between dirty work organisations and organisations in general, as it pertains to the complex relationship between emotion management and work.

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Endnotes

1. For example, a dentist can be viewed to be a dirty worker (physical taint) but because of the status, income and education associated with the work it is viewed to be less dirty than say, the work of a garbage collector or butcher.
2. Some of the techniques listed overlap with those used by other researchers. For example, Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) draw upon the stigma management strategies developed by Sykes and Matza (1957).
3. Kreiner, Hollensbe and Sheep (2006) theorise that *work-self intrusion* is more likely to occur in a dirty work environment and that it involves considerable emotional labour. Adopting a boundary framework they contend that individuals construct mental fences or engage in boundary work when there is a conflict between organisational expectations of a preferred identity role and the preferred identity role of the individual.
4. Drawing upon Crotty's (1998) work, social constructivism differs slightly from social constructionism. According to Crotty (1998) constructivism focuses exclusively upon the meaning making of the individual. It is generally is not concerned with an emancipatory or critical agenda. Social constructionism, on the other hand, focuses upon the collective generation of meaning. It is usually more concerned with an emancipatory agenda and emphasises the hold that culture has upon us in constructing meaning. The first author was particularly interested in the individual's meaning making; however, she also felt that the embedded nature of social, cultural, political institutions contributed to the individual's processes of meaning making. For the first author it was a matter of emphasis and 'social constructivism' better captured the acknowledgement of the social, historical and cultural significance (and interaction) of meaning making, as well as the focus upon the individual's processes of sense making.